

## **Frostbiting: Ship 270 Sea Scouts Stay Sharp During Winter Sailing Season**

When Summer sailors began pulling their boats from Northport Harbor for the Winter months, the Northport Sea Scouts of Ship 270 pulled on their dry suits and joined the Centerport Yacht Club's (CYC) fleet of Frostbiters to keep their sailing skills sharp through the winter.

"When we first got out there in October, it felt great to be at the beginning of sailing season instead of at the end," said Calder Raio, Boatswain of Ship 270. "The weather was still warm and so was the water. That did change, however."

Raio, 17, and his brother Jonas, 15, formed the crew of William Wilkes' donated boat 2116 - one of the JY-15s that could be seen navigating courses on Northport Harbor and Northport Bay on Sundays from November through March. The brothers, both students at Northport High School, participated in more than 60 races in weather ranging from a balmy 58 degrees down to a bone chilling 28. Ship 270 Boatswain Mate and fellow Northport High Schooler Kurt Wagner also joined the team as skipper and crew on numerous Sundays throughout the season.

The JY and Melges 15 foot boats sailed various courses ranging from out in the bay to the lee of Little Neck slightly south of the Club. "I really liked short tacking up the West Bird Island Channel, that was fun," said Jonas Raio. "We went over into the water one time and it was really cold but we had a good experience righting the boat. We just had so much fun it was like, I didn't even realize we were learning so much while we were doing it." The races are supported by a crew on power boats who help maintain safety in the freezing weather, setting up marks and keeping score. 15 year-old Jonas Raio spent the season working as crew for his older brother. The pair developed a partnership that allowed them to stick with the fleet and by the end of the season were able to gain ground on the much more experienced sailors. "We were definitely glad not to have crashed into anyone that's for sure," Jonas said. "We knew we were competing against master sailors so we were just excited to be out there and learning so much from them."

The Sea Scouts were brought into the CYC Frostbiting program through the Ship 270 First Mate Masaki Sato, a club member and seasoned sailor who has mentored the Scouts along with Ship Skipper Penny Gadzini for several years. The Scouts have also participated in the Northport Bay Weekly Summer races with Gadzini on Sato's 26 foot J-80 which got them excited about racing.

"If it wasn't for learning how to race, I wouldn't have been able to really learn to sail so quickly." Calder said. "You're thrown in and you have to pick up how to do it or you're done, you're going to fall behind so you're really forced to learn through total immersion."

According to Calder, his fellow racers, all of whom are seasoned sailors, were more than willing to help the Scouts along the way. "With all these amazing sailors around you giving you tips you learn how to go faster. Making the boat go is one thing, but learning the fine tuning aspects of sailing in order to be the best, you won't learn or you can't really appreciate the full impact of if you are not racing. Being a part of these Frostbiting races just took our knowledge vertical in a hurry."

According to Jonas, one of the best parts of the whole experience was the soup. "Oh man, the soup. After the races we always had soup," Jonas said. "After being out there in freezing weather for a few hours, that was the best soup I ever tasted."

Post race debriefing took place at the CYC Yacht Club over vats of New England Clam Chowder and oyster crackers. "Yeah, that was some delicious soup," Calder agreed. "But just being with the other sailors and debriefing with Masaki and talking about the wind and the race. It was just a really great way to spend Sundays over the Winter. I loved it."