Varsity Sailing Completes an Eventful Fall Season

By Lisa Collins, Drew Mitchel, Jeff Brock, and Yan Amaro

With several victories and a plethora of strong finishes under its belt, the MIT Varsity Sailing Team sailed its last regatta of the season last weekend. Finishing with an easy win, the team had an excellent fall. With prospects for an even better spring season, the team is looking forward with high expectations. Here are some highlights from the fall season.

On Oct. 15-16, the U.S. Coast Guard Academy hosted the New England Sloop Championships. Drew Mitchel ’98 with Jenas Sylvester ’96 and Frank Marcoline ’96 competed in the U.S.-flag fleet. Sailing against some of the best sailors in the country (six teams were skippered by All-Americans), the Engineers improved all weekend to end up a respectable eighth overall.

Also on the way for MIT was the Smith Trophy. Twenty-five school teams competed for the largest field of competitors in any regatta in the country. Elaine Heal ’95 with Kusumoto ’97, and Adam London ’95 with Anna Michel ’98 finished in a strong fourth place.

On Saturday, Oct. 22, Harvard hosted the Oberg Trophy for the Great Boston Championships. The Oberg has three divisions rotating between two different types of boats. Shifty and light wind conditions plagued the eight races in each division. DeCusto with Collins, Brock with Bischoff, and Nester with Wong adjusted to the conditions to finish fifth overall.

On Sunday, Oct. 23, Hellmuth with Chen and Marcoline with Collins traveled to the Seattle Sound Invitational. The course, which was made up of a straight wind, was the conditions extreemly unpredictable. After six races, MIT finished fifth.

Victories at Cape Cod Open On Sunday, Oct. 23, Jeffrey Brock ’97 with Bischoff, and Mutch with Kusumoto won the Cape Cod Open held at Massachusetts Maritime Academy. MIT handily defeated nine schools including Tufts, ranked number one in the nation. After eight races in light and shifty winds, Mutch and Bischoff, in the K division, were 11 points ahead of their nearest competitors, Roger William Slattery ’98 and cellphone, and took the overall low point score for the regatta with a consistent 18 points. In the B division, Mutch and Kusumoto also won their division, with strong final set after several close competition.

On the last weekend of October, MIT’s freshman sailing team consisting of Hellmuth with Chu in the A Division, and Mitch with nine Patterson ’99 in the B Division, both narrowly missed qualifying for the Atlantic Coast Championships.

Racing in the New England Freshman Championships for the Nickerson trophy, they sailed well in the challenging winds on Mystic Lake. After Saturday, five teams were within a few points of qualifying. MIT improved on Sunday to finish a close seventh overall. With the top six schools going on to the Atlantic Coast Championships, MIT was only 11 points out of 174 behind the last qualifier.

That same weekend, MIT hosted the Schell Trophy, the largest regatta of the year. Seventeen schools competed in a field of two days of racing, DeCusto with Collins, and Brock with Bischoff sailed in the highly competitive fleet. Saturday was characterized by strong breezes while Sunday saw lighter gundalow winds, which made the course more shifty. Both divisions sailed well after a few false starts, giving MIT a good showing in one of the toughest regattas of the year.

On Oct. 30, Adam London ’95 with Anna Michel ’98, and Nestor Wong ’98 with Heather Cakarel hosted the MIT Fall Regatta. The team came out with a fifth-place finish.

On Sunday, Nov. 6, Nester with Wong, and Hellmuth with Martin and Ken Amaro ’98 defeated 16 other schools at the Bowd Regatta. Brandeis hosted the regatta at the Bowd脍 Dickies. In light shifty winds, familiarity with the boats and reliance on their skipper’s ability to utilize their skills to outswim the opposition in four racing tryouts.

Water Polo Finishes in 6th Place In EWA

Hepburn then ran a series of seven unanswered goals before Bradley Pearson ’95 and Nazario scored back to back, but the score was tied 11-11. MIT continued to steal the ball and play well, but seemed unable to slow down the second half offense of the opponents net, and finally lost 23-18.

Nazario said, “It was a good game; much closer than the score indicated. It was an intense battle for a career on a loss, but I’m glad I had the opportunity to play on this team.”

Tournament leaders included Luia (9 goals on 14 attempts, 6 steals, 2 assists), Pfautz (7 goals on 9 attempts, 2 steals, 2 assists), Bras- denburger (4 goals on 9 attempts, 1 steal, 1 assist) and Fitch (22 blocks, 4 steals).

MIT finished its season with a record of 6-10, with sixth place honors in the Eastern Water Polo Association’s National Pool (11 divisions), and 2nd place in East Coast Division III conference.

Coach John Beneczek said, “This was a very successful season in many ways and most certainly a year to build from for next year. We were very fortunate to have Evans and Reitaca as captains.”

Next year, the team will miss this year’s seniors who will be lost to graduation. Co-captains Bradenburger and American Javier Nazario ’95 provided excellent leadership for the team as well as great offensive skills. Luia, Pfautz, and Fitch, who led the team in scoring over the season, will be missed for his bandwidth speed and counterstrikability.

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