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New doc ‘Mighty Mary’ celebrates groundbreaking, all-female crew who made America’s Cup history

By [Matt Juul](#) Globe Staff, Updated September 4, 2026, 6:00 a.m.



Marci Porter Lucier in “Mighty Mary.” RICHARD SCHULTZ/COURTESY OF 50 EGGS FILMS

The [America’s Cup](#) has long tested the wits and mettle of the sailing world’s elite, with many top skippers and their yacht crews, backed by wealthy benefactors, braving the high seas over the years in hopes of taking home the coveted “Auld Mug.” But in America’s Cup history, which dates back to the launch of the event in 1851, few teams have left a mark quite like the crew of the Mighty Mary.

The new documentary “Mighty Mary,” from Massachusetts-based filmmaker [Mary Mazzio](#) and opening in area AMC theaters on Sept. 11, explores the underdog story behind the first all-women’s team to compete in the prestigious yacht racing event, in 1995. Narrated by Hugh Jackman and [Pittsfield native Elizabeth Banks](#), the film recounts how the history-making crew was assembled, as well as the many twists and turns that ensued in their pursuit of the oldest trophy still actively up for grabs in international sports.

Calling their story “a piece of history that has kind of been forgotten,” Mazzio was excited to bring the Mighty Mary crew’s groundbreaking journey to the big screen.

“These women were take-no-prisoners, like just extraordinary strength of character *and* strength of personality,” Mazzio told the Globe in a Zoom interview.

After winning the America’s Cup in 1992, billionaire sailing enthusiast Bill Koch decided to rock the boat in a major way, announcing his intent to field an all-women crew, composed largely of newcomers to the sport, to go after the title in 1995. While the decision was viewed with skepticism at the time, Koch’s team proved to be formidable, even beating “Mr. America’s Cup” himself, the legendary Dennis Conner and his Stars & Stripes squad, during a key and controversial race. Despite losing to Mighty Mary, a backroom deal between Conner and Koch led to Stars & Stripes also making it to the final round of a selection tournament to decide which team would ultimately defend the America’s Cup. Mighty Mary ended up losing in the finals, but nonetheless paved the way for women in yacht racing.

“This [film] has been on my bucket list for quite some time,” Mazzio said.



Amy Baltzell COURTESY OF 50 EGGS FILMS

The filmmaker noted that several members of the Mighty Mary crew also competed at the 1992 Olympics, and had trained and lived in Boston. Mazzio, a rower and member of the 1992 US Olympic team as well, even competed with some of them, like fellow Bay Stater, Olympic rower Amy Baltzell.

“You got this kind of big Boston contingent go from the Games in Barcelona and jump aboard Mighty Mary,” Mazzio explained. “I, of course, heard about this story even before I became a filmmaker, and I remember thinking at the time, ‘Holy Jesus, this is a murder mystery, with the twists and turns and the unexpected challenges of this campaign.’”

“This is a first, a professional team of women going toe-to-toe against professional teams of men on the same plane, no handicap, no short course,” she added. “That’s like an NHL team going up against a women’s professional team, right? It’s a historical first in many different ways, and really groundbreaking for its time.”

Mazzio had originally hoped to spotlight Dawn Riley, a key member of the Mighty Mary crew who was also part of Koch’s 1992 America’s Cup-winning team, as part of her 2002 film “Apple Pie” about athletes and their mothers, which aired on ESPN (Mazzio met NBA Hall of Famer Grant Hill while working on the project, and he serves as an executive producer on “Mighty Mary”). However, she was told by ESPN to cut Riley’s segment due to time constraints, but promised the sailing pioneer that she’d make it up to her.

“She was so unhappy with me, and I said, ‘Dawn I’m so sorry. ... I will be back,’” Mazzio said. “It took a while, but we’re back!”

To help tell this story, Mazzio utilized a dual narration style, with Banks and Jackman’s lines bouncing off of each other throughout the film. The filmmaker utilized a similar approach on her 2024 film “Bad River,” about a Native American community in Wisconsin. For that project, Boston-born actor Edward Norton served as the “voice of the pipeline and colonialism,” according to Mazzio, while Quannah ChasingHorse “was the voice of Native resistance.”

Despite the two narrator tactic working “so spectacularly well” on “Bad River,” “Mazzio originally planned to use just one narrator for “Mighty Mary.” That was until she started interviewing many of the male competitors who faced the Mighty Mary crew during their America’s Cup run. The filmmaker was taken aback by how honest and often poignant their reflections were, as well as their enthusiasm to participate in the project.

“The things that they said during their interviews completely changed the movie, completely changed where this documentary was going,” Mazzio admitted before paraphrasing what one of the men says in the film: “‘As men of goodwill ... we need to move away from what our fathers taught us and lean into what our sons are learning.’”

“To hear that articulated today, where we are as a country, is such a beautiful sentiment,” she added, saying later in the conversation, “When you can have that full 360, where the men are also celebrating this, that is something I think that’s really special for the time that we’re in.”



From left: director Mary Mazzio, director of photography Peter Levy, and AC Andrew Jeric on location in Oyster Bay. COURTESY OF 50 EGGS FILMS

Praising Banks and Jackman for how “they played off each other so well,” Mazzio thought having both a man and woman providing narration would work well for this story, “especially with the twists and turns.” Both stars also serve as executive producers on the film.

Noting Banks’s history of supporting women’s sports as a co-owner of Boston Legacy FC, Mazzio said she had a blast working with the Bay State star, and even got to be in the booth with Banks as she recorded her lines.

“At one point, she improvised and said something, and I burst out laughing. She turned to me, she’s like, ‘Mary?’” Mazzio said. She then apologized to the star for stepping on her lines. “I said, ‘You’ve got to forgive me.’ So she was wonderful.”

Jackman, meanwhile, was a perfect fit for the project, according to Mazzio, given his history with sailing (it’s a big deal in his native Australia) and the fact that he owns a professional team. The filmmaker, an Olympic rower whose daughter is also an Olympian, says she got Jackman laughing while offering to help the actor improve his performance on the rowing machine, as he’s an avid rowing fanatic who often posts his workout results on social media.

Mazzio says that “Mighty Mary” arrives at a time where “we’re seeing a regression culturally,” in some ways, pointing to how girls are often put into certain boxes thanks to the “omnipresence of social media.” However, it’s also a moment where “interest in women’s sports is cresting,” as she put it, providing opportunities to tell inspiring stories like these.

“This film is all about defying what might seem impossible,” said Mazzio.

“*Mighty Mary*” opens in theaters Sept. 11.