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After participating in the Save the Bay swim, these girls were tired, but happy. They are, from left, Erin Brennan, Caitlin Crawford, Alexa Mazur and Megan Hanrahan. Photo by Adrienne Downing

Rough water plagues Save the Bay swimmers

By Adrienne Downing

Wind may be a good thing for the sailors on the Narragansett Bay, but it proved to be the biggest challenge for Save the Bay swimmers on Saturday morning.

The 1.7-mile swim kicked off on time at 8:30 a.m. under clear, but cool and windy, skies. It was the 31st annual year for the event, which started at the Naval War College in Newport and ended at Potter's Cove in Jamestown.

Stuart Cromarty, of Foster, a 14-year veteran of the swim, was the first swimmer to exit the water with a time of 39:47. When asked about his swim, he replied, "It was rough, the wind was really making it difficult. The less experienced swimmers out there are going to have a real hard time."

Islander Caitlin Crawford, who was swimming for the first time, echoed the sentiment about the wind stirring up the water.

"The swim itself was not hard, but because of the wind I got caught up in a current and actually ended up going way out of my way. I got carried under the Newport Bridge," she said, adding, "It was hard to get my bearings because every time I looked up I got smacked in the face with a wave. I swallowed so much salt water that I felt sick."

Her past swimming experience

was limited, but she got the idea to do the swim after being sidelined from running with a torn tendon in March.

"She was doing a lot of cross-training in the pool and one day I saw her swim and told her I thought she could really move through the pool," her dad, Steve, said. "The idea just took off from there."

Crawford participated in the event with Alexa Mazur, islander Erin Brennan, and Megan Hanrahan, three of her teammates from the North Kingstown cross-country team.

Hanrahan was the kayak spotter for Crawford and Brennan spotted for Mazur.

"It was pretty tough in the kayak, too," Brennan said. "My arms are sore from paddling."

The girls were grateful to their kayakers, a requirement for anyone who has not previously completed the swim in under one hour, for keeping them going in the right direction.

"Meg stayed right with me the whole time. I could have reached out and touched her if I needed to," Crawford said.

Onne van der Wal, of Jamestown, also credited his spotter, islander Paul Cronin, with helping him post a 1:02:47 finishing time for the race.

"Paul is such a good waterman. He has a great understanding of the breeze and the current, so I really did not have to worry, I just had to follow him," van der Wal said. "I was able to put my head down and not pick it up the whole way across."

A competitive swimmer, water Swimmers continued on next page

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