

Hutchen follows All-American's lead

Add Briana Hutchen to the long, distinguished list of basketball players who used St. Frances Academy as an avenue to further their education.

Hutchen, a senior from Randallstown, has guided the Panthers to Cumberland and another appearance in the Bishop Walsh Girls Invitational Tournament. Upon graduation, she will take her resume to Rutgers University, where she will play for coach Vivian Stringer, a leading figure in the women's game.

"How," Hutchen said, "could I say no to a legend?"

At St. Frances Academy, Hutchen has grown into a star for coach Jerome Shelton. Last month, the Panthers won the Interscholastic Athletic Association of Maryland tournament for the third time in her four varsity seasons, and for the seventh time in eight years.

"Briana is the hardest worker on our team, and has really come into her own as a player," assistant coach Nillon Lambert said. "She's a great asset to the school, taking the initiative to get her classmates on board."

Hutchen has earned membership in the National Honor Society, carrying a 3.1 cumulative grade point average and excelling in math and showing her leadership skills as vice president of the senior class and a mentor in the Big Sister program.

On the court, the 6-foot guard-forward averages 17 points and a team-high 16 rebounds. She has a perimeter game that should take her a long way in the Big East Conference.

It helps that Hutchen trains occasionally with Angel McCoughtry, a St. Frances Academy standout in the first half of this decade who was a three-time All-American for Louisville, the No. 1 selection in the 2009 WNBA draft and then the league's Rookie of the Year, for the Atlanta Dream.

"Angel is my mentor," Hutchen said. "When she's in Baltimore, I get to work out with her. When we first started doing that, I was really nervous. She counsels me,

makes sure I'm improving."

Hutchen plans to return to Cumberland next weekend, to cheer on the St. Frances Academy boys in the Alhambra Catholic Invitational at Frostburg State University. Other than host Bishop Walsh, St. Frances Academy is the only school represented in both the boys and girls Catholic tournaments in Allegany County.

No wonder that Oblate Sister of Providence Sister John Francis Schilling, the president of St. Frances Academy, has had her own basketball blog.

BRIANA HUTCHEN

St. Frances Academy

Senior

Credentials: Member of National Honor Society; 3.1 cumulative grade point average; headed to Rutgers University on a basketball scholarship; leading rebounder and second-leading scorer for IAAM champions.