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January 03, 2011

2011-01-03: A fair wind is blowing for these Huskies

Kara Shemin
Northeastern University

Recommended Citation

Shemin, Kara, "2011-01-03: A fair wind is blowing for these Huskies" (2011). *News@Northeastern*. Paper 775. http://hdl.handle.net/2047/d20002018

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A fair wind is blowing for these Huskies

Northeastern Sailing Club teammates gather at MIT for the fall Olberg Trophy, hosted each season by Northeastern. *Courtesy Photo*

January 3, 2011

It's said that pessimists complain about the wind but realists adjust their sails — which is what Northeastern's Club Sport Sailing Team did to make this one of the most successful seasons in its nearly 100-year history.

They tacked and jibed their way up the New England Intercollegiate Sailing Association (NEISA) rankings, surpassing well-established varsity teams, and advancing from 21st place to 17th, an unheard of achievement in NEISA.

"We've been looking for coaches, trying to get people to come to practice, and then people did and we got a coach, and we started doing really well," said Michael O'Brien, a senior **psychology major** at Northeastern. "The math just worked out."

The team placed high enough to be invited for the first time to sail in the Schell Trophy regatta, named for Erwin Schell, a founder of college sailing in the United States. Only the top 18 schools in NEISA sail in the race.

Northeastern sailors were ranked 16th and finished 15th in the competition, qualifying to compete next in the Atlantic Coast Tournament. There, they placed 10th out of 18 of the top boats in New England, clinching the spot by a mere one-point margin.

"We are looking to continue our progress in the spring season and have a top-half finish at we move onto the national stage," added teammate Sydney Rey, a third-year **English major** and linguistics minor.

Engineering professor Jeff Doughty, an avid sailor, has been faculty advisor to the club sailing team for nearly 15 years and is working with the students on a project to piece together the team's history. "If we want to have great success in the future, one of things we want to do is connect to our past successes," he said.

Sailing began as a student activity and became a club sport about seven years ago. The students are hoping to compete someday as a varsity team — an idea that seemed, as O'Brien said, almost laughable until the season ended a couple of weeks ago.

The team accepts sailors of every skill level, including first-timers, but hopes to recruit talented high school-level sailors and Northeastern students to continue their success next season.

For more information, please contact Kara Shemin at 617-373-2802 or at kara.shemin@neu.edu.

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