

# A man for all seasons

by JOAQUIN HENSON  
Philstar.com

Chile in a rematch for seventh place after losing to the same team in the preliminaries ended the campaign on a high note. The US team, however, was beyond reach with stars like Bill Russell and K. C. Jones.

It was in 1949 when Prieto, a former La Salle junior and senior cager, began his coaching career with YCO in the commercial circuit. He piloted the Painters to a string of national championships, including seven straight, up to 1957.

During his term as PBA commissioner, Prieto took basketball to the next level and provided fans with a vehicle to enjoy sports entertainment. His vision opened opportunities for talented players to make a living in the sport that Filipinos love. Today, the PBA is a multi-million peso enterprise that employs hundreds – from coaches to players to ballboys to physical therapists to communications officers.

Even as he retired from the PBA in 1982, Prieto never left the league. He often showed



Leo Prieto

up at the stadium to enjoy the games and talk basketball with the fans. He continued to host lunches for sportswriters, serving the snipes he downed in hunting trips. He took every opportunity to stay close to the game and the people who shared his passion for it.

Prieto passed away last Tuesday, April 7 and would've turned 89 on May 19. He is survived by his wife Mary (the actress Yolanda Marquez), children Mike, Leo Jr. and Marilou (oldest son Tony is deceased) and seven grandchildren. ■

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