

Healani's upset bid falls short

Hui Nalu paddles back

By Andy Yamaguchi

Advertiser Sports Writer

Healani Canoe Club found life in the fast lane yesterday, but it wasn't enough to stop Hui Nalu from powering its way to the team title at the Hawaiian Canoe Racing Association state championship regatta at Kaneohe Bay.

Hui Nalu, which earlier won the Oahu HCRA crown, came from 13 points back with just four events left to snuff Healani's hopes for an upset.

Hui Nalu is now an enormous favorite to complete the hat trick — Oahu, state and all-state titles — at today's combined state championships with the Hui Wa'a and Surfing Association.

Today's regatta is at the same time, same place — 9 a.m. off the Kaneohe Marine Corps Air Station. Spectators should enter through the main gate and follow directions to the beach.

Hui Nalu had to put on a furious kick to overtake Healani and score 55 points. Healani, which went scoreless through the last four events, finished second with 52 points while defending champion Outrigger was a surprisingly out-of-it third with 37 points.

Big Island champ Kai Opua scored 26 points to edge Hanalei and Lanikai, both with 25, for fourth place. Kailua followed in seventh place with 19 points and Waikiki Surf Club was next with 11.

Healani is a solid club but, during the regular season, was by no means in the same league as Hui Nalu and Outrigger. It's like comparing the Chicago Bears to the Pittsburgh Steelers.

So more than a few eyebrows were raised when Healani won three straight races and took leads of 20-9 and 34-22 over Hui Nalu early in the regatta. Even more astonishing was that Outrigger had all but disappeared, scoring but five points in the first 10 events.

Then a clue. People started to notice that, in the first 14 events, the winning canoe always was in lanes one through six (there were 12 lanes). In nine of those 14 events, the winner was assigned either lane one or two. Indeed, Healani piled up four victories while paddling in lanes one, three, one and one.

Race director Mel Kalahiki called an early lunch break while the quarter-mile lanes were re-measured.

Lane one, it was found, was just "six to eight feet" longer than lane 12, Kalahiki said. "That's within our tolerance," he said.

So the games went on, but not without the suspicion that *something* was odd.

