Coeducational and Women’s Sports vs. the NCAA

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Abstract

From its founding in 1910, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) was a male-only organization, officially opposing female participation in its programs and events. This endured until it lost its court battles to defeat Title IX, or at least exempt intercollegiate sports from Title IX. Intercollegiate sailing programs provide a rare example of a sport managing to mostly avoid and eventually escape the clutches of the Evil Empire, resulting in thriving coeducational and women’s competitive sailboat racing programs. MIT sailors played a key role in this story.

Preface

MIT was instrumental in the development of intercollegiate competitive sailboat racing in New England and beyond. In the 1950s-1970s it also became a microcosm of several national stories playing out in mid century, especially the question of who controlled college sports and whether or not women were permitted to participate, either in women-only events or in coeducational sports, where teams included both women and men. From its founding documents until the failure of its efforts to overthrow or escape Title IX, the NCAA provided a simple answer — competitive intercollegiate sports run by the NCAA were for men and only men, and it had no interest in whatever women wanted to do on their own.

Somewhat hidden in the big story of the resulting struggle was the case of one naturally coeducational competitive sport — sailboat racing — and the organizations supporting it, including MIT.

Introduction

Competitive intercollegiate sports have played an important role in higher education as a means of physical exercise, character development, entertainment, building institutional identity, and, of course, fund raising. In the United States in the late nineteenth century, such competitive sports were exclusively male (and white) and women not encouraged participate in sports or almost any serious physical exercise. Intercollegiate sports were usually informal and loosely organized, with little oversight by the institutions or governments. This began to change in the late nineteenth century with the rise of American football, which drew increasingly large audiences along with occasional chaos due to the lack of standardized rules and increasing injuries and even deaths to athletes. As a result, various groups began to propose and promote creating official bodies to regulate such sports.
Spurred on by President Teddy Roosevelt, the Intercollegiate Athletic Association of the United States (IAAUS) was founded to regulate football and “other collegiate athletics.” All early documents refer to participants as “young male,” “boy,” or “young man.” Sports, athletics, and physical education were aimed at “the needs of young white males who they envisioned would be the country’s leaders.” [5] Women and minorities were invisible.

The name was changed in 1910 to the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). In the Constitution, By-Laws, and Executive Regulations, women are explicitly prohibited from competition with men in sanctioned events. The rule is not dropped until years after the 1972 enactment of Title IX. Quoting Carter [5]:

Things would remain the same at the NCAA until Congress passed Title IX in 1972. In light of that statute, and upon advice of legal counsel, the NCAA rescinded its rule prohibiting female athletes from competing in NCAA-sponsored events. That same year, the first female competed in a NCAA Championship, the NCAA’s National Swimming and Diving Championship. But separate championships for women would not be created until 1981.

In the early days of the NCAA, women educators were increasingly promoting athletic programs for women at both women-only institutions and a few coeducational institutions. In the late nineteenth century, women had expressed increasing interest clubs for competitive sports such as tennis, croquet, bowling, archery, and even basketball. Some men’s clubs allowed women to become associate members, but denied them full membership. Women and supportive men saw positive benefits in regional and national organizations to help standardize the rules of competitive games, help organize multi-institutional competition, and promote physical education requirements and the implied access to athletic facilities at institutions. One of the earliest such organizations was the the Committee on Women’s Athletics (CWA), founded in 1917. These organizations for women appreciated the benefits of the NCAA in terms of standardization of rules and organizational, but they were well aware of its faults. In a 1929 report American College Athletic produced by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching reported that amateurism was being eliminated or modified from athletics at the college level as colleges turned athletics into big business Bell (2008) [3].

The CWA evolved over many years, through many name changes and mergers, including the Commission on Intercollegiate Sports for Women (CISW), which had been created in 1970 in response to the growing awareness of civil rights and rights for women and minorities of the 1950s and 1960s. The evolution culminated in 1971 with the founding of the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW) with 278 charter institutions.

