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“Shoe-in” with Schulman and Co.

With Head Coach Steve Schulman at the helm of their revival, the Lehman College men's basketball team has struck twice and is hungry for more.

In the past two seasons under first-time head coach Schulman, the Lehman Lightning have stormed to an impressive 34-18 regular season record, having won the Hudson Valley Championships in only his first season as coach last season, and won the CUNY North Division title and made the ECAC playoffs for the first time since the mid-90's this season. More impressive though, is the fact that Coach Schulman inherited a team that had won a combined 25 of 62 regular season games over the three seasons before he arrived, and in 1993 went win-less for the season with a 0-25 record.

Though this is only his first time as head coach, Schulman has 13 years of coaching experience under his belt, 11 of which were as an assistant coach for three different colleges, the most recent being at SUNY Binghamton where he spent six years as an assistant coach. “I was able to learn a lot at Binghamton. I got to deal with scholarship athletes and work on my recruiting while I was there,” says Schulman.

The modest 2002 CUNY Coach of the Year, Schulman credits his coaching staff for recruiting some very impressive young talent as one of the main reasons for his early success. “(Assistant Coach) John Sanchez has made the transition really easy for me, since he is able to get good young kids into the program for me to work with. He really knows what he's doing.”

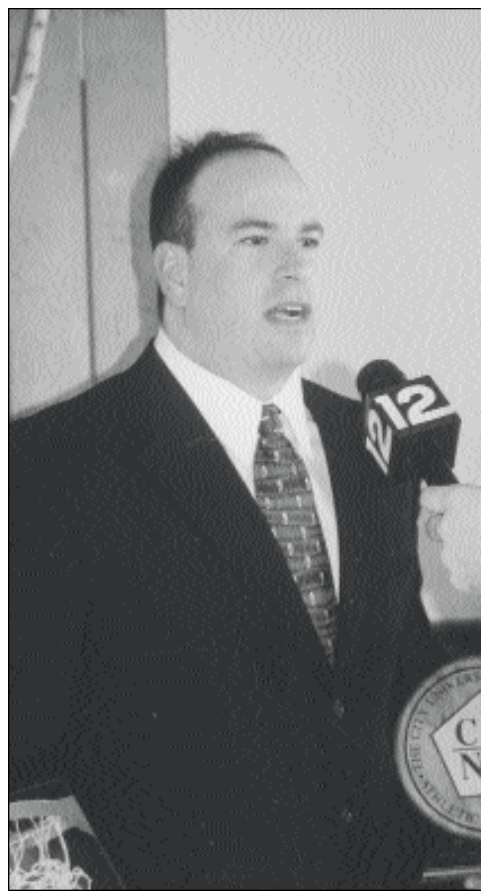
Assistant Coach Sanchez would know a little bit about recruiting, since at one time, he, himself, was a recruitee to play sports: baseball. Sanchez even played rookie ball for the Cleveland Indians for a few seasons. “After baseball, I really got into basketball and through the contacts that I made, I got the job at Lehman and was able to bring some good young guys to the program.”

In fact, Coach Sanchez was instrumental in bringing CUNY Rookie of the Year Luis Chavez to Lehman, along with Lehman's leading scorer Edgar Lugo and up-and-comer Jose Perez. “I've been coaching basketball in the city for six years, so I have lots of contacts with a lot of different clubs,” says Sanchez. In fact, he coached the Madison Broncos under the program director and AAU legend Paul “Doc” Nicely. The Broncos have been home to such NBA stars as New York City playground legend and current Boston Celtic, Kenny Anderson and ex-Net, Jayson



2001-02 Lehman College Men's Basketball

PHOTO: BOB HARRIS



Steve Schulman, Head Coach, Men's Basketball

Williams.

This is a very impressive coaching staff, but the coaches can only take a team so far; it is up to the talent to handle the rest, and when it comes to the Lehman team, there is plenty of talent to go around. Though led by Senior team captains Chris Bowman and Mike Patrick, Lehman is expecting big production from younger stars such as Amil Hector, the aforementioned scoring leader Edgar Lugo, Mike Turner, Alvin Jones, and Jeff White next season.

“We're a young team, and we did well this season; now we have experience,” says

the traditional starting point guard Amil Hector. “I like that I'm the point guard of this team, because I like to pass first and get everyone else going. I like to make the decisions, and I trust myself to make the best decision, because I really know this team.” With a humble playmaker like Hector running the show for the Lightning, it is no wonder that they are making some noise.

And noise they made. This season the Lightning won an impressive 17 of 27 games playing the stiffest competition in Lightning basketball history. After winning the CUNY North Division title, though, they suffered a tough loss to York College in the opening round of the playoffs, which has caused some Lightning players to feel that they have something to prove next year. “The way we lost last season makes us feel incomplete and we want revenge,” says Hector. “Last year, we were underestimated. Now, we'll have to be recognized.”

Captain Chris Bowman, whom Coach Schulman calls the ‘glue’ of the Lightning team, feels that Lehman should be considered a top team next year. “If we get together and play with chemistry, there's nobody that can stop us from winning the championship next season. We just have to play our game.” Bowman, who takes more charges in a game than shots as he has modelled his game after former Duke Blue Devil Shane Battier goes on to say, “We're a very mentally strong team; when it comes down to the wire, I know we will win.”

The Lightning players do know, though, how lucky they are to have Coach Schulman and his staff aboard. “Coach makes it an official collegiate environment,” says Hector. “I'm definitely always learning something from him, and he and Coach Sanchez really complement each

other very well.”

For these gifted athletes, Lehman is more than just a great place to play basketball. “This is the college for me,” says Hector. “It's in the city, it is more diverse than any other school, it's got a really nice campus, the professors are excellent, and the education is as good as any other CUNY school.” Hector also liked that the Lightning are a very young team because he was able to make big contributions from the start of his collegiate career. “I like the fact that it's a new program and everything is fresh. It is a new style of basketball for Lehman, and new guys are able to come and fit in. It's home”

Coach Schulman and Athletic Director Marty Zwiren try their best to accommodate their players and make Lehman feel as close to ‘home’ as possible. “Since I'm here full time, I feel that the players have advantages over other schools,” says Schulman. “The time commitment that our staff puts in to making sure the kids are doing well in school helps for sure. We send out reports for teachers to fill out throughout the year to check on how they're doing in each class, and Dr. Zwiren even helps get them work on campus.”

Something must be working, because 15 of the 17 players this season will be back next year with above a 2.0 GPA, a feat that should be well commended on the part of the players, the coaching staff, and Dr. Zwiren.

With everything going in the right direction for the Lightning, it's no wonder that the campus is buzzing with excitement these days. “When you're winning, it gets everybody excited, not just the players,” says Coach Sanchez. And he's right. I, for one, have no doubt that Lehman will be successful next season, and I hope to have a front row seat to all of the action. I will see you all there.