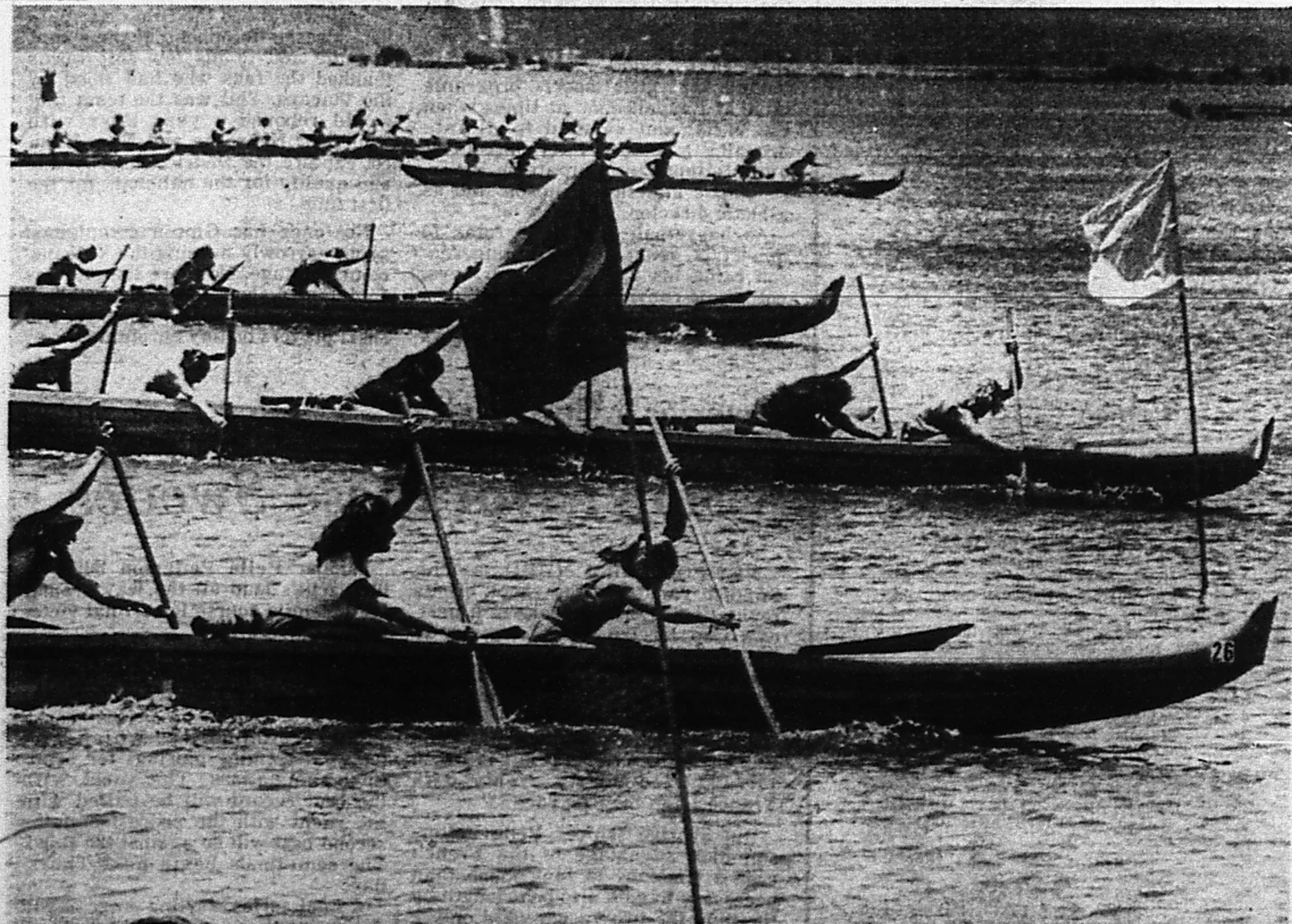
"Guys that won Oahu (HCRA title) weren't even qualifying today, that's what got me thinking," said Hui Nalu coach Kala Kukea. "What was surprising was that Outrigger wasn't winning, and they had a lot of these lanes," he said, pointing to the area around lane nine.

Healani coach Gary "Sword" Murakami thought lane one was a better lane, but not because of its alleged shortness. "I think it's deader on this side (next to the pier) so it's easier paddling. When you're out in the bay you've got to fight the currents."

Whether it was a short course, currents or just an "on" day for Healani, Murakami's club led Hui Nalu 52-39 with just four events left.

Then Healani dried up while Hui Nalu placed second in the junior men's event, won senior women, placed second in the boys' 18 (delayed because of a false start) and, for insurance, finished fourth in senior men.

The senior women's victory — by Lanakila and Nalani Spencer, Christie Gibson, Ann Schumaker, Carol Kukea and Lita Blankenfeld — was the big win for Hui Nalu.



Advertiser photo by Greg Yamamoto

It's a photo finish with Terri Ako and Linda Brown in the Kai Opua canoe (foreground) paddling hard to help edge Healani in the sophomore women's event.

