

Quite a crew: Greenwich Academy, Sacred Heart, Greenwich crew shine at local regatta

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It takes a boat load of strength and stamina to be a successful rower, components the Greenwich Academy, Convent of the Sacred Heart and Greenwich crew teams certainly aren't short on.

Each local squad distinguished itself at the 7th annual Greenwich Invitational Saturday at Greenwich Harbor -- an event that showed how popular the sport is becoming with high school athletes. Sponsored by NYPPEX, the 1,000-meter dual sprint competition featured approximately 35 schools throughout the region, the largest turnout ever for the event.

The Gators, Tigers and the Greenwich crew teams took advantage of a rare opportunity to row in front of their home fans, producing exciting finishes throughout the blustery day.

Greenwich Academy won the Girls Varsity 4 championship, while Sacred Heart took home the first-place silver cup trophy in the Girls Varsity 8 division.

"This was the first home race that we have had and the first time that we have ever competed in this regatta," Greenwich Academy co-head coach Stephanie Hedges said. "Our team was very impressive today."

Said Convent of the Sacred Heart senior captain Paige Terry: "This is always a good race to start off the season because it is local. We don't have a lot of local regattas, so we had a bunch of girls from our school come and support us, which was nice. I think it is going to be a good season for us."

The top two times from each division in the morning races advanced to the afternoon's championship races. In the girls varsity 4 final, Greenwich Academy defeated Sacred Heart, crossing the finish line about five seconds ahead of the Tigers. The Gators' varsity 4 boat included: Renny Ostrover, Nina Demmerle, Camille Candland, Christie Mayberry and coxswain Heather Miller.

"It was definitely very exciting," Ostrover said. "Sacred Heart is one of our crosstown rivals and we were prepared physically and mentally to face them."

"We practice with them (Sacred Heart) on the water with them every single day, so it was fun to see them in the championship race," Demmerle added. "We were tired at the end of the day, but it was worth it. It was a great day."

The Gators also qualified for the finals in the girls Varsity 8 class. The squad consisting of Amanda Young, Demmerle, Ostrover, Amanda Ball, Caroline Ostrover, Galen Hughes, Candland, Kate McCarthy and Miller (coxswain) qualified for the championship race by finishing ahead of CSH in the first race. But GA had to pull out of the finals due to an injury to one of its rowers.

"We graduated a lot of seniors last year, but our juniors have really stepped it up," Miller noted. "We knew coming into today's races that we couldn't rest on our laurels."

Greenwich Academy's second varsity 8 boat took home a first-place medal in their division, which did not feature a championship race.

"Our team is really coming together, all of our boats have very good chemistry," Mayberry said. "We all pulled together real well."

Said Candland: "This season should be real exciting, we have a lot of challenges ahead of us. The NEIRA (Championships, Lake Quinsigamond, Mass., May 21) will be real hard. We are looking forward to putting our best eight out there."

Sacred Heart's varsity 4 boat put forth a strong effort in finishing as the runner-up behind Greenwich Academy. Laura Marsalisi, Gloria Lee, Elizabeth Rail, Jennifer Rohde and coxswain Celina Frelinghuysen rowed in the varsity 4 boat.

"The 4 boat was awesome today," CSH head coach Costel Mutsecu said. "We have a young boat, with two freshmen, one junior and one sophomore. We are looking to get better and better from regatta to regatta."

The varsity 8 boat of Terry, Margaretta Ryan, Julie Rohde, Margaret Dunne, Kate Welch, Liz Sabia, Alex Root, Lindsey Alpeter and coxswain Mollie Pillari raced against their own time in the championship race, as GA was a scratch.

"At this regatta we were definitely focused on GA more than any other school," Terry said. "It was a fun way to start the season by racing GA. I am the only senior in the boat, so it is fun to help the younger girls improve."

Greenwich crew fared well Saturday despite missing a number of key rowers.

"It was a pretty good performance for our season-opener," said Chris Ives, who is one of Greenwich crew coaches. "A lot of our kids went away for spring break and some went on a band trip for school, so we had to make some lineup changes. The kids that we had today did very well."

Greenwich crew took home several medals in divisions that didn't include championship races in the afternoon. The girls lightweight quad finished first, as did the boys lightweight quad. Greenwich's boys novice 8 boat placed second in its race.

"A lot of rowers that competed today are untested rowers, this was their first regatta," noted August Allocco, who along with Trevor Fox serves as a captain of Greenwich crew's freshman rowers. "They all did real well against some good competition. I think we have a great season ahead of us."

"The team is coming along, it was our first regatta and we are going to improve," added Marko Serafimovski, who is one of Greenwich crew's coaches.