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**Y2A BY ELLEN BIRRELL**

**Accomplishment:  
 ONE TASK AT A TIME**

*Youth2Adult – Y2A – is a series of articles celebrating sailing’s role in youth development for Caribbean children.*

According to 13-year-old Mia Nicolosi who just won the 24th International Optimist Regatta (IOR) held June 17th through 19th in St. Thomas, USVI, victory came out of her ability to focus on the task of building precise skills, moments on the water. This article could be written solely about the thrill of seeing a girl win in a male-dominated sport like sailing. The lesson here is more universal. It is a take-away for girls and boys alike. Mia states so well what it means to identify tasks and accomplish goals. To go far in life, a person needs to get beyond vague ideas and focus on specific goals and objectives and their associated tasks.

From Carol Bareuther’s press release on the 2016 IOR (see Regatta News, page 16): “At first, I didn’t focus on getting first,” says Nicolosi. “Instead, I paid more attention to the goals my coach wanted me to practice in preparation [for the upcoming Optimist World Championships]. Those were getting good pin-end starts, making strong gains on upwind legs and not getting covered on the downwinds so I could go faster. In the end, it was achieving these goals that helped me to win this regatta.”

While a good coach can assist a young sailor in reaching greater potential, it is the sailor’s ability to actively listen, take instruction and then stay focused on implementing the advice. After all, only “perfect” practice makes perfect.

Going out and sailing, sailing, sailing can be helpful in acquiring an affinity with boat and water, but sporting champions, or those who excel in any field, are the ones who develop an understanding and ability to identify core objectives and the related specific step-by-step tasks to get there. You could call those tasks the baby steps that take you where you want to end up.

Task: “Assigned piece of work often to be finished within a certain time. Something hard or unpleasant that has to be done.”



*Antiguan Omari Scott, Optimist Race Coach for the Coral Reef Yacht Club in Florida, advises: ‘set specific tasks for each practice and event’*

In a world of constant distraction — friends, mobile devices, TV, media, cars, cameras — it is easy to be pulled off task.

Antiguan Omari Scott, Optimist Race Coach for Coral Reef Yacht Club in Florida, says, “Just like in life, sailors, too, have to focus on specific tasks to accomplish the ultimate goal. To be successful, a sailor has to master the art of preparation, boat handling, boat speed and tactics. These all take time and the only way to master these skills is to set specific tasks for each practice and event. Setting specific tasks allows the sailor to focus on the task at hand. This will allow them the time and opportunity needed to perfect each skill in practice and in competition. Doing this enough will provide consistency and each skill will become second nature where it becomes a part of the sailor. Once all these skills are at that point, you will have yourself a near-perfect sailor.”

Setting your own tasks can be satisfying. Working with an instructor to set your goals and then identify associated objectives and how to accomplish them through day-to-day tasks is an exercise that will serve a person over the course of an entire lifetime. Whether it is setting an academic, work, career, inter-personal or family goal, the skill of seeing what you want and then working backwards by identifying objectives and tasks to get there makes all the difference. Statistics show that people who write down their goal are more likely to achieve it.

As of this writing, Mia Nicolosi managed an 81st-place finish out of the 255 Optimist World participants. Think of it, countries from around the world sent their best youth sailors, 255 in all, and Mia managed to beat two thirds of them! According to <http://optimistworlds2016.com/results>, the USVI produced five entrants and the BVI one (Rayne Duff), to represent the entire Caribbean region. We know there are other champions waiting to emerge in the Caribbean. Are you one of them?

Like an uphill path through dense forest or upwind course tacking against wind and current, taking baby steps (the tasks) seriously and methodically will get you where you want to go.

**Getting the Word Out**

The St. Lucia Yacht Club seeks a qualified instructor to lead its young Optimist and Laser sailors in its developing Youth Sailing Programme, which runs from early September 2016 through to July 2017. Position requires an energetic, enthusiastic and committed male or female who has experience and enjoys working with young sailors from ages seven to 18; has the racing experience to coach its few top Optimist and Laser racers for regional competition; and the maturity and knowledge to work with member volunteers to develop the sailing programme. With a fleet of Optimists, Lasers, Picos and one J/24, the programme is structured to provide opportunity for beginner, intermediate and racing-level sailing on weekends and weekday after school sessions.

Salary package includes monthly salary and accommodation allowance and return economy airfare.

The St. Lucia Yacht Club is located on Reduit Beach, Rodney Bay, St. Lucia. Apply to [lilybergasse@yahoo.com](mailto:lilybergasse@yahoo.com) or [sunkissedmocha@gmail.com](mailto:sunkissedmocha@gmail.com).

*Ellen Birrell attributes her opportunity to cruise the Caribbean aboard S/V Boldly Go to life skills built in childhood. Believing swimming and sailing are essentials for island youth, she supports grassroots and competitive junior sailing and serves as chair of sailing development for Caribbean Sailing Association (<http://caribbean-sailing.com/sailing-development/the-future-of-caribbean-sailing>).*