The 2006-07 Lehman Lightning Coaching Staff believes this year’s team has the potential to be one of the best in school history. That’s saying a lot considering the Men’s team is coming off a championship season as the Lightning men ran away with the 2005-06 CUNYAC Championships by recording a record number of points (643) and outdistancing the field by almost 300.

Head Coach Peter Kiernan oversees the entire organization of the program but relies heavily upon the expertise of his assistant coaches, Freddy Sanchez, Carlos De Los Santos, and Wendy Martinez for the daily implementation of the program. They have worked closely over the last three years to put together a team consisting of outstanding stroke performers and tremendous team depth that remains their strength.

Leading the men’s team will be Darnell James (Jr. Saunders, Yonkers, NY), a two time CUNY Conference Most Outstanding Performer and CUNYAC Record Holder in the 100 Butterfly along with fellow Yonkers’ resident Walter Lugo (Sr. Lincoln HS), the soul of the team who also swims the butterfly stroke. Coach Kiernan attributes much of the growth and success of the team over the past three years to Lugo for helping instill the drive the team needed to attain its’ current high level of performance.

Other major contributors this season will be Junior Joseph Bodden from South Bronx HS, “a great talent who has developed into one of the teams most versatile swimmers” specializing in Breaststroke and Sprint Freestyle, along with Junior Hector Pena, a teammate of Bodden at South Bronx HS who finished second to Darnell James at Conference in the 100 Butterfly giving the Lightning a lethal one-two combination. “Our swimmers also learn to swim many different events so we have the versatility to match up better against another team’s strength. This gives us an opportunity to be competitive against most teams.” As a Division III school the Lightning presently carry two Division II schools on their schedule.

Second year swimmers Matt DeTiberis (Lehman HS) IM and Distance Freestyle, and Miguel Delgado (Clinton) Butterfly and Middle Distance Freestyle, and Johan Lopez (Msgr. McClancy HS) Diving and Freestyle, and Oscar Ramos (Jane Addams) Backstroke, provide depth from the second unit. First year members Jason Santana, Matt Martinez, Vadim Banshchikov, Michael Toro, and Gene Hasangiejak will develop as they gain experience during the first half.

Kiernan feels that as the team develops its new talent, the second semester will be much stronger. Adding to the group with the return of Conference Champions Kostya Slavashevich, (200 Freestyle) and Bud Rivera (50 Freestyle) and Conference All-Star Steve Guerrero as well as Jordan Kalus (500 Freestyle).

“Fortunately all of our conference meets and the championship tournament is in the second semester when our team will be closer to full strength and better prepared for the challenge.”

Each year college teams change so you’re never quite sure how you match up with the rest of the conference, but with the versatility of this Lightning squad, they should be in the hunt for another outstanding season.
Mark the date on your calendar! December 7, 2006, one of the newest rivalries to hit the sports scene takes place in the Bronx. With the same vibe of a Yankees-Red Sox, Lakers-Celtics and a Cowboys-Redskins match-up, the Lehman College Lightning and the Baruch College Bearcats have provided basketball fans a rivalry worth watching.

The rivalry stems from both programs emerging as perennial title contenders each year. The two colleges met last year in the CUNY conference semi-finals, where Baruch and Lehman battled nip and tuck before Baruch came out with victories in both games. On the women's side, both Baruch and Lehman have been picked to finish at the top of the conference, with Baruch boasting reigning CUNY Player of the Year Chiresse Paradise, while Lehman features reigning CUNY conference Rookie of the Year Sally Nnamani.

"The rivalry between these two teams is very special for the conference," said Lehman head coach Eric Harrison. "Both teams mirror each other and everyone involved gets up for the games."

The men's match-up also features a very intriguing plot. The Lightning have emerged as perennial contenders each year under the guidance of seventh year head coach Steve Schulman, and have virtually battled Baruch to an even draw each season. Baruch is under the guidance of legendary coach Ray Rankis. Lehman fans remember Rankis, a member of the 1970's basketball teams at Lehman, and a member of the first Hall of Fame inductee class at Lehman.

"No matter what the talent level on the court is, these two teams are always going to battle to the final buzzer," said Schulman. "Ray being a former Lehman guy brings a little more spice to the rivalry, but both teams feature a hard working group which always provide excitement."

The last thirty years of the CUNY conference have seen rivalries established with schools such as CCNY, Hunter, College of Staten Island and York. Of all the these rivalries, the Baruch-Lehman rivalry is the first two feature both the men and women's teams, and features a wide array of basketball talent.

"When I first got the job at Baruch, the big rivalry was Hunter-Staten Island," said Baruch head coach Machli Joseph. "Now with the talent and the intensity, Lehman-Baruch has emerged as the must see event in the conference."

With all four teams being picked to finish at the top of the conference, there is no doubt that the action will be fast and furious. Even though the match-up is early in the season, a statement can be made by either squad early.

"It's no surprise that the Baruch-Lehman doubleheader has become a hot ticket in the Bronx," said CUNY conference executive director Zak Ivkovic. "You have four tremendous programs on the upswing with coaches who understand how to compete at the NCAA level, so fans should expect to see two very exciting games."

The Lehman College APEX Arena is located at 250 Bedford Park Boulevard. Admission for this doubleheader is free of charge, as is all Lehman College sporting events. The men's game is scheduled for a 5pm tip-off, while the women's match-up is slated for 7:15pm. For further information, contact the basketball offices at 718-960-7175.