miscellany

Canoe racing

HAWAIIAN CANOE RACING ASSOCIATION State Championships at Kaneohe Bay MEN

Senior — 1, Outrigger 15:27.2, 2, Kai Opua 15:39.4, 3, Kihel 15:49.0, 4, Hui Nalu 16:01.0. Junior — 1, Hanalei 12:11.8, 2, Hui Nalu 12:16.4, 3, Koolau 12:17.3, 4, Outrigger 12:20.9. Masters — 1, Healani 3:59.8, 2, Kailua 4:08.5, 3, Waikiki Surf 4:09.0, 4, Hui Nalu 4:10.2. Open 4 — 1, Hui Nalu 4:14.0, 2, Waikiki Surf 4:22.2, 3, Lahaina 4:27.4, 4, Leeward Kai 4:23.5. Sophomore — 1, Makaha 7:43.4, 2, Outrigger 7:44.8, 3, Hui Nalu 7:48.4, 4, Hui Lanakila 7:50.7. Freshman — 1, Outrigger 7:43.6, 2, Hui Nalu 7:52.5, 3, Kihel 7:58.0, 4, Kamehameha 8:00.5. 18-under — 1, Outrigger 8:01.7, 2, Hui Nalu 8:05.3, 3, Kai Opua 8:10.5, 4, Molokai 8:11.6. 16-under — 1, Hui Nalu 3:52.6, 2, Hui Lanakila 3:56.5, 3, Healani 3:58.4, 4, Kahana 4:05.3. Novice A — 1, Healani 3:56.5, 2, Lanikai 3:57.9, 3, Hui Nalu 4:00.1, 4, Kamehameha 4:07.3. Novice B — 1, Lanikai 3:58.2, 2, Leeward Kai 3:59.1, 3, Kapa 4:00.7, 4, Outrigger 4:01.8. 14-under — 1, Healani 1:56.6, 2, Hana 1:59.7, 3, Outrigger 2:00.5, 4, Kailua 2:00.9. 13-under — 1, Healani 1:58.3, 2, Waikiki Surf 2:00.4, 3, Lanikai 2:00.7, 4, Hui Nalu 2:04.3. 12 A — 1, Hanalei 2:13.2, 2, Kailua 2:17.6, 3, Hui Nalu 2:19.0, 4, Kai Opua 2:21.7. 12 B — 1, Hui Nalu 2:16.7, 2, Kai Opua 2:18.4, 3, Healani 2:20.8, 4, Hana 2:21.3.

WOMEN

Senior — 1, Hui Nalu 8:41.8, 2, Warriors 9:04.6, 3, Kai Opua 9:06.9, 4, Outrigger 9:11.5. Junior — 1, Healani 4:35.3, 2, Hui Nalu 4:38.6, 3, Kailua 4:41.8, 4, Kihel 4:44.2. Masters — 1, Outrigger 2:17.7, 2, Kailua 2:18.1, 3, Hui Nalu 2:18.4, 4, Lanikai 2:20.7. Sophomore — 1, Kai Opua 4:41.6, 2, Healani 4:44.0, 3, Warriors 4:47.1, 4, Kailua 4:49.4. Freshman — 1, Kai Opua 4:38.3, 2, Healani 4:38.7, 3, Kailua 4:40.5, 4, Lanikai 4:42.5. 17-under — 1, Na Kai Ewalu 4:29.8, 2, Hanalei 4:43.4, 3, Kai Opua 4:44.1, 4, Outrigger 4:49.2. 15-under — 1, Hanalei 2:12.3, 2, Outrigger 2:17.0, 3, Waikiki Surf 2:18.1, 4, Lanikai 2:20.1. Novice A — 1, Hui Nalu 2:11.3, 2, Kailua 2:15.4, 3, Healani 2:15.8, 4, Warriors 2:16.0. 13-under — 1, Healani 2:20.2, 2, Makaha 2:20.7, 3, Lanikai 2:21.8, 4, Koolau 2:22.1. Novice B — 1, Healani 2:11.8, 2, Lanikai 2:15.5, 3, Koolau 2:16.1, 4, Waikiki Surf 2:16.8. 12-under — 1, Hanalei 1:17.8, 2, Kahana 2:20.6, 3, Hana 2:21.4, 4, Hui Nalu 2:28.9.

MIXED

Men-women — 1, Honolulu 4:18.9, 2, Outrigger 4:29.2, 3, Lanikai 4:35.8, 4, Kailua 4:38.0. Boys-girls — 1, Lanikai 2:26.1, 2, Healani 2:27.1, 3, Kihel 2:27.9, 4, Honolulu 2:30.2.

TEAM SCORING

1, Hui Nalu 55, 2, Healani 52, 3, Outrigger 37, 4, Kai Opua 26, 5 (tie), Hanalei and Lanikai, both 25, 7, Kailua 19, 8, Waikiki Surf 11, 9 (tie), Makaha, Hawaiian Warriors and Kihel, all 8, 12 (tie), Hana and Honolulu, both 4, 13 (tie), Koolau and Na Kai Ewalu, both 2, 14 (tie), Kahana 1, 15 (tie), Leeward Kai 1.