Such organizations for women’s athletics were mostly ignored by NCAA prior to the enactment of Title IX in 1972 — they were not taken seriously as sporting events and they did not involve major financial benefits to the institutions or to the NCAA. This neglect by the NCAA was not benign, but it did allow the AIAW to grow significantly before becoming a target of the NCAA, containing more than 800 institutions by 1981, when the NCAA turned its significant financial and political power against the AIAW.

While the AIAW pursued similar administrative and organizational attributes to the NCAA, their goals were vastly different. Bell (2008) [3] states that

Their mission was to “lead and conduct” programs at the collegiate level that were competitive for women. The AIWA focused on the female student-athlete’s
education, not on athletic performance, and thus rejected the ‘win or die’ attitude of the NCAA. Instead, the AIAW emphasized participation in sport as the most important aspect and de-emphasized winning.

This set the stage for the one-sided and sad story of the NCAA’s efforts to destroy the AIAW following the enactment of Title IX.

The focus of this essay is intercollegiate sailing — a sport that is a natural candidate for coeducational participation, and which never fell under the direct domination of the NCAA. Unfortunately, however, it was caught in the middle as the NCAA pushed institutions to follow its dictates in all sports at the institution, whether or not they were governed by the NCAA. Violation could result in an institution’s entire sports program being penalized by the NCAA by withdrawing its sanction for more remunerative sporting events.

Much of this multifaceted story occurred in the 1960s, with development in the 1970s, resolution in the 1980s, and enduring impact. Women’s athletic programs, competitive sports, and, in particular, sailing at MIT provide a specific and important example of the story.

I was present at MIT 1960-66 and an active sailor for two years. My long term interest in the history of coeducation at MIT (see [6]) and my return in retirement to active racing of Bullseyes in Rockport Mass. kindled my interest in this story, which led to my researching and writing this story.

**Intercollegiate Sailboat Racing before 1960**

The Intercollegiate Yacht Racing Association (ICYRA) was established in 1930, reportedly in conjunction with the first intercollegiate dinghy regatta, the Boston Dinghy Club Challenge Cup. No explicit gender-based restrictions were stated in the founding documents, unlike those of the NCAA.

The ICYRA became the Intercollegiate Yacht Racing Association of North America (ICYRA/NA) and, in 2000, changed its name to its current name *Intercollegiate Sailing Association* (ICSA). This article is about history, however, so I will stick to the ICYRA name as the one most commonly used during the period treated, where only the epilog involves the new name.

Led by Walter “Jack” Wood MIT ’1917, the MIT Sailing Pavilion was built and opened during 1935-6. The first fleet of wooden Tech Dinghies is designed by MIT Naval Architecture Prof. George Owen and built by the Herreshoff Manufacturing Company — founded by Nathanael (Nat) Greene Herreshoff (MIT 1870) and his brother John in 1878 in Bristol RI.

![Tech Dinghy 1936](image)

The first generation Tech dinghies serve until 1952.
MIT won the first Henry A. Morss Memorial Trophy, the North American Intercollegiate Dinghy Championship sponsored by the ICYRA, in 1937. MIT would win the championship 11 times more out of 25 through 1961, occasionally with women crew members. It did not win again until 2018. In the 1961 Morss Cup, I was the heavy-weather crew for my brother, Peter Gray ’61. The other MIT skipper was Don Nelson ’61. Both Pete and Don were later elected to the Intercollegiate Sailing Hall of Fame.

Several women at MIT participated in the sailing program at MIT. One was Emily Lippencott Wick, who arrived at MIT in September 1946 from Mount Holyoke College as a new PhD student in chemistry. Emily played a major role in my earlier article on coeducation at MIT in Volume I [6] of this series, but here she plays a different role as an éminence grise in the background of the MIT sailing program. She did not race competitively at MIT as she was a graduate student, but she was an avid sailor and racer in her home town of Rockport Mass. and as both an advisor and later an Associate Dean of Students, she was a counselor and advisor for the women’s athletic program and for women student athletes. So her story is intermingled with the MIT sailing theme.

