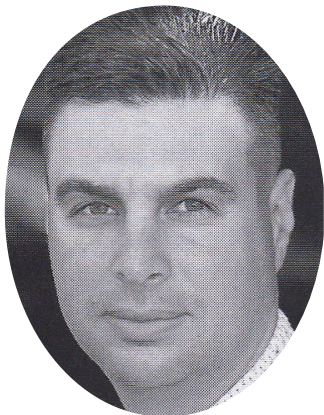


*Special Award Recipient*  
**Mark Lambert**



**I**n a city that has produced a basketball Hall of Famer, an American League MVP, and a Little League World Series champion, **Mark Lambert** has certainly done his part to keep Norwalk on the national sports map.

In only six seasons as the head coach of the Norwalk Community Technical College baseball team, Lambert has built the Panthers into one of the top junior college programs in the entire country.

In the last two years alone, NCTC has compiled a sparkling record of 95-2, capturing the Junior College Division III national championship in 1998 while going 50-2 and finishing third in the country this past season.

Lambert took over as head baseball coach at NCTC in October of 1993 and didn't waste any time making the Panthers a national power. In his very first season in the spring of 1994, Lambert led the Norwalkers to an impressive 20-4 record and a berth in the New England Regional Tournament. NCTC, the top hitting team in the nation that season, was also ranked seventh in the country in the final National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) Division III poll.

In 1997, Lambert, with more time to prepare, practically doubled the schedule and the Panthers responded by going 37-7, winning the state championship in only their second season, finishing runner-up in the region,

and achieving a final national ranking of No. 5 in the country.

Then in 1996, Lambert guided NCTC to a 44-8 record and its first New England championship and with it its first berth in the NJCAA Division III World Series in Batavia, NY. The Panthers finished third in the country at the World Series as well as being ranked third in the final national poll.

The Norwalk team would follow that outstanding season by going 35-8 in 1997, winning another regional title and finishing fifth in the World Series. In the final poll, which came out prior to the World Series, NCTC was ranked second in the country.

But as well as the Panthers had done in their first four seasons under Lambert, the best was yet to come. In 1998, Lambert led NCTC to a 44-5 record, its third straight regional crown, and the program's first-ever national championship when they beat Eastfield Community College 7-0 in the finals of the World Series.

Lambert was named National Coach of the Year by both the NJCAA and the American Baseball Coaches Association.

The 1999 season this past spring was almost as memorable for Lambert and the Panthers, who went a perfect 45-0 during the regular season while batting a robust .462 as a team and outscoring opponents by an average margin of 12.5 runs per game. In fact, NCTC scored double figures an amazing 37 times and won games by 10 or more runs 31 times. What's more, the Panthers twice scored 30 or more runs (winning games 30-0 and 33-0) and six times they topped 20 runs in a game. They also scored 19 runs once, 18 runs three times, 17 runs once, and 16 and 15 runs three times each.

With three more wins in the regional tournament en route to a fourth straight championship, and victories in the first two rounds of the World Series, the 1999 Norwalk Community Technical College baseball team was a perfect 50-0. The Panthers finally lost to Gloucester County College of New Jersey 7-2 in the finals of the winners' bracket, ending their two-year 5-game winning streak. A loss to Richland (Texas) Community College three nights later ended NCTC's dream of a second consecutive national championship.

But the Norwalkers still finished with a glossy 50-2 record and were ranked No. 1 in the final national poll before finishing third at the World Series. It also gave Lambert and his successful program an outstanding six-year record of 230-34 for a remarkable .871 winning percentage. During that time, Lambert has coached 19 All-Americans, numerous more All-Region selections, and 15 of his former players have been signed or drafted by Major League organizations.

In addition to NCTC, Lambert also coached on the professional level the last two years as a bench coach and first base coach with the Bridgeport Bluefish, including this past season when they won their first Atlantic League championship.

That was Lambert's second stint with an independent professional team. He also served as an assistant coach with the Mohawk Valley Landsharks, a Class A minor league team in New York that played in the Northeast League.

The 32-year-old Lambert is a 1985 graduate of Notre Dame High School of Fairfield where he was an all-conference shortstop for the Lancers. He actually played four sports while in high school, earning team MVP honors in basketball and cross country while also playing football.

He then played two years of baseball at Division III power Eastern Connecticut State University in 1986 and '87, before transferring and playing at Sacred Heart University in 1989 and '90. As a senior outfielder, Lambert hit .319 for the Pioneers, who were ranked 10th nationally that season.

Lambert also coached at SHU as an assistant from 1990-'93, qualifying for two NCAA regional tournaments and one Division II College World Series during that time before coming to NCTC

Lambert and his wife Susan live in Bridgeport and have one daughter, Casey.