

By JOSEPH G. LARIOS A

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C HICAGO (*jGLi*) – Filipino American NBA Head Coach Erik Spoelstra said Thursday, June 28, “It’s an honor for me to be recognized by the House of Representatives in the Philippines” after becoming only the first Asian American coach to win the NBA championship last week (June 21).

Written by
Friday, 29 June 2012 15:39 -

In an email to this reporter, Tim Donovan, vice president for sports media of Miami Heat, quoted Mr. Spoelstra as adding, "I've truly had fulfilling trips the last three years working with Filipino families and youth during my off-season visits to the Philippines

. It is so rewarding to be able to give back through the game of basketball that has given so much to me."

Three days after the Miami Heat beat Oklahoma Thunders for Spoelstra's first championship, the Philippine House of Representatives cited Mr. Spoelstra as the "first coach with a Filipino lineage to win an NBA championship."

Bacolod Rep. Anthony Golez, Jr. filed House Resolution 2515 for recognizing Mr. Spoelstra's roots from the Philippines.

Spoelstra's mother, Elisa Celino, hails from

San Pablo

City

in the

Philippines

.

According to Golez, “The House of Representatives has traditionally paid tribute to outstanding Filipino achievers who have showcased their knowledge and talent in the international stage. Coach Erik Spoelstra’s pride with his Filipino heritage is evident with his visits in the [Philippines](#) and his statements in the public.

“Spoelstra is one proud Filipino; you can see this with his actions and statements. He has visited the Philippines several times and even proudly proclaims his admiration with fellow Filipino achiever, Rep.

[Manny Pacquiao](#)

. The entire country should be thankful and honored with his achievements.”

STILL KEEPS THE FAITH

Even after being informed of unconfirmed reports that Mr. Pacquiao could be rooting for Heat's rival's Boston Celtics, Mr. Spoelstra still kept the faith and didn't mince words when he told Miami Heat fans after winning the NBA Finals that he was drawing "lots of analogies" from boxing when he said, "Everybody knows I am a big Manny Pacquiao fan. There are quite a lot of comparisons that our guys can relate."

Spoelstra has always counted Filipinos among the legions of his fans.

There were reports that if Mr. Spoelstra returns to the Philippines during the off-season this year, he might take along with him the Larry O'Brien NBA Championship Trophy. But this has yet to be confirmed.

Spoelstra is the first [Filipino-American head coach](#) in the NBA, as well as the first Filipino-American head coach of any North American professional sports team. He is also the first [Asian-American](#) head coach in the history of the four major American sports leagues. From 2001 to 2008, he served as assistant coach/director of scouting for the team. He has coached the Heat to 194 regular season wins and four playoff appearances, including trips to the [2011 NBA Finals](#) and [2012 NBA Finals](#), in his first four seasons, and, of course, his first NBA championship.

Spoelstra, 41, and still single, is the son of [Dutch - Irish](#)-American [Jon Spoelstra](#), who was an NBA executive for the [Portland Trail Blazers](#),

[Denver Nuggets](#)

,

[Buffalo Braves](#)

and

[New Jersey Nets](#)

, and the grandson of the late Watson Spoelstra, a sportswriter in the Detroit area. His mother, Elisa Celino, is from

San Pablo

, Laguna. # # #

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