In 1947 Emily joined the MIT Nautical Association in March by getting her sailing card. The cards are allegedly for one year, but the original cards from the early days on are kept in a file by the front desk of the Sailing Pavilion. Emily’s card shows she qualified as Crew and Helmsman, but not as a Racing Skipper — because she was a graduate student. In her oral history, she said that she did take advantage of the MIT sailing resources, but not to a great extent because she preferred to spend her free time time in Rockport, where she had a succession of sailboats, including an O-Boat, a Star Boat, a Jolly Boat, a Firefly, and finally a Cape Cod Bullseye.

On 26 March 1949 the New England Intercollegiate Sailing Association (NEISA) was formed in Cambridge as part of ICYRA. Leonard (Len) M. Fowle, yachting editor of the Boston Globe and correspondent for the New York Times, is a founder and leader of both NEISA and ICYRA, which is made up of such regional organizations as NEISA.

In 1952 the second generation Tech dinghy fleet arrives, fiberglass instead of wood and built by Cape Cod Shipbuilding.

in 1953 the ICYRA regulations made explicit the rule that member institutions must be either all male or coeducational and that women-only institutions were not allowed. ICYRA correspondence show attempts to follow closely the strict standards of the NCAA “with possibly some modifications.” The allowance of coeducational teams was in direct conflict with NCAA rules.

At MIT, the general issue of extending more athletic programs and facilities to women was increasingly being considered. In December 1955 the MIT Director of Athletics wrote to the Athletic Administrative Board and Committees for the Planning of Athletic Facilities and Program regarding “basic assumptions that it is felt must be made in considering the need for additional athletic facilities at M.I.T.” including
2.0 That we plan in the Athletic Program to include facilities for approximately 200 women.

2.1 That there be no intercollegiate program for women.

2.2 That there be a limited intramural program for women, such as badminton, archery, bowling, etc.

2.3 That there be no required program for women.

After several discouraging attempts to participate in MIT sports, Antonia (Toni) Deutsch (later Schuman) is welcomed by Jack Wood and Hatch Brown at the Sailing Pavilion — provided she can handle a Tech Dinghy and a 110 and tie the prerequisite knots. In 1956 following her crewing in several regattas she becomes the first woman to receive an MIT Junior Varsity letter. She is the President of the Association of Women Students (AWS) in her Junior Year, and many years later the MIT Toni Deutsch Regatta was named after her.

— but women were still not allowed in the MIT Athletic Association or Varsity Club!

In 1958 the ICYRA notes that “where sailing is a regulated sport, it is a part of the athletic program which in most colleges is regulated to some extent by outside groups such as the National College Athletic Association (NCAA). The policy of this and other similar groups does not recognize the participation of women with men” and begins consideration of creating an Affiliate Membership for women’s sailing associations.

The MIT sailing team included Carol M. Dorworth ’60, who crewed for Team Captain Dennis Posey ’59 in the New England and the National championship regattas sailed in Firefly sloops, winning both championships. [8]

To finish setting the stage for the 1960s, in 1959 Emily Wick was appointed Assistant
Professor in the Department of Nutrition and Food Science at MIT, and Julius Stratton became MIT President.

The Plot Thickens: 1960-1971

In 1960 the class of 1964 arrived at MIT, and in 1961 the University of Rhode Island, an NCAA school, announced it would follow NCAA rules in all sports and exclude women from all intercollegiate sports and refuse to play any teams including women [8].

This illustrates the basic tactic of the NCAA, to bully institutions wishing to have their remunerative male sports like football and basketball be within the NCAA fold; the institutions had to force all of their sports programs to comply with NCAA rules, even if those programs were not governed by the NCAA. This effectively eliminated women from participation in any varsity sports.

