



Feisty survivor: Meg Morgan is an original member of the Ascot Radiology Pink Dragons.



Water action: The Ascot Radiology Pink Dragons compete on the Waitemata Harbour.

Dragonboaters in the pink for nationals

By Rebecca Rassie

Breast cancer isn't the only thing Remuera's Meg Morgan and her other Ascot Radiology Pink Dragons can beat.

This weekend is the New Zealand national dragonboating championships, held on the Blue Lakes near Rotorua.

The 20 women of the Pink Dragons have all survived breast cancer and are on a mission to bring home gold.

The team was formed in 2005 and trains twice a week at Westhaven Marina.

Mrs Morgan, an original member of the squad, says the women have more in common than just beating a disease.

"You've got to be feisty to survive in this team.

"Training is a hard workout, concentrating on stamina, strength and speed. "We've all got to be pulling as a team. You can't be an individual," she says.

The Pink Dragons are all working women with families to look after as well as team commitments.

They paddle to support each other, stay healthy and make others aware of the benefits of being active after surviving breast cancer.

After coming second by less than half a second at the Auckland dragonboat regatta at Lake Pupuke this month, the team is determined to win the nationals.

Team coach Supu Perese

also trains the Epsom Girls Grammar team, and says he pushes the Pink Dragons just as hard.

"They're just as capable and aren't going to let cancer bring them down.

"I give them the work and they dig deep and give me even more. They want to celebrate life," he says.

The team's sponsors, such as Ascot Radiology, make training and racing possible.

Expenses like travel, ac-

commodation, competition entries, uniforms and boat costs all add up to make dragonboating a pricey sport.

Team member Paula Sheahan, owner of Hammerheads Restaurant and Bar, is proud that her Okahu Bay venue is an original sponsor of the Pink Dragons.

"We started off just as a group walking in the Domain and then we talked about getting a

team together," she says. Hammerheads provided the initial funds so the team could lease a boat and enter their first competitions.

Mrs Sheahan says now the team's ambition is to go to the 2010 International Petersborough Dragonboat Festival in Canada.

Hammerheads is holding a dinner and auction in July to help raise money for the trip.

—Rebecca Rassie is an AUT journalism student

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