

Sailing Camp is Summertime Sailing Fun

It wasn't a particularly breezy morning, yet the diminutive craft continued its ever-increasing heel; soon the gunnel was awash; warm waters lapped inwardly filling the hull with soothing splashes. Now she was beyond the point of no-return; the peak of the mast slapped the seas and continued its inexorable journey to the inverted. "We've turned turtle!", exclaimed the captain and his first mate. "No worries" assured the instructor. "Just climb on the daggerboard and bring her back up."



One would think that a capsize would be a frightening event. Not so if you're nine-years-old on a sizzling summer day during the DCYC Sailing Camp capsize drill.

What's sailing camp all about? Simply stated it is summertime fun with a focus on sailing. Young sailors, aged seven and up, participate in a five-day, action-packed adventure at DCYC's scenic, lakeside facility. Once the campers have demonstrated swimming proficiency in the pool, they don their PFDs, liberally apply sunscreen, guzzle some ice water or Gatorade, and head to the harbor.

Rigging by the campers, under tutelage of the instructor, of the Optimist prams and Open Bic sailboats ensure that the vessels are seaworthy. Learning the names of the boat's parts requires patience as blank stares and confused looks initially prevail. Soon we're underway, trying to steer straight and level across the wide-open lake. "Now which way do I push the tiller?"



"What's a mainsheet? "How come I'm not moving"? are all typical inquiries from the young sailors. "Pull the tiller to you!", "Steer for the bridge.", "Watch the boom and duck your head!", beckons the instructor from the ever-watchful chase boat.

Returning to the dock and making a safe, proper approach is a required skill which the campers practice repeatedly. Once the youngsters understand not to approach the dock with the wind astern it all goes smoothly. The first few landings can raise the blood pressure of the instructor.

Later in the week the young sailors practice sailing upwind, downwind, reaching, tacking, and gybing. By the fourth day we're successfully having short races. OK, mastering the starting line approach will require some more work. During most camps, we enjoy a lunchtime sail on a keelboat.

Off the lake, free time for swimming and pool games is abundantly administered. Even a water-balloon fight may ensue. Oh, there's that dreaded classroom time wherein we learn rules of the road, points of sail, sail trim, and boat part names. But we watch YouTube videos of sailing skills, boat handling, and some thrilling high-wind sailing. Knot tying is popular with the juniors learning the bowline, clove hitch, figure eight, cleat, and square knot.



On day five, Certificates of Achievement are presented to the campers in a ceremony often followed by ice cream and cupcake treats.



DCYC Summer Sailing Camp