Seeing the writing on the wall, NEISA adopted the NCAA prohibition (to be effective in 1966), but actively supported formation of the Women’s Intercollegiate Sailing Association (WISA) and the New England WISA (NEWISA) “To encourage and promote women’s intercollegiate sailing; to form college sailing teams; to inspire interest in sailing; to create and instruct sailing groups.” The idea seems to have been first proposed in Lucie Sheldon’s 11/19/60 letter to Len Fowle, whose 12/5 reply suggested bringing it up at a 12/10/60 NEISA meeting. The idea was further discussed in a 2/18/61 meeting of several women students, administrators, and Fowle at Walker Memorial at MIT, where a constitutional committee including MIT’s Eleanor (Ellie) Chance was appointed and an initial regatta schedule for spring 1961 was drawn up and the MIT women’s sailing team came into existence. Unlike the NCAA, NEISA worked behind the scenes to help create an independent but parallel women’s organization and worked for consistency of rules and organization between the two organizations in anticipation of an eventual reunification. The NEISA was aware of the intentions and power of the NCAA, but they were quiet and sneaky in their opposition.

This was all going on in 1961, while I was at MIT, a member of the Nautical Association, on the sailing team, and, apparently, clueless. I did not learn these details until 2019 during visits to the archives of the Mystic Seaport Museum [11].

MIT student Eleanor Chance played a key role in the development of women’s sailing as the MIT student representative in the February 1961 meeting at MIT initiating the organization WISA and NEWISA, their relationship to NEISA and ICYRA, and scheduling the first spring regattas.

Earlier in 1960 she is mentioned in the 11/18/1960 The Tech as a member of the MIT team along with Marjory Harper as a participant in “an unusual intercollegiate event” — a regatta for women sailors held at MIT. She was still on the NEWISA mailing list in 1962, but then disappeared from MIT records, I could not even find a sailing card for her at the MIT Sailing Pavilion. It turns out, however, that her life was intimately involved with sailing — but only briefly at MIT. On 2 February 1964 The New York Times published an announcement of her marriage to Bradford N. Swett along with the biographical information that she is an alumna of the Baldwin School in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, and the University of Pennsylvania and that she also attended the University of Uppsala in Sweden and MIT. Her father, George Britton Chance, was a Professor at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine and a 1952 Summer Olympic Gold Medalist
The meeting was called to order at 1:30 by Polly Hogan.

Present were: Boston University, Leslie Andrews; Conn. College for Women, Lucie Sheldon; Jackson, Larrin Stieglitz; Haidi Haner, Sheila Thompson, Lannie Davoren, Denise Valtz, Polly Hogan; MIT, Ellie Chance; Mt. Holyoke, Carolyn Dorrance; Pembroke, Miss Janet Lutz, faculty, Betsy Hammett; Radcliffe, Mrs. Theodore F. Parker, faculty, Mary Jo Wheeler, Ann Knowles; Regis, Pat Lilly; URI, Mary Davey, Diane Piercon; Wellesley, Jr.s Paige, Sybil Healy, Sally Jakob; Wheaton, Nancy Mann.

1. Mr. Leonard H. Poulis, Graduate Secretary of NEISA, spoke for a few minutes on the opportunities for joining the Inter-collegiate Yacht Racing Association of North America, if desired, and the advantages resulting from such action.

2. A spring schedule was set up, copies of which are to be sent out to each college.

3. It was decided that any college that registered for a meet and did not attend or withdrew at least two weeks before the date of the regatta would be held responsible for payment of the entry fee.

4. A committee was appointed to set up a constitution to be voted on at the first spring regatta. Members are: Nancy Mann, Ann Knowles, Polly Hogan, Ellie Chance and Betsy Hammett.

5. The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted

Polly Hogan
in 5.5 Meter sailing. Eleanor built a significant sailing reputation sailing Finns and later larger boats at the New York Yacht Club under the names Eleanor Chance Swett and Eleanor Chance Burgess. She sailed with Jerome (Jerry) Milgram ’60, who is coincidentally mentioned in the same *The Tech* article mentioned above, and was reported to have taken command of Milgram’s controversial cat-rigged catch *Cascade* following races. Milgram was a star MIT sailor and a long-time professor at MIT. Eleanor appears again in 7 August 1972 *New York Times* as second-place skipper of the *Cascade* in the New York Yacht Club’a Astor Cup race. Eleanor’s daughter Hannah Swett was the Rolex Yachtswoman of the Year in 2004. Ellie Chance’s role is clear from the earliest documents in the NEWISA archives in the Mystic Seaport Museum Collections [11] shown in Figure. NEISA provided high level liaisons with NEWISA, advice (led by Len Fowle and Jack Wood), organizational cooperation, and the long term goal of an eventual merger. MIT plays active role as a host for NEISA regattas.

