



Providence

Novice sailors taking to the sea to win first Mayor's Cup

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PROVIDENCE — Who needs the America's Cup? Providence is bringing competitive sailing back to Rhode Island with the inaugural Mayor's Cup tomorrow in Narragansett Bay.

No, famous sailing yachts like Stars & Stripes and Kookaburra III won't be there — this is a decidedly lower-rent affair. The Mayor's Cup will feature 20 Providence middle school students, novice sailors all, at the helm of three sailing vessels in a half-hour race launching from the Community Boating Center at India Point Park. The winners get prestige, a chance to hobnob with the mayor, and the chance to show off their new sailing skills.

The regatta is an outgrowth of a partnership between the Providence After School Alliance and the Community Boating Center, which offered PASA participants summer sailing classes for the first time this year. The 20 participants are first-time sailors, who in just over a month, have gone from learning the terminology to taking the helm of the 22-foot boats.

"It really is wonderful, these are kids who are coming from true inner-city schools," John O'Flaherty, executive director of the boating center, said. "Some of these kids didn't realize that Providence was a waterfront city until they came to us, and that's no joke."

O'Flaherty said that Mayor David N. Cicilline plans to race on one of the three vessels — though he'll be an observer only.

"Sailing is a wonderful way to keep our children engaged in learning during the summer months as they apply many of the things they've learned in the classroom, like math and science, out on the water," Cicilline said. "Activities like this also go a long way towards boosting our students' confidence and broadening their horizons."

The three 22-foot Hunter 216 boats will leave from Community Boating Center's India Point dock tomorrow at 2:30 and embark on the first leg of their triangular course. Each boat is crewed by eight sailors, including CBC instructors and the mayor.

After they dock, Cicilline will present the winners with the first Mayor's Cup.

While this is the first time that Community Boating Center has offered summer programs to PASA participants, the Boating Center has worked with PASA to offer spring and fall programs in the past.

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