

# The Pure Love of Dirty Water by Sarah Goodman

While coasting in a boat in the middle of the Charles River, it is easy to see the appeal of escaping the demands of MIT to sail between the cityscapes of Boston and Cambridge. The modernism of the iconic Hancock Tower and Prudential Tower to the south pull you into the future while to the north the sturdy architecture of the century-old Great Dome anchors you home to Tech.

"You feel a deep connection to Boston and to Cambridge, and all of your stresses and worries just drift away in the breeze," said Megan McKnelly '17 of MIT's Varsity Sailing team. "There's really nothing like gliding over the water while the sun sets over the Charles."

But the members of MIT's Varsity Sailing Program aren't casual joyriders on the water, they are competitive athletes who hone mens et manus to command their vessels in hail, rain, and winds upward of 30 miles per hour. Like for many MIT students, it's that challenge that is the appeal. "I love how it's a combination of physical ability and technical skills," said McKnelly. "Joining the sailing team has been one of the most challenging yet worthwhile commitments I have made at MIT," added Jorlyn Le Garrec '17, Captain of the women's team.

Both McKnelly and Le Garrec are accomplished sailors who picked up the sport as freshman with no prior experience, but connected with the team during orientation and CPW, respectively.

"Sitting through that first CPW practice, I quickly realized that sailors speak a different language," recalled Le Garrec. "I don't think I caught anything except maybe that the blue arrow on the board represented the direction of the wind. It was that challenge that made me come to the first practice in the fall, but it was the team that has kept me coming back to every practice since then."

"The knowledge that the team will be by my side through thick and thin makes me feel like I can conquer any challenge MIT throws at me," said McKnelly. This strong sense of camaraderie largely develops because the sport fosters peer education by pairing greenhorns and advanced sailors with individual styles. "I think I sailed with almost every skipper my first fall which means that everyone contributed to my continued participation and growth," said Le Garrec.

Lisa Sukharev-Chuyan '16 was also drawn to sailing during her freshman year. After loving a learn-to-sail class at the end of orientation, Sukharev-Chuyan signed up for the MIT Physical Education sailing course. "The PE class was very rewarding," she said. "I could probably take the class again now and still learn new things." Sukharev-Chuyan performed so well that the sailing coaches invited her to join the varsity sailing team.

All three women now feel sailing is an entrenched and important part of them, despite it being a relatively new activity in their lives. Sukharev-Chuyan acknowledges that her future is unknown, but one thing is for certain:

"I'm sure I'll be sailing wherever I am."