Sailing club hits lucky 13

Once just a typical club, Colgate’s sailing team, founded in 1947, has recently become a competitor at college sailing regattas up and down the East Coast. Part of the Middle-Atlantic Intercollegiate Sailing Association (MAISA), the team races against top-rated teams including St. Mary’s, Hobart and William Smith, Georgetown, and Cornell. At the conclusion of the 2009 season, we are now ranked lucky 13th!

So how has this come about? Thanks to a constant effort by team members, our roster has increased, as has our competitive mentality and welcoming atmosphere. While we do not have a coach, we work together to contribute the individual knowledge we each bring to the table. Sailors of all experience levels are welcome, from those with years of competitive high school and junior sailing backgrounds to those who do not (yet) even know what “starboard” means. We practice four days a week at Willow Bank Yacht Club in nearby Cazenovia, and hold sessions using chalk-talks and interactive videos to garner information easier explained off the water than on it.

Our rankings have improved immensely. While the club once was — understandably — in close to last place and at risk of losing MAISA recognition, we placed 26th by the end of the 2008 season, out of about 45 teams! Last spring, the team qualified for the spring regional regatta, The America Trophy, for the first time. This is especially impressive considering we do not practice in the spring thanks to the late thawing of Cazenovia Lake. We managed to place 11th out of 18, beating varsity teams with full-time coaches and regular spring practices.

The fall ’09 season turned out to be one of the best in Colgate history, with some of the highest-ever turnouts to practice and great achievements on the water. During October break, we placed third at the Cornell Fall 2 Qualifier, qualifying, again for the first time, to compete in the War Memorial Regatta against some of the finest collegiate teams in the country. Over Halloween weekend, Adrian Mason ’10, Nate Swift ’11, Sara Winkelman ’12, and Andrea Liptack ’13 drove to St. Mary’s City, Md. Conditions were tough, with shifty winds most of the time. Although we placed at the back of the fleet, finishing 17th, it was a great achievement to even attend such a prestigious regatta.

We have earned acknowledgement from other teams, and finished in the top five in most regattas (usually out of 18). This season will be hard to forget and sets the bar high for the future. Our goal now is to keep up this momentum. While we are indeed the underdog, these last few years have proven that we have the potential to be a top-ranked sailing program. –Adrian Mason ’10 and Nate Swift ’11