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Hui Lanakila finally goes the distance



Hui Lanakila paddlers, from left, Jessie Eames, Jodi Kono, Sera Eames, Katie Slocumb, Deborah Rosenblum, Gail Grabowsky and Vi Coito accepted the first-place trophy.

Deborah Booker • The Honolulu Advertiser

By [Dayton Morinaga](#)
Advertiser Staff Writer

The women of the Hui Lanakila Canoe Club are for real.

They proved it yesterday with a breakthrough victory in the Dad Center Long Distance Race for women.

Hui Lanakila completed the 24-mile course from Kailua Beach to the Outrigger Canoe Club in 3 hours, 20 minutes, 4.59 seconds. According to several veteran paddlers in the club, it is the first time the Hui Lanakila women have won a long-distance race.

"When you think about it, who is Hui Lanakila as far as all the top women's teams?" said Raven Aipa, coach of the Hui Lanakila women. "Nobody knew; we didn't even know because we hadn't shown anything yet. At least now we have an idea."

The Dad Center race is considered one of the preludes for the Sept. 26 Na Wahine O Ke Kai.

Michelle Arnold, who has been paddling with the club for seven years, said: "This is making club history for us. Like everybody else, our goal is still at the end of September. But it's still awesome to win this one. This is a special one."

It was also a close one.

Hawaiian Canoe Club, which was actually a crew of elite paddlers from four different islands, placed second by less than a half-second. Their official time was 3:20:04.95.

Outrigger was third in 3:20:12. Keahiakahoe was fourth in 3:26:48, and a second Outrigger crew was fifth in 3:27:49.

"I think it shows how good the field is," Aipa said. "Every race is going to be close because there are so many tough crews."

Hui Lanakila now has to be considered one of the tough ones.

Members of the winning crew were Arnold, Vi Coito, Jessie Eames, Sera Eames, Gail Grabowsky, Pauahi Ioane, Jodi Kono, Deborah Rosenblum, Katie Slocumb and Bernie Suafoa.

Hui Lanakila fared well during the recently completed regatta sprint season, but yesterday was its first test of the long-distance season.

"We didn't really know where we would stand," said Slocumb, who steered the winning canoe. "Sure, we did great in the regatta races, but distance is a totally different thing. So to get first really does a lot for our confidence."

Hui Lanakila and Outrigger battled for the lead throughout most of the race, and Hawaiian nearly sneaked past both with a strong finish.

Conditions were generally calm, so every wave provided a precious push. Aipa said Hui Lanakila took control with a strong run off Sandy Beach.

"We were on the inside, and that seemed to be faster," he said. "Outrigger was maybe only 50 yards outside of us, but it made a difference."

Hawaiian's new Sonny Bradley canoe got stuck on the reef off Kailua, forcing them to play catch up the entire race.

"That's never happened to me before," said Noe Auger, who steered the Hawaiian canoe. "We got left way back because of that, but we kept battling. We're happy we were able to make it that close at the end."

They caught Outrigger in the final 20 minutes of the race, then surfed up to Hui Lanakila's tail by catching a wave right before the finish line.

Because Hawaiian has five paddlers from O'ahu, three from Maui, one from the Big Island and one from Kaua'i, the crew does not practice together.

A masters 50-older crew from Lanikai got caught on the reef off Hawai'i Kai, and needed assistance from lifeguards. The canoe was pushed back to safety, and the crew resumed paddling. However, officials disqualified the crew for receiving outside assistance.

The annual race is held in honor of George "Dad" Center, a legendary swimming coach and waterman in Hawai'