

WOMEN'S CANOE RACING

Outrigger Continues Tradition of Excellence

By Genie Kincaid



Outrigger III pulls away from Molokai's Laau Point and heads for Oahu. From bow to stern, Anne Rosa, Tiara Salassa, Annmarie Mizuno, Keala Kilcoyne, Darcy Iams, Wendy Wichman.

The Kakina crew was proud to finish 15th overall and first in koa. Front: Vaima Philpotts, Meleana Carr, Lisa Livingston. Back: Laurie Lawson, Kendra Epstein, Erika Eberhart, Genie Kincaid, Lisa Irish, Jen Bossert and Kristin Lee.

Outrigger's women saved their best effort of the season for the last race. It took the entire summer to adjust to changes in the personnel, with some veteran paddlers taking a break or moving on to other clubs, or getting new talent up to speed.

Throughout the regatta season, other local clubs challenged Outrigger in every sprint event making it clear that Outrigger's women had their work cut out for them in preparation for the Molokai race. And the races leading up to the 41-mile Na Wahine O Ke Kai race, considered the world championship of women's long-distance outrigger canoe paddling, were compressed into three demanding weeks.

One week after the Dad Center race, three crews headed to Kona to race iron in the 18 mile Queen Liliuokalani Races, where Outrigger placed 8th, 9th and 27th out of the 126 women's crews entered.

The crew of Mary Smolenski, Traci Phillips, Megan Clark, Erika Eberhart, Jen Thayer, and Malia Kamisugi won the Koa Division in the Kaoloa with a time of 2:16:45. Team Bradley won the race in a time of 2:08:02, followed by Kai Opua and Waikiki Beach Boys.

Hot on the Kaoloa crew's line was the masters crew of Genie Kincaid, Jen Bossert, Laurie Lawson, Lisa Livingston, Paula Crabb and Kisi Haine. Crossing in a time of 2:17:48, Outrigger won the Iron Masters Division. Not far behind was the crew of Jane Stevens, Kendra Epstein, Meleana Carr, Vaima Philpotts, Lisa Irish and Kristin Lee finishing in a solid 2:24:36.

The following weekend the women were home for the 32 mile E Lau Hoe race, which started from Maunaloa Bay in Hawaii Kai to Nanakuli Beach Park. In the past, the race was run from Magic Island to Pokai Bay, but the new course presented a much more favorable line. Team Bradley again won, and was followed by Hui Lanakila and Waikiki Beach Boys.

Outrigger 1 finished 4th in 4:24:08 and acknowledged committing small, but fixable, mistakes. The crew included Crabb, Clark, Eberhart, Haine, Kamisugi, Phillips, Smolenski, Stevens, Thayer, and Nicole Pedersen.

Outrigger 2 got another chance to race in the *Kakina* and was fast enough to win the Koa Division. The crew of Bossert, Carr, Epstein, Irish, Kincaid, Lawson, Lee, Livingston, Philpotts, and Anne Rosa finished 10th overall in 4:53:24.

At the beginning of the summer, head coach, Ian Forester, envisioned having a crew where newcomers to the women's program could gain experience. With the support of Liz Perry to coach and nurture this group, a third crew finished the E Lau Hoe race in 5:23:56.

Except for veterans Wendy Wichman, Pam Davis, and Annmarie Mizuno, the crew consisted of Outrigger neophytes, Keala Kilcoyne, Aimee Grace, Darcy Iams, Nani Loui, Tiare Salassa, and Tiffany Sutherland. Katy Bourne, a three-time Molokai champion for Outrigger, literally ran off her Hana Relay team, flew back to Oahu, and rounded out the crew.

On September 26, Outrigger entered three (of the 72) crews in the 27th annual Na Wahine O Ke Kai race across the Kaiwi Channel from Molokai to Oahu. Outrigger I, runner-up for the previous two years, finished 3rd in 6:03:18, behind Team Bradley and Hui Lanakila.

The malia conditions of light winds and a glassy ocean made for a slow crossing. Still, it was the strongest showing for the women who saved their best race for last, making no mistakes and having paddled with heart. And notably, since the inception of the Na Wahine in 1979, the women have consistently placed in the top five spots.

Outrigger II ensured that *Kakina* stayed golden throughout the 2005 distance racing season by winning the Koa Division in 6:34:58, and placing 15th overall. It was the first Molokai crossing for two crew members, Eberhart and Philpotts, and only the second for the crew's youngest member, Carr.

For the crew, racing the *Kakina* was simply an honor and privilege. Through the years, Outrigger Canoe Club has been on the forefront of outrigger canoe racing not just in terms of competitive excellence, but from the standpoint of perpetuating Hawaiian culture through the current use of its koa canoes.

Kakina was originally crafted in 1937, and has undergone a number of modernizing transformations at the expert hands of such master craftsmen as George Perry, Joe Quigg, and Domie Gose to keep her seaworthy.

Outrigger III finished 47th overall in a time of 7:12:49. Of the ten girls, seven made their first crossing, including Aimee Grace and Tiffany Sutherland who practiced with the crew for less than a



Collecting their third place trophies were OCC I crewmates: Malia Kamisugi, Kisi Haine, Jen Thayer, Megan Clark, Traci Phillips, Jane Stevens, Mary Smolenski, Kanesa Duncan, Paula Crabb and Nicole Pedersen.

month. The experience ranged from, "I'm so excited, I never thought I'd get a chance to cross the Molokai Channel" to "Take me home, I'm never doing this again."

For others, like Punahou teacher, Darcy Iams, it was a chance to race for the red and white. For each of them, it was a chance to be a part of that tradition of excellence that is Outrigger Canoe Club.

Outrigger's women of the sea could not accomplish anything in this exacting sport without the moral and logistical support of the Outrigger ohana, including the Board of Directors, Jen Bossert and the Canoe Racing Committee, the Club's staff and employees, and every Club member.

A heartfelt mahalo must go to their partners in the Club's canoe racing program, Coach John Puakea and the men of the upper division, for their cheers, beers, and barbecues - thanks for keeping it fun.

Finally, special mahalo to Robi Solmssen, Billy Philpotts, Tom McTigue, Chris Kincaid, and Michele St. John for their invaluable support from the escort boats.

Outrigger I

3rd Overall

Henry Keawe Ayau

6:03:18

Kisi Haine, Mary Smolenski, Traci Phillips, Malia Kamisugi, Megan Clark, Paula Crabb, Kanesa Duncan, Jennifer Thayer Binney, Jane Stevens, Nicole Wilcox Pedersen

Outrigger II

1st in Koa

Kakina

6:34:58

Kristin Lee, Jenifer Bossert, Meleana Carr, Erika Eberhart, Kendra Epstein, Lisa Irish, Genie Kincaid, Laurie Lawson, Lisa Livingston, Vaima Philpotts

Outrigger III

47th Overall

Kainalu

7:12:49

Wendy Wichman, Pam Davis, Aimee Grace, Darcy Iams, Keala Kilcoyne, Nani Loui, Anmarie Mizuno, Anne Rosa, Tiare Salassa, Tiffany Sutherland