

ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

Smooth sailing to silver for Basil Katsivalis

By Andrew Soong
The Suburban

Former recluse and disabled sailor Basil Katsivalis captured silver at the AQVA's Quebec Cup this past month in Pointe Claire.

"Sailing is incredible and it's just like being on vacation," said the West Island resident about his first victory on the water.

"I was in shock and it was such a rush [when I realized that I won]."

Katsivalis' failed operation to control his Syringo Myelia (a degenerative spinal disorder) about a year ago not only confined him to a wheelchair, but almost confined him from living life. However, through his family and physiotherapy programs Katsivalis became inspired to use his wheel chair and eventually discovered the AQVA's disabled sailing program hosted in Pointe Claire. According Katsivalis' daughter he "started living again."

"I had a strong aversion to the chair, but my wife and kids got me out of my shell and I started getting out more often," said Katsivalis when he first



Basil Katsivalis in his first year of competition earned a silver medal at the adapted sailing championships.

realized that he had to use a wheel chair. "I gained a sense of freedom and the boats give me another sense of free-

dom."

Katsivalis quickly developed a keen sense of sailing earlier this year and was

catapulted into competing in the sport. Katsivalis can often be found on the water as many as four times per week. According to fellow sailor Doug Gilmore who started sailing at the same time, Katsivalis "is a good sailor."

"Basil has really thrown himself into the sport," said AQVA chief instructor Matt Palardy.

"He is a quick learner and was competing almost one month later with the top guys."

Katsivalis presently works in online marketing, but can still be found sailing throughout the week at the Pointe Claire Yacht club where the main chapter of AQVA.

The AQVA has been in operation at the club since 1996 providing equipment for disabled sailors including the Martin 16 that incorporates the Autohelm. According to Katsivalis "it would be awesome to do this full time."

"I hope to do more competitions in the future," said Katsivalis about his newfound love and competition in sailing.

"I started living again from a recluse to travelling and then sailing." ■