

Lokahi, Outrigger picked to win respective regattas

By Marshall Hughes
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There is one obvious favorite and a not-so-obvious one as Oahu's two canoe racing associations hold their championships this weekend at Keehi Lagoon.

Lokahi Canoe Club, undefeated in its AAA classification this year, looks to be an obvious pick to paddle away with the Na Ohana O Na Hui Wa'a Association regatta Saturday.

Outrigger Canoe Club, which has won but two of six Oahu Hawaiian Canoe Racing Association regattas this year, is the not-so-obvious choice in the OHCRA championships Sunday.

There is more at stake this weekend for the clubs than the pride of winning association championships. The top four finishers in each race of each regatta will advance to the state championships Aug. 6 at Keehi Lagoon.

Why is Outrigger favored, especially since the Kailua Canoe Club has won four regattas?

Experience, tradition and momentum, for openers.

Outrigger's two victories have come in the last two OHCRA regattas — a five-point win over Kailua last weekend in the John Kaupiko Regatta and a 40-point triumph on the Fourth of July Walter Mcfarlane Regatta in Waikiki.

"I don't think we've ever taken this race seriously," said Beanie Heen, Kailua assistant coach after the Mcfarlane race.

"We didn't train hard enough, we should have trained harder," Heen said after last week's 75-71 loss.

Heen spoke earlier this week

of how seriously Kailua is taking the OCHRA championships.

"If we don't win this weekend, we're in trouble ... we've had it," he said. "I think everybody is going to pull out all the stops this weekend, use all their people. You put your best where you think they are going to score points.

"It's going to be Outrigger and us ... us then Outrigger," he added. "I shouldn't say that (but) you've got to go in confidence."

Then there is the matter of Outrigger's four-year streak of state championships.

And what is Outrigger's motivation?

"The motivating factor is a lot of people would like to win a few regattas this season," said OCC coach Mike Fox, who seems cautious about saying anything that could put extra spark into Kailua's paddlers.

Healani and Hui Nalu are expected to battle for third as they have done for most of the year. Hui Nalu's best finish this year is a second in the Mcfarlane race.

Although Lokahi is undefeated in AAA (the classification for clubs entering 18 or more races), the club was outscored in one regatta this year.

In the Kahana Bay Regatta, held June 27, Ka Mo'i, a Class AA club, beat Lokahi, 54-47. The Kamehameha Canoe Club, another AA club, scored 44 points in that meet to nearly drop Lokahi to third.

To make things more interesting, Ka Mo'i is jumping to the AAA classification for this meet. Instead of running their usual

number of crews, they expect to race about 24 crews this week, which could make things uncomfortable for Lokahi.

Kamehameha and Ka Mo'i have outscored Manu O Ke Kai, the only other club to compete in the AAA classification this year, in four of seven races this year. Lokahi has beaten Manu O Ke Kai by an average of almost 20 points per regatta.

"In about 90 percent of our races from Novice A on up we're counting on everyone to get first or second ... if they don't make mistakes, get disqualified," said Lokahi head coach Mike Cushnie.