

Rain blocks Philly Regatta for NDP Crew team

Leaving home hours before sunrise on Oct. 27, 14 members of the Notre Dame Preparatory School's crew team were traveling north to compete in the Thomas Eakins' Head of the Schuylkill Regatta. It's an annual trek for the Towson Blazers' club team but this year, the boats never hit the water.

With the torrential downpours experienced late last week and into the weekend, the river was flooded and the competition cancelled.

According to NDP head coach Steve Perry, crew is a popular sport and growing. In fact, the Blazers carry 35 athletes on the team, many of whom are freshmen.

During the eight-week fall season, the Blazers are focused on mechanics and skills teaching. And with a majority of younger rowers, Perry spends a great deal of time focusing on the basics, teaching the positions and working on technique, leaving the two fall regatta competitions to his older, more experienced rowers.

The Blazers compete locally in the spring against other private high schools, including the Institute of Notre Dame, Roland Park Country School, Bryn Mawr and St. Paul's School for Girls.

"Crew is a team sport that takes hard work, dedication and a lot of time," said Perry, who is in his second year with the team.

Perry also said that the sport demands top-level endurance and takes a real athlete to excel.

The team is led by two senior captains, Jessica Brown and Claire Perkins. Brown is characterized by Perry as "strong, tough, skilled and dedicated." Perkins is keyed as the strategist as the team's coxswain, in charge of steering and commanding the boat. Both athletes attended summer rowing camps at prestigious colleges which yielded vast improvement in their technique and confidence.

Other experienced and returning squad members include junior Leah Taylor who is characterized by Perry as the team's motivator, with a very positive attitude and one who is highly coachable and responsive to new ideas.

Veteran squad members also include seniors Flora Cejku, Julianna Jackson and junior Amy Cayce.

The Blazers will try again to get back on the water with their final competition of the fall season on Nov. 3, competing in the Head of the Occoquan Regatta in Lorton, Va.