

Despite losing all but one player to graduation, Young remains confident

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After winning two consecutive Yonkers city championships and then losing all but one player to graduation, it would be easy to assume that Lincoln's boys basketball team would be facing a rather bleak season.

But with coach Mike Young's dedication and enthusiasm, as well as that of his players, it would be wise to follow the old adage about not assuming anything.

"We're basically a young team and we're doing a lot of young things," Young said. "I've been stressing getting better every day. One of the things that experience will teach them is fast decision-making on the floor."

Although the Lancers sport only one returning varsity player and four former junior varsity players, they have known one another for a few years. Most have played together in the summer leagues at Trevor Park in Yonkers and in last summer's camp at Fordham University. Young organized and encouraged them to participate in the Fordham camp.

"To remain competitive in the league (IA), we have to work year-round," he said.

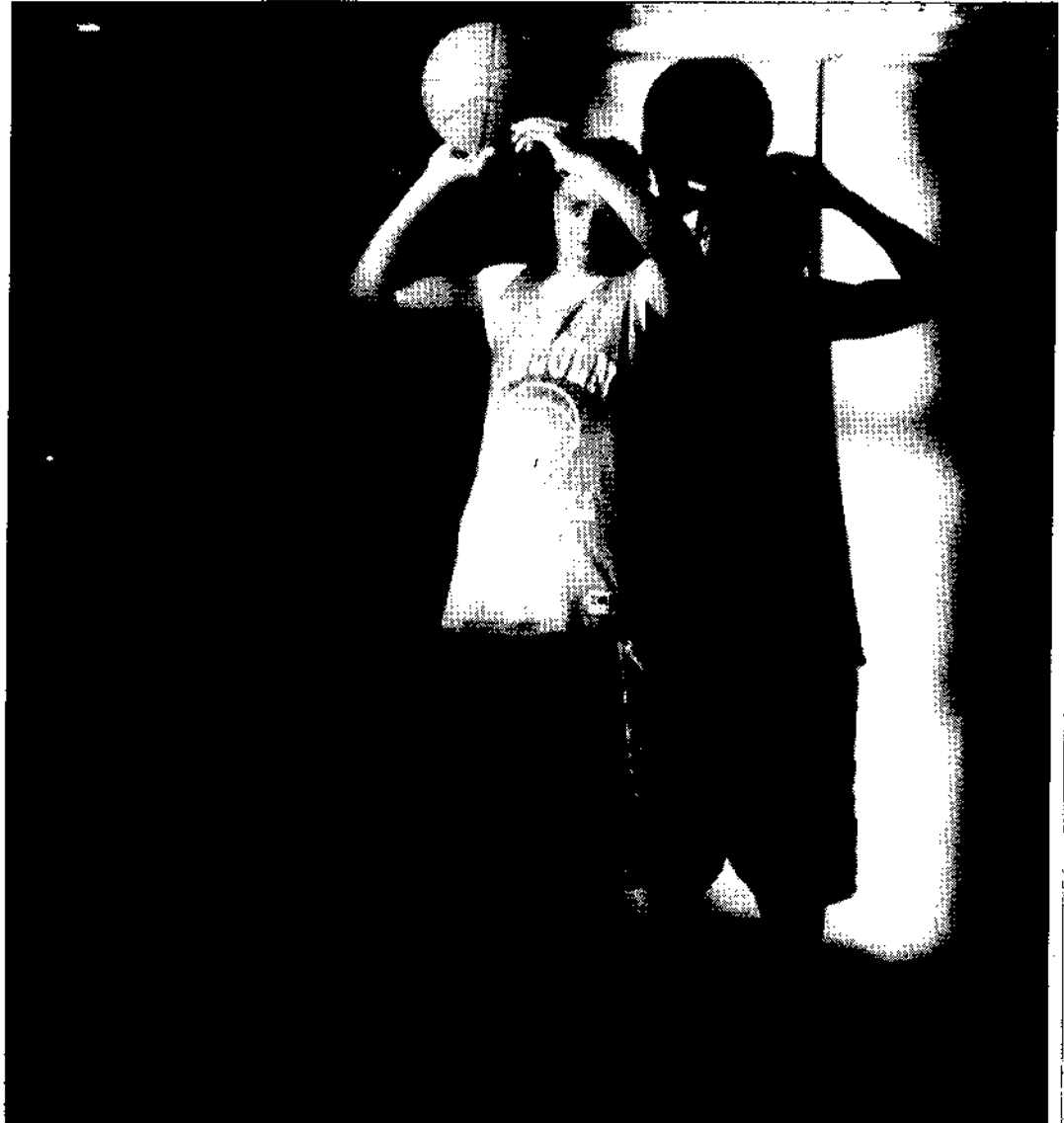
While the offseason work has shortened the players' learning curve, the coach isn't putting a great deal of pressure on them, marking this year as more of a learning year.

"This is one of the best times to coach," he said. "There's no pressure on you to win."

Even though the coach isn't putting that type of pressure on his players, they hunger for a chance to stretch Lincoln's record of consecutive Yonkers Terrace City Tournament championships to at least three. This season's battle for bragging rights among the city's four public high schools is at Saunders High, Jan. 25-26.

"I look forward to taking that trophy," sophomore guard Vincent Simmons said.

Last season was Simmons'



Mark Vergari/The Journal News

Lincoln junior Vincent Simmons played on the junior varsity squad last season.

first and only with the JV squad, but he has known most of his teammates for at least the past two years, having played with them at various playgrounds around Yonkers.

Junior James Tallman, a 6-foot-2 forward, is another first-year varsity player who spent one season on the JV squad, but who has known his teammates for a while. He believes the team's camaraderie is a big plus, but that there is still much work to do.

"We're working hard and the more practice we do, the better we get," Tallman said. "And we're getting better every day."

To that end, Young has been working with them, honing

their skills and working on various offensive schemes, step by step.

In addition to capturing its second consecutive city championship last year, Lincoln went to the second round of the Section 1 Class A tournament, where the Lancers were knocked out by league rival Mount Vernon. None of the other schools in Yonkers finished .500 in boys basketball, but the Lancers were 14-6. Justen Price, a 6-foot-3 forward, is the only holdover from that team.

Price was the team's sixth man last year, but is now looked up to as a leader, given his veteran - and championship - experience. He be-

lieves that his team has a good shot at repeating the success of the last two years, but does acknowledge that there are some obstacles.

"I think we can do it. All we have to do is work hard and I know we can do it," the junior said. "But we're not as big as we were last year, so we'll have to run and do fast breaks more."

Said Young: "I've got their attention and I've got them listening and doing what I want them to do."

He'll see if they are still doing what he wants them to do when the Lancers open their season at Mount Vernon Dec. 14.