

MHS Sailing Team

-Alex Kerai

March in Marblehead, the cold weather has reappeared and the harbor is empty. It's a sad beginning to spring. Look closer though, there are some white sails in the distance, a boat or two on the horizon! As the two boats round one of the moorings left in the harbor, more boats come into view. Suddenly there are eight boats racing in the harbor, and it looks as if spring might be closer than it appeared earlier. Even though warm weather is weeks away, the Marblehead High School Sailing Team is already out on the water practicing and racing. They have been for the past few weeks, getting boats rigged up and ready and then running practice races before their first regatta this past weekend.

Expertly coached under the talented Nick Burke, the Fishwagons have become one of the most successful sports programs at MHS. Under Mr. Burke's direction for the past twenty years, the Fishwagons have won six state titles and have placed in the top three for the state sailing championships every year except for two years. But that is not what Mr. Burke hopes that sailors will get out of the team, instead he says, "So many teams are winning this and winning that, but we're not about that. We're about learning, even if that means through losing and how to be a better loser and then a better sailor. At the end of the day if you come away learning something new, then you've won. The losers are the ones who don't learn anything."

This season has the biggest sailing team in recent memory with over twenty sailors, all of whom got the chance to sail this past weekend in the first regatta of the season. For the regatta, Marblehead hosted Mt. Desert Island High School and George Stevens Academy (both from Maine) in a team racing extravaganza which frequently would come down to very close finishes. By the end of the weekend all three teams were exhausted and were vying for first place (at time of writing rankings had not yet been released, but it is believed that George Stevens Academy and Marblehead were tied for first place) after around five hours of sailing each day. It was an outstanding weekend with surprisingly wonderful weather and wind.

Although the season is just getting started, Marblehead has already won a team racing regatta against St. John's Prep (which occurred on Thursday, March, 29 with Marblehead winning five races and SJP winning one) and is preparing for their next regatta which should be in the next few weeks. The team is already looking strong with captains Nick LaChance and Ryan Hoey leading the way. As always they hope to do well at the state championships in May, but that is months away and as Coach Burke says, "Learning is key in sailing. If you don't learn, how do you expect to win races?"

Much thanks is due to the Marblehead Reporter and Marblehead Patch for their articles on the sailing team that I referenced.