



Rich Goulet receives a volunteer award from then Prime Minister Stephen Harper. (Contributed)

BC coaches threaten to boycott Pitt Meadows basketball

Angry over firing of Rich Goulet

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Coaches around B.C. may boycott the Pitt Meadows Marauders basketball program over the school's firing of hall-of-fame coach Rich Goulet.

Paul Eberhardt, president of the B.C. High School Boys Basketball Association, said there has been an angry response from the coaching fraternity, after the hall of fame coach who has headed Pitt's program for 39 years was fired following parent complaints.

"We are just very sad, and we are angry that someone who is such a legend in basketball is treated this way," said Eberhardt, who coaches at R.C. Palmer Secondary.

"He was like a mentor to me."

He is hearing from numerous coaches around the province, and expects the outcry to be even louder once coaches return from summer vacation.

Coaches tell him they are taking Pitt Meadows off their schedule as a protest.

There has been a loud outcry on social media, with even NBA icon Steve Nash weighing in.

Eberhardt will discuss an appropriate reaction from the association when the executive meets early this month.

Eberhardt said Goulet is the type of person who allowed visiting coaches from out of town to stay with him, at his home, and was an open book in talking basketball – everything from what type of offence he runs to fundraising ideas.

“He’s had a lot of influence on a lot of coaches,” he said. “He was always so open to showing me things, and teaching me things.

“Rich can come across as a pretty tough guy. That’s his nature. But he’s got a heart of gold.”

Because Goulet had retired, and was coaching as a volunteer, it was easy for the school administration to dismiss him as a coach, said Eberhardt.

“If Rich was still a teacher, they could have never treated him this way,” he said, noting the BCTF would have been involved.

He did meet with the school administration to discuss the issue, but he refused to divulge the details of the parent complaints.

His association is confronting a challenge in recruiting and retaining good basketball coaches, and he said they should not be easily dismissed over parent complaints – because it is impossible to please everyone.

“There are always going to be coaching complaints,” he said.

Eberhardt adds his voice to the many saying the man deserves a fitting tribute to his basketball career.

“He gave his life to it. They should have been able to find a better way to resolve this.”

He said offering to have Goulet do administrative work for the program, away from the bench, is insulting.

“In his heart he’s a coach. That’s what he does and it’s his identity.”