

SUMMER IN THE CITY



DOMINIC KHAN, right, sees off one of the many crews he's hooked on rowing since starting the Bayside club. Collette Blanchette, below left, and Sarah Vernon are there twice a week.



— Kevin Masterman, SUN photos

Club pulling for the kids

Bayside Rowing Club fills gap in the sport

Amid hulking cargo ships the small wakes left by slim boats brought a new import to the portlands — fun.

Dominic Khan, director and coach, started the non-profit Bayside Rowing Club after seeing a gaping hole in the sport right here in Toronto.

“Rowing has typically been for the private schools or the elite, the reason being no one can afford it,” said the ever-enthusiastic Khan from the shipping channel club.

So Khan begged and borrowed and now puts two dozen inner-city schools in the water along with countless other kids supplemented by donations and adult rowing lessons that go on all summer long.

Ever since hitting the water three years ago, Jordan Winick has yet to come up for air, training seriously with the club for competitions.

“If you want to be competitive — it's your life.”

Rowers can also rub shoulders with some of the best, as the club boasts world champion Emma Robinson, who won three championships after battling cancer.

Emerging rowing star Peggy Hyslop said a good rower has determination, “strong quads and lats and big lungs.”

But many here are just in for the fun, sun and exercise.

The club runs lessons all summer which attract all ages and skill levels.

Jack Armstrong, however, was just getting his sea legs as he climbed in the boat for

the first time yesterday.

“It's like asking somebody at the 22nd floor after jumping off the 32nd floor how they're feeling — so far, so good,” the 68-year-old said.

Sarah Vernon teams up with Collette Blanchette twice a week to “relax after a day at work.”

For Michelle Haney-Kileeg it was a way out of the gym.

And after braving April conditions on the water she's back for more.

“You dress like you went to go cross-country skiing, but no gloves,” Haney-Kileeg said.

And the secret of success for her team of co-workers from Toronto Community Housing is a good centre of gravity.

“Us fat-bottomed ladies have a better chance (at balancing the boat),” Haney-Kileeg said.

And egging them all on is coxswain Petra U, 32, who provides directions and inspiration to rowers and a steady hand on the

rudder to steer the boat. Her personality is the perfect fit at the end of the boat.

“My friend was rowing and they needed somebody small and loud — so I fit the bill,” U said.

■ IF YOU GO:

Located at 600 Unwin Ave.
416-463-7006

Twice-weekly lessons for individuals or teams running from August 6-24 will cost \$150



Kevin
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