Unfortunately, the MIT women’s sailing team and NEWISA were not able to sustain this initial burst of activity and little more happened until autumn 1964 when once again MIT fielded a team and NEWISA organized five spring regattas.

In 1962 Sailing and fencing were approved as women’s club sports, but women had very low priority in using MIT athletic facilities.

The following photo of Emily at the Sailing Pavilion was published in 1962 with an article on Emily, the attached commentary by Emily on her MIT sailing is taken from her oral history [12].

Interviewer: Sailing? Did you [take] advantage of the MIT...did they have a sailing team?
Wick: Well, I did. Sure MIT did, but I did not do a lot of it there because I had a boat out here in Rockport and I did not want to use up my goof off time in town. But, when things got thick, I would walk down to the sailing pavilion and smell the fresh air.

In 1963 Margaret (Scotty) MacVicar was the president of the MIT AWS and was also an avid sailor.
In 1964 a women’s athletics program was formally established at MIT, beginning with 44 women students.

WISA incorporated several ICYRA procedures at MIT. Ruth Beckley ’67 chaired the NEWISA Scheduling Committee. Beckley was a member of the MIT women’s sailing team organized in the fall of 1964 in anticipation of the expected enforcement of the prohibition of women on the Varsity sailing team in 1966. In 1967 Beckley won the first MIT Pewter Bowl Award, given annually to the “Female senior who has shown the highest qualities of inspiration and leadership in contributing to women’s athletics.”

In response to appeals from women’s sports and athletics organizations and its own long range planning committee, the NCAA clarifies its position [5][9]:

NCAA categorically rejects participation of women in their championship events:

The games committee shall limit participation to eligible male athletes.

On 21 January 1965 the MIT Athletic Board invited Associate Dean of Students Jacqueline Mattfeld and several undergraduates to discuss the women’s athletics program at MIT. The undergraduates include Ruth Beckley. The following excerpts from the minutes of the meeting provide added information on renewed attempts to form an active women’s intercollegiate sailing program.

M.I.T. ATHLETIC BOARD MINUTES
January 21, 1965

Present: Professor G. A. Brown, Chairman
Mssrs. S. Edgarly, T. P. Schuiling, G. P. Strehle
Professors K. F. Hansen, J. W. Mar
Dr. A. O. Seeler, Mr. O. R. Simha, Professor R. H. Smith,
Dean K. R. Wadleigh
Mssrs. W. R. Brody, W. David Carrier, III, R. E. Lucy,
R. I. Mandle and F. S. Souk

Absent: Mssrs. J. S. Merriman, Jr., and E. Pollard

Guests: Mrs. J. A. Mattfeld, Associate Dean of Student Affairs
for Women, Ruth Beckley, Barbara Desmond, Sandra Poote,
Diane Pickering and Martha Redden

The meeting was called to order at 7:45 p.m. by Chairman Brown.

I. DISCUSSION OF THE ATHLETIC PROGRAM FOR WOMEN AT M.I.T., INCLUDING OBJECTIVES, PHILOSOPHY AND THE PRESENT SCOPE OF THE PROGRAM.

Chairman Brown suggested that Dean Mattfeld review for the Athletic Board the current statistics on the number of women enrolled at the institute, and indicate as accurately as possible the probable increases in enrollment.
Tech women sailors continued their success in the first year of their banishment from Varsity sailing by the NEISA. The article incorrectly states that the women’s sailing team came into existence in spring of 1962 and that its first intercollegiate competition was in the spring of 1965. As we have seen, the team was first formed and had its first intercollegiate regattas in 1961.

In 1967 NEWISA and her sister organization, the Middle Atlantic Association of Women Sailors, (MAAWS), organize the first women’s nationals for 1967.

