

Nelson College for Girls crew studying up before setting sail for Australia

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LUZ ZUNIGA/FAIRFAX NZ

The Nelson College for Girls sailing team have qualified for an international regatta in Melbourne.

It is a still morning on Nelson Harbour and Tess van der Wel is inside the Nelson Yacht Club headquarters completing some homework.

She is not studying for an exam or doing research for a school project. She is reading through the rules of sailing ahead of the Interdominion Teams Racing Regatta in Melbourne, Australia.

"You've got to use the rules against the other team to let your team members through," she said, highlighting the importance of tactics and smarts on the water.



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Geo Schokking and Frankie Hickman out on the water.

So although it is a Sunday, the lack of wind gives her a chance to train the brain.

Tess is the captain of the Nelson College for Girls sailing team that is preparing for September's international regatta, having qualified after finishing as the second best girls team at the national championships.

The rest of the team are; Naomi Skerten, Rebecca Fleet, Geo Schokking, Silvie Arkless, Rosanna George and Frankie Hickman.



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The Nelson College for Girls team train every Sunday.

The format of the regatta will see NCG race in three two-person 420 dinghies against one opposing school at a time. The competition will be split into pools with teams aiming to progress through to the final.

The score is determined by the combined placings of each of the three boats in a scenario where one point is given for first place, two points for second and so on. The team with the lowest total score wins.

And although there might be two sailors in each boat, team-work and communication between all six is vital.



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The Nelson College for Girls sailing team practice out on the water.

"You might have a really good sailor who is out in front and going really fast but if they look over their shoulder and see two team-mates behind her, she will literally slow down, and in a worst case scenario you will actually turn around and use the right of way rules to hold the others up so your team members can catch up," explained Ruurd van der Wel, the commodore of the Nelson Bays Youth Teams Racing Association.

"And if you finish last, it doesn't matter, as long as the other two do very well."

This is why Tess was doing her homework on a Sunday morning!