

# OCC Finishes Second in Na Wahine O Ke Kai

By Steve Scott

Forty-three crews lines up on the starting line for the 1993 Na Wahine O Ke Kai Molokai to Oahu canoe race on September 26. With hundreds of hours of training behind them, the Outrigger was one of three crews having a legitimate chance of being the first to finish.

The day prior to the race was spent preparing the canoe and mentally getting ready. Everyone knew the race would be tough, especially with the weather being so uncooperative.

Our favored trade winds had disappeared and had been replaced with the dreaded variables, which meant mostly southerly winds.

Our canoe, Iwalani, was chosen with the idea there would be trades and an ocean to work during the race. The conditions would not be that, but the women were ready for anything.

In our meeting the night prior to the race, I told the women that if the conditions stayed calm and the ocean flat, it would take a record crossing to win the race. This proved to not be too far off the mark.

Race morning started as usual: up at 4:30 if you slept at all, a few bites to eat, and then off to Hale O Lono. The best part of this is the ride to Lono, with the sun coming up over Molokai Ranch turning the sky red and orange.

After the opening ceremony, the starting crew of Traci Phillips, Donna Kahakui, Katy Bourne, Sara Ackerman, Malia Kamisugi and Kisi Haine, paddled to the starting line, positioned about in the middle with our competition closer to shore.

At the gun, the Outrigger canoe jumped to an early lead, but this would not last. After five minutes, Surfers Paradise had pulled even and Offshore started to pull ahead.

At Laau Point, Offshore was in the lead by about five boats, with Outrigger and Surfers Paradise side by side.

The next three hours were uneventful with the ocean so calm. The balance of the crew, Nicole Wilcox, Kaili Chun, Cathy Ho, Diana Clifford, Mary Smolenski and Lisa Livingston, came in with excellent



Outrigger's crew included Traci Phillips, Malia Kamisugi, Coach Steve Scott, Donna Kahakui, Sara Ackerman, Cathy Ho, Lisa Livingston, Kaili Chun, Katy Bourne and Kisi Haine. Not pictured: Diana Clifford, Mary Smolenski and Nicole Wilcox.

changes and paddled as well as the starters to keep us in the race.

Offshore was in the lead to the south of the Outrigger, about a minute plus ahead, and Surfers was directly behind us by one and a half minutes.

Then, the southerly winds came up, just to make the race interesting. This means the swell comes from the ama side, and the canoe becomes very tippy.

Just to prove this, the Outrigger canoe flipped over and Surfers Paradise came up on our tail fast. By the time the canoe was righted and we started paddling, we were only 15 seconds ahead of Surfers and our four seat was still bailing.

One minute and thirty seconds of our lead was gone, and we were now in a battle for second place.

Fortunately, the Outrigger women responded to the challenge and took the lead back up to 45 seconds, only to almost flip again. The best thing to do at that point was to stop the canoe and add a weight to the ama, which Kala Judd was able to do very quickly.

Now, the canoe was stable and the women could concentrate on paddling, a job they would have to do since Surfers had closed on us again.

Just prior to flipping, Outrigger had been closing on Offshore in the

sloppy conditions, but now the battle for second place was one that we did not want to lose.

Our race was for the inside line as we passed Koko Head, trying to catch the incoming tide headed for Diamond Head. We stayed ahead of the Australians and were able to cover their line to the finish.

The only excitement was squeaking over a wave at Diamond Head, Kisi's preferred line, and then we were at the finish line.

This Molokai to Oahu canoe race was not won by Outrigger, but it was certainly not for the lack of training and preparation. If you haven't been a part of it, it's hard to appreciate the effort that goes into racing at this level.

Unlike Offshore and Surfers Paradise Australia, who can select all star crews from around the world, the Outrigger competes with the best using the members that we have.

The Outrigger women paddlers should be congratulated for what they have accomplished this year, and it wouldn't hurt to tell them so.

Editor's Note: Offshore won the race in 5:47:53. Outrigger finished second in 5:54:17 and Surfers Paradise was third in 5:55:34. OCC was second in fiberglass and was the first Hawaii canoe to finish. ☺