 Fran Charles, MIT Sailing Master (at MIT since 1992), relates stories told to him by Hatch Brown, former MIT Varsity Sailing Coach and Sailing Master, and Stu Nelson, women’s Varsity Coach at MIT for 39 years and first full time women’s coach for theICYRA:

During the mid 1960s Emily spent many weekends organizing and hosting New England women-only sailing regattas and was instrumental in founding the New England Women’s Intercollegiate Sailing Association when the New England Intercollegiate Sailing Association would not allow their participation in varsity sailing. Emily even organized the do-it-yourself sandwich lunches for the regattas. She also lobbied the Athletic Association for approval of women’s sailing as a varsity sport.

Excerpts from Athletics and the Women Students at MIT, 17 March Memorandum from Associate Dean Wick to Dean Wadleigh:
The MIT Women’s Sailing Team has a distinguished record in that it won the 1966 New England Intercollegiate Women’s championship and was undefeated throughout the fall season. . . . Because of their demonstrated activity in athletics and their need for assistance and a structure within which to schedule meets, the question of admitting women students to the MIT Athletic Association was discussed at a meeting of the Athletic Board. Their membership was approved by the Athletic Association in February 1967.

Women’s crew is also admitted to membership in the Athletic Association. But women are not yet permitted in the Varsity Club. MIT views the women’s Varsity Sailing team as having officially begun in 1969 with the Athletic Department funding of a women’s coach, Stu Nelson — a decision strongly influenced by Emily [7].

Later in the year women’s sailing and crew are designated “Varsity teams” retroactive to 1963, all other women’s sports considered “club sports.”

In 1970 ICYRA recognized NEWISA women’s nationals and set policies and procedures. Sailor Carole J. Bertozzi ’70 won the 1970 MIT Pewter Bowl Award.

In 1970 Emily wrote for the 1971 MIT President’s Report that

A high point in the history of M.I.T. women was reached when Kathy Jones ’71 and Maria Bozzuto ’73, members of the Women’s Varsity Sailing Team, received M.I.T.’s highest athletic award, the Straight T, at the Athletic Association’s Awards Banquet.

This was the first time that women were invited to the annual Awards Banquet! Jones won the 1971 MIT Pewter Bowl Award and Bozzuto won it in 1972.

MIT women won the 1971 ICYRA National Women’s Dinghy Championship.

Sea Change: Title IX

A tidal wave occurred for women’s sports (and all other educational activities involving federal funding) with the 23 June enactment of Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972:

No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.

Colleges and universities are not required to comply until 1978, but intense activity begins immediately. Title IX is strongly supported by the AIAW. Their early reaction to the legislation was the optimistic hope that women’s involvement in the administration, coaching, policy, and funding will increase and no longer be in the shadow of the NCAA male-dominated view of sports [4].

The NCAA fought the legislation ferociously with lobbying, influence, and lawsuits. The intensity of the attack is described in many sources, including [2], [4], [5], [10], [3]. The NCAA’s executive director Walter Byers states that Title IX signaled the “possible doom of intercollegiate sports,” and many argued that that doom includes what few women’s sports existed at the time. These tactics all fail, so the NCAA adapted an old industry strategy — it initiated efforts to take over governance of women’s sports rather than ignore or fight their existence. That will keep their power over policy, budgets, and personnel
intact while taking over the rapidly growing programs for women’s athletics. It also has the effect of putting the control of women’s sports in the hands of the largely male NCAA administration as well as replacing the stated goals of the AIAW goal placing student interests and education first with the NCAA’s goals of economic power and winning at any cost. The onslaught does not happen overnight, the NCAA will not win its until 1982.

MIT Ad Hoc Committee on the Role of Women Students at MIT

In 1972 MIT formally appointed an Ad Hoc Committee on the Role of Women Students at MIT, including many members of the Women’s Forum, a group of over one hundred members including students, faculty, and staff (including a few men). The committee produced a report by the end of spring\(^3\). The report included an “Athletic Report” which begins

There is one major problem that coed athletes at MIT encounter; they are often not taken seriously by the Athletic Department. This, however, is merely a reflection of the attitudes which pervade society in general with regards to women athletes. Rather than providing positive motivation, as for men, which involves tangible rewards, e.g., varsity letters and recognition, women athletes must overcome a negative social image, that is, one of being competitive and unfeminine.

