

Crew builds strength

Eaglets win Hebda Cup; next goal is Midwest title

May 6, 2007

BY CHRIS LAU FREE PRESS SPORTS WRITER



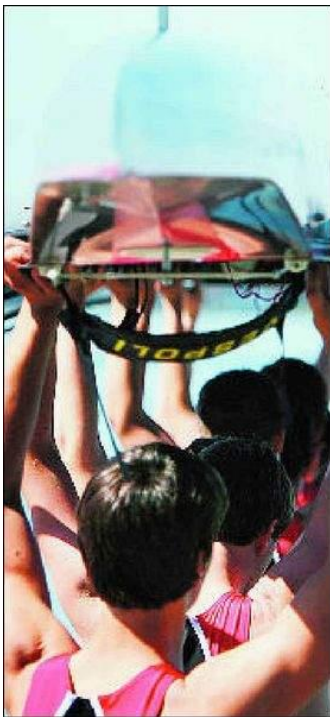
The Orchard Lake St. Mary's lightweight eight crew, front, rows against Cleveland's St. Ignatius, back, April 21 on Orchard Lake. The race marked the end of a grueling winter of training (ROB WIDDIS/Special to the Free Press)

During the morning of April 21, members of Orchard Lake St. Mary's rowing team awoke at dawn and met at a boathouse at 7 a.m. for the day's opening regatta.

The Eaglets rigged their boats, munched on breakfast, stretched and warmed up. By 9 a.m., they launched onto Orchard Lake for their small-boat races against St. Ignatius High of Cleveland.

St. Mary's hosted its April 21 opponent the night before in the school dining hall and housed the team in the St. Mary's basketball gym.

It was a beautiful, sunny day -- perfect for rowing.



An Orchard Lake St. Mary's crew carries a boat to launch.

"Home race, great weather, no wind, flat water," senior heavyweight eight rower James Shubert said. "I've been here four years, and that was the best I've ever seen it."

St. Ignatius won the regatta. The Eaglets won five of twelve races: heavyweight four, heavyweight eight, lightweight four, heavyweight pairs and heavyweight junior eight.

After the end of the races, the teams had a mass, St. Mary's had a boat dedication and then everyone went home.



Members of the Orchard Lake St. Mary's lightweight eight crew team take a boat out of Orchard Lake after competing with St. Ignatius.

It was memorable for St. Mary's, not just because of the festivities, but also because the race signified the end of a grueling winter.

"That is when the season counts the most," junior lightweight eight rower Tom Stachelski said. "This is when you get strong. You can't really build up strength fast. The winter counts that much."

Each year, the Eaglets' primary goal is to win the Midwest Scholastic Rowing Championships.

They have the state's elite crew. On April 28 in Wyandotte, they captured the prestigious Hebda Cup. They topped second-place Ann Arbor Pioneer, 36-22, and won four of the eight events: lightweight eight, heavyweight junior eight, heavyweight junior four and novice four.

"Getting beat by St. Ignatius really focused their efforts, and they came back and did a great job," Eaglets coach John Ray said. "The really nice thing about it is, it was a total team effort" because the team earned points from the heavyweights, lightweights and novices.

In total, St. Mary's has won 13 Hebda Cups (1994-2005 and 2007) and seven Midwest championships (1994-99 and 2001). This Saturday and Sunday, St. Mary's will travel to the Cincinnati area for the 2007 Midwest Scholastic Rowing Championships. There, the team will try to qualify for the national championship races, which take place May 26 in Camden, N.J.

The Eaglets are looking for their first Midwest title since 2001. Last year, they placed second and sent two boats -- the heavyweight four and lightweight four -- to nationals.

At this point in the season, the team centers much of its attention on technicalities, including stroke form and race strategies.

The Eaglets still have to run and lift, but the heavy work is done. The rowers spent fall on the water and winter on land before hitting the water again as soon as weather permitted in early spring.

The heavyweights rowers (more than 150 pounds) took a competitive approach. They competed with one another on every aspect of training, including performance on the Ergometer, sprinting, weight lifting and car pushing.

"You need your biggest and fastest guys to be the rock of the team," Shubert said.

The lightweights rowers, meanwhile, focused more on conditioning and their aerobic base. Unlike their bigger and more powerful teammates, they depend on quantity of strokes. They can average 38 strokes a minute for an entire 1,500-meter race.

"It's insane to ask your body to do that," Stachelski said. "We row at a fast rate, so what we have to work on is fatigue."

Then, April finally rolled around, which meant it was time for the Eaglets to put their work to the test.

"You train the long winter -- five months -- for just five minutes of rowing," junior lightweight four coxswain Justin Elwood said. "It's a self-test of discipline, determination and strength, hoping that you can hold out over the other boats and pull through. We hope all that suffering will lead us to a joyous victory."

Contact **CHRIS LAU** at 248-351-3688 or clau@freepress.com

Orchard Lake St. Mary's 2007 crew lineup



Orchard Lake St. Mary's crew celebrates winning the prestigious Hebda Cup in Wyandotte on April 28
(MARK KOWALSKI/Special to the Free Press)

Heavyweight coxswains

A.J. Doyle, Dan Sawchuk, John Thiede

Heavyweight rowers

Matt Augsburg, Brad Burns, Gabe Charette, Carl Goeckel, Alex Goodroe, Sean Graham, Sean Johnston, Devin Kachinovsky, Aaron Koski, Mike Lucas, Andrew McNary, Dustin Miller, Shane Seelig, James Shubert, Ian Silveira

Lightweight coxswains

Luke Davis, Justin Elwood, John Miskena

Lightweight rowers

Brett Anstett, Evans Brostek, Ben Caplinger, Robert Clemente, Mike DiCiuccio, Aaron Glidden, Abbas Husain, Robert Hurlles, Kevin Kowalski, Evan Lyons, Sako Manavdjian, Aaron Montville, Kyle Sahutske, Tom Stachelski, Mike Politowicz, Nathan Tajima, David Trudeau, Jim Vyscocol

Novice coxswains

Trevor Dickieson, Andrew Steele

Novice rowers

A.J. Blazevic, Un Woo Chun, Austin Davis Christian Donald, John Gibson, Eric Goeckel, Devin Gray, Sung Won Koh, Sacha May, Andrew Pope-Starnes, John Rybski, Zack Selig, Cameron Taylor, Earnest Thomas, Christopher Veal, Chris Whalen, Dony Wright III, Jae Yoon Yoo

Coaching Staff: John Ray, Kevin VanHouten, Chris Czarnecki, Mike Anton, Kevin LeBlanc, Adam Starnes, Jack (Laddie) LeBlanc

