



Steering
the Course
Women's Sailing
Festival



Encouraging Female Participation

Kanto Intercollegiate Sailing
Association - Ladies Championship

Case Study #4

sport / nature / technology



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Introduction

Kanto Intercollegiate Sailing Association - Ladies Championships are held twice a year, once in spring and once in autumn. Entries are open to all female student members in university sailing teams that belong to the Kanto Intercollegiate Sailing Association.



How and why the project was started

The regatta has been running for around 50 years. It is understood that it started in order to improve skills and participation of female student sailors and to create a safe and encouraging environment for them, when historically university teams did not have many female members and little opportunities were available for them to take part.



Key successes

Recent regattas saw significant improvement in their skill levels and as a result it became one of the pinnacle events for female student sailors in the Kanto area*. The format of the regatta is for individual competition; however, by starting to award the most successful female team, universities were incentivised to encourage the female sailors to be part of it.

It has helped greatly to increase female participation and to boost their skill levels. As a result, female sailors at universities are taking as important roles as male students do within team operations.

**Metropolitan and its surrounding prefectures.*



Changes or developments throughout the project

The movement of this regional event spread to the rest of the nation over the years; currently Women's Intercollege Nationals are also held. Both provided opportunities for young female sailors, and some sailors who competed in these events have progressed to international competitions, showing the regatta as a key event in the pathway to international success.



Challenges the project has overcome

There were times when lack of entries cast doubt on the necessity of holding the regional female student regattas; some claimed that there is no point having isolated female event when the number of female students were sufficient to compete as part of mixed group competitions. But the leaders who created, supported and took part in these regattas converted those negative opinions as they believed carrying on such opportunities to cater for every girl's need, and for all of the girls to enjoy themselves, was important.

Comments



Chizuko Nakagawa, vice-chair of the Japan Sailing Federation, has made relentless efforts to support the event for over 30 years.

She said, “The female events discontinued for a few years in the past. During this time, girls were not even allowed to take part in regattas unless they were exceptionally talented, and the number of female student sailors declined as a result.”

“That was when I decided to devote myself to reopen the doors for those girls so they can have the opportunities to take part, and I believed that bringing back the event would enable it.

“To make this happen, I lobbied the governing body to increase the number of female board members, and turned the regional event into a

national event to find sponsors that were willing to provide continuous support for women in sailing.

“Some of the female sailors who used to take part in the events progressed to compete in the Olympic games and one of the 470 teams won the silver medal at Atlanta in 1996.

“Another unique achievement is that we have had a crèche for over 20 years at the annual National Sports Festivals and major international competitions held in Japan, to encourage the female sailors with young children to take part. This played a big role in helping those female student sailors to stay in the sport through the various stages of their lives. Launching creche at the national sports festival is the first achievement by JSAF and this new trial has been treated in the medias time to time. This movement has been spread out to the other sports NFs as the good role model.”

“The next step would be to encourage more women to take up different pathways such as coaching or race officials as a professional career to help make female sailing sustainable.”

Japanese sailor **Ai Yoshida** previously competed in those female student regattas. She is now a four-time Olympian, having a baby after Rio Olympic games and won the 470 class Women world title in 2018.

“I have been using the Child Room (crèche) since my baby was four months old,” said Yoshida.

“As the Child Room is right next to the venue, I can easily pop in and see my son whilst waiting on the shore if the race is postponed due to lack of wind. Seeing my son happy at the crèche between races is reassuring and greatly cheers me up, and that enables me to focus on the race with peace of mind.”

“The sailing competition is dependent on weather conditions and may be delayed due to the lack of wind, but at such times, I realise the value of the Child Room. I am grateful that the JSAF have created such a place even before the number of sailing mums increased in various regattas.”

How others can get involved

If you would like to find out more
or get involved, contact the
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