

Girls crew team comes up huge

By Claire Barkin

SPORTS CORRESPONDENT

Seven thousand, five hundred athletes from around the world converged on the Charles River to compete in the 45th Head of the Charles Regatta this past weekend.

Despite the wet, cold and windy conditions, all races went forward as planned. The race course starts at the Boston University Boathouse and goes almost immediately under the combination of a railroad trestle bridge and the B.U. Bridge. It then proceeds through five triple-arch bridges to the finish line, approximately three miles upstream.

Junior events took place on Sunday, before the snow started. The Head of the Charles is a coxswain's race with several bridges and difficult turns.

Varsity girls boated two boats for Sunday's events. First up for the girls was the Junior 4+, coxed by senior Suzie Freedberg, stroke Becky Paresky, Emmie Perry, Lizzie Becker and bow Antonia Vitagliano.

Cox Freedberg set a good course for the boat, enabling the crew to overtake several boats. The girls stroked to a 38th-place finish with a time of 21:14.

The varsity 4+ finished in the top half of the field of 77 entries; this guarantees the team a spot in the junior 4+ race for 2010.

Rachel Regent in cox, stroke Kristi Wagner, Catherine Chappell, Sophie Gavell, Claire Barkin, Margo Cox, Alexandra Hill, Jillian Zieff and bow Haley Sacra stroked to a seventh-place finish with a time of 17:53.

Cox Regent faced some tricky situations during the course. She steered a tight course and the crew was able to pass four boats during the race. The squad walked through the last boat in the final meters of the race.

The varsity 8+ strong finish in a field of 74 teams secures their spot for next year's Head of the Charles.

"My first thought is how well we handled some very adverse conditions. During our launching/races it was cold, windy and raining; later in the day it started snowing," said coach Matt Hanig. "I'm not sure which is worse. I think both boats handled the weather maturely, not letting adverse conditions affect their races. In the four, I was hoping to place high enough to gain an automatic bid in that category for next year. By placing in the top half the crew achieved that, in addition to being competitive in a tight pack of some very strong crews. The 8 rowed a tremendous piece.

"Seventh place ties the best finish by the W-W girls ever, and I'm very proud of their performance. It was a great stepping stone for the program, and placing top 10 at the Charles is something very few athletes achieve. I'm looking forward to getting our entire squad back on the race course next weekend at Head of the Fish Saturday, and defending the MPSRA state title on Sunday in Worcester."

The W-W crew finishes the season next weekend with back-to-back regattas. The team travels to Saratoga for the Head of the Fish on Saturday Oct. 24. The Massachusetts Public School Rowing Association Championships on Lake Quinsigamond in Worcester is the next day with the W-W squad looking to defend its state championship title.