

## **Title gives New York rowers more to enjoy than weather**

By Justin Williams, Staff Writer

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When the Hamilton College rowers left their school's Upstate New York campus for Augusta one week ago, they knew they were leaving behind miserable weather conditions.

But they had no idea what their hometown was in for.

"I just talked to my wife, and she told me they had a foot of snow last night," Hamilton coach Eric Summers said. "We go from rowing indoors up there to rowing in beautiful conditions here."

The Division III school of about 1,800 students felt the chill of coming agonizingly close to winning last year's Augusta regatta.

That experience, Summers said, motivated the crew enough over the past 12 months to win the overall collegiate championship in Saturday's 24th annual Augusta Invitational Regatta at Langley Pond.

The overall championship was the closest ever in the event's history, according to organizers. Hamilton prevailed over second place William & Mary by a two-point margin, 100-98.

The way the regatta scoring is weighted, the men's and women's Varsity 8 races account for the most points. Accordingly, the title-winning team is typically the winner of one of those two races.

That wasn't the case on Saturday, as the University of Tennessee took first place in the men's event and William & Mary (Williamsburg, Va.) took the top spot in the women's race.

Hamilton was able to win the overall title by finishing close to, or at the top of numerous events.

The Volunteers' crew recovered from a slow start off the line to edge N.C. State by two seconds after what crew member Matt Magette said was a frenzied final sprint.

"We were basically at our sprint pace for most of the race because the pace was so fast," he said. "But to win that kind of race when our crew hasn't been on top in a while, it just feels phenomenal."

In the women's final, Hamilton was a close second place behind William & Mary.

In junior action, the crew of more than 90 rowers from St. Andrew nearly swept the meet with numerous wins.

The Augusta Junior Rowing Club "ate a ton of silvers," as one coach put it, leading Augusta to a second-place finish in the overall junior division.

In the Junior Men's Novice 8's, Augusta defeated St. Andrew's A squad by nearly 50 seconds.

Novice coxswain Ben Gibbs, a student at North Augusta High School and an Augusta crew member since October, attributed the feat to a winter's worth of aggravation after losing to St. Andrew in Augusta's fall regatta.

"This was our day and our race," the 16-year-old said. "The only thing on my mind as the coxswain was yelling at the guys, motivating them and keeping them on track."

The Junior Men's Novice 4's boats were doubly successful, providing two gold medals. Augusta won its final gold medal of the day in the Junior Varsity double.

The Augusta B boat won the Flight 2 final in the regatta's closest race of the day. The final time of 8:59.4 beat St. Andrew B by a mere 0.2 seconds.

Augusta A enjoyed a more comfortable victory in a time of 8:09.7, winning by nearly 20 seconds.

"This is just freakin' awesome," 15-year-old Davidson Fine Arts student Nolan Klinke said. "Last season, our novice guys were saying, 'Yeah, we won a bronze.' Now, we get to show off a gold medal."

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