



The *Manu Ula* crew races toward the finish line in the 2016 Na Wahine O Ke Kai.
Photo by Twain Newhart.

Na Wahine O Ke Kai: "It Doesn't Hurt, You Love This"

By Natasha Haine



Finishing second in this year's Na Wahine O Ke Kai race were: Jennifer Rammes, Jennifer Fratzke, Natasha Haine, Shannon O'Neill, Angela Dolan, Britta Bourne, Mary Smolenski, Tracy Phillips, Amy Lawson Woodward, Kahala Schneider.



ABOVE: The OCC women were thrilled to be treated to a glass of champagne and lunch after they returned to the Club after the race: Tracy Phillips, Amy Lawson Woodward, Jennifer Rammes, Mary Smolenski, Natasha Haine, Angela Dolan, Kahala Schneider, Britta Bourne, Jennifer Fratzke. Not pictured: Jennifer O'Neill.



RIGHT: Britta Bourne and Natasha Haine have a hug for Britta's mom, Katy, who was on OCC's winning Na Wahine crews in 1984 and 1985 with Natasha's mom, Sandra Stanley Haine, and Tracy Phillips.

We got 10 years older on September 25. That's in six-man Molokai years.

When you tally up the Molokai channel crossings of our team: coach Tracy Phillips, 31 (she won Na Wahine with my mom in 1984 and 1985); Mary Smolenski, 25; Jen Rammes, 9; Angie Dolan, 4; Amy Lawson Woodward, 3; Britta Bourne, Jennifer Fratzke and me, 2; and Kahala Schneider and Shannon O'Neill, 1; we are 80 years young.

And not to get all mathematical, but if you delete the outliers that's an average of three years of experience apiece, going up against an all-star team with far more years of combined experience and incredible ocean knowledge and wins under their belt.

With States and last year's Molokai being cancelled we really had no idea how we would hold up against the other teams, especially with our new stroke. We started the distance season off strong with two second place finishes, but still behind Team Bradley, closing the gap each race. So with confidence, we set our sights on first place and off we went.

Winning would have been amazing but third would have been devastating for us, and losing to coach Johnny Puakea's "other girls", Team Dana Point, was not an option.

To get through these races I believe that lying to yourself is critical to success. I tell myself no matter what the conditions are it is only a five hour race, a quick flight to California, so I was actually quite surprised to find out that we had pushed past six hours: 6:11:46 to be exact to Team Bradley's 6:05:34 first place finish.

I had some injuries I had been going to physical therapy for, so I kept telling myself if a football player can play with broken bones, you can paddle through your pain, "it doesn't hurt, you love this."

I attribute part of my success to being on "Ins' Amy" Lawson Woodward's escort team, as she works to accomplish her life bucket list goal of crossing the Molokai Channel on every

man powered vessel. Together in the past two years I have watched her do five channel crossings (non six-man), insane right? I have learned that it is possible, that the island really does get bigger, that you can push through mental and physical pain, and if she could do it so could I.

The actual crossing had sloshy water, but it was breezy with cloud coverage, amen. It's really all I hope for when race day comes. Some people ask for waves, I ask for rain, clouds and wind. Heat management is a huge priority for me, as us Haines' are a hot bunch, so before each change I stuff my hat with ice so it can melt down my head as I paddle. Amy has another approach you can ask her about.

Angie's husband, Pat Dolan, showed up on his surfski, watching him wind off to keep up with us made me laugh since we were working so hard just to move forward, but his calm words of encouragement were so appreciated. Everyone out there with us, Jimmy Austin, Bill Pratt, Pam Davis, our coaches, our parents, our past and present teammates, all motivated us to get to that finish line. It really does take a village.

Our Outrigger men's crew and family and friends were there waiting for us, as we rolled up on shore at Duke Kahanamoku Beach with our unique tan lines from all the tape holding our bodies together, muscle soreness, sea sickness and tears of joy. We did it...again, and for the first time for two of our girls and two in our Koa.

My team told me I could only write this piece if I told the truth and openly admitted that I am obsessed with paddling and I actually enjoy racing. I think I am, really just now, admitting that to myself and coming to terms with the fact that I have already thought about Molokai 2017 and that winning this thing with these amazing women is possible.

Sometimes it is hard to admit you love something that requires so much time, energy and hard work. But when you think about it, the love for it has to be the only reason you keep doing it. So there it is folks, I love paddling, I think.

Koa Crew Wins Division Gold in 2016 Na Wahine O Ke Kai

By Malia Boyd



OCC's *Kaina* crew included: Maggie Parks, Possie Badham, Malia Gacutan, Marie Martel, Colleen Hall, Jennifer Kilpatrick, Malia Boyd, Karin Hansen Del Rey, Hilary Denison, Paula Crabb.



Steerswomen Malia Gacutan and Paula Crabb, relax at the Club after the race.



The *Kaina* crew won the Koa Division.

As the Molokai morning sun broke orange and pink into the eyes of the women in Outrigger's Koa crew in Hale O Lono Harbor, optimism dawned with it. They had been preparing for this moment since December 2015, when coaches Johnny Puakea and Tracy Phillips introduced a new stroke modeled on the Tahitian men's stroke.

Those long months of effort had come down to this day, the 38th Annual Na Wahine O Ke Kai. The women felt hungry and ready as they heaved their koa canoe, *Kaina*, onto their shoulders and walked her to the water.

At first glance, these 10 women were not a slam dunk to win their division: eight of them were over 40. Two of them had never crossed the channel before. Their relief steerswoman Malia Gacutan, at 17 years old, was not even old enough to vote; while their main steerswoman Paula Crabb was just a year short of being able to qualify for all sorts of, shall we say, age-related discounts. And some viewed their canoe as only the *second* best for the job (*Leilani* was in the shop).

Yet as the women would find that season, and that day in particular, there is no accounting for the strange and wonderful alchemy that often makes a crew and a boat so much more than the sum of its parts.

Unlike the previous year when towering surf and howling winds cancelled the race, 2016's channel was to be benevolent: three to six foot swells, favorable trades and a good tide. Yet Mother Nature wasn't in the mood to comply with the forecast: poor surf and a preternaturally strong current near Oahu lead to a significantly longer and more difficult crossing than predicted. While the winning crew crossed in just over six hours, the final crew took a muscle-munching 8:36 to pass the line.

Yet the lucky ladies of the *Kaina* had a few secret weapons to aid them for the grueling second half of that race, not the least of which was steersman Crabb, a Molokai champion who had raced in all but three of the Na Wahines ever held.

Her intrinsic feel for what was right in the channel, dovetailed well with the GPS technology in the escort boat being analyzed by AnnMarie Mizuno and Liz Perry, who also served as the crew's tough but loving race coach. Rounding out the escort power trio was Tom McTigue, an expert driver who gave long drops, occasional sled rides, and comic relief.

But the surprise asset ended up being the youngest paddler, Gacutan; she started the race then followed it with the first double; she sat in every single seat over the course of the race, and she steered her pieces with aplomb.

However, as anyone will tell you, one or two paddlers and great coaches do not an undefeated crew make. For that, you need 10 women just as interested in harmonizing with each other as with the ocean; just as committed to their collective well-being as their collective wins, and just as open to having endless aloha for each other as they do for their sport. And this year, the OCC Women's Koa crew was lucky enough to have all of that.