The Committee made many recommendations, which unfortunately mostly led to more discussions and committees without solid changes for several years. An important exception was the extension of the Physical Education Requirement to women undergraduates, giving them equal priority of access to athletic resources.\(^4\) Another welcome result of the report was that the students on the Ad Hoc Committee on the Roll of Women won a Karl Taylor Compton Prize — “the highest award presented by the Institute to students and student organizations in recognition of excellent achievements in citizenship and devotion to the welfare of MIT.” The Ad Hoc Committee Compton Prize was used to fund the Emily Wick Trophy regatta, a women’s intercollegiate sailing event.

The MIT women’s varsity sailing team won the 1973 ICYRA National Women’s Dinghy Championship.

A Future for Women’s Sailing

In 29 May 1976 NEWISA and ICYRA agreed to merge NEWISA into NEISA and become a self governing committee for women’s sailing. At the MIT Sailing Pavillion the Women’s Intercollegiate Sailing Committee (WISC) is formed from NEWISA and its sister organizations “to encourage and promote women’s intercollegiate sailing.” The merger is

\(^3\)Role of Women Students at MIT; A report by The Ad Hoc Committee on the Role of Women students at MIT, July 1972. MIT Archives, AC-22, Box 3.

\(^4\)“Historical Outline of Women’s Athletics at MIT,” Dottie Bowe, unpublished manuscript in MIT Archives.
accomplished by ICYRA direction in 1978. So unlike the NCAA, the governing organization of intercollegiate sailing managed to incorporate both women-only and coeducational sailing, bringing into the historical women’s sailing organizations, with whom it had cooperating in the background during the years of NCAA dominance. But the NCAA was not done.

The Empire Strikes Back: 1980-1982

The NCAA fought back against Title IX by planning and implementing its own championships in women’s sports, developing competing programs to the those of the AIAW and its component and sister organizations. The NCAA offered incentives to institutions to join it rather than the AIAW, including free travel funds for women’s teams and free women’s memberships for institutions whose men’s teams joined the NCAA. The NCAA signed TV contracts to televise its own women’s teams’ championships on the same day as AIAW championships, costing the AIAW its primary financial source [4]. The NCAA dwarfed the AIAW, which could not survive the onslaught. The AIAW filed an antitrust suit, but lost because the judge did not believe that the NCAA was or threatened to be a monopoly. The AIAW collapsed financially in 1982 and the NCAA took over almost all intercollegiate men’s, women’s, and coeducational sports — the latter of which their were virtually none past sailing, rifle, and high diving. Carpenter and Acosta in [4] draw the sad conclusion on unintended consequences:

As the brief, ultimately sad history of the Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIWA) will show, a model of competitive but humane intercollegiate athletics once existed. Ironically, the NCAA demolished it in the wake of federal legislation intended to provide equity, including equity for women in sports.

Epilog

Sailing and the ICYRA (now known as the ICSA) remained independent, not directly governed by the NCAA. Unfortunately, they are still affected by rules agreed to by institutions belonging to the NCAA.
In 2018 the MIT women won the Emily Wick Trophy and the coeducational sailing team won the Morss Trophy for the first time since 1961.

Acknowledgements I am grateful to the MIT Museum and the Special Collections (aka Archives) and to the Mystic Seaport Museum Collections. Most of the images are from these collections. The details of the NCAA successful war on the AIUA draw heavily from Barnes and Scannell [2], Carpenter [4], Carter [5], and Bell [3]. Special thanks for discussions of women sailing at MIT to Antonia (Toni) Deutsch Schuman MIT ’58 and for editorial and content discussions with Bob Popadic, Class of 1964 Historian and Technique Photo Editor and Editor.

Bibliography

Bob Popadic, Editor in Chief, 12 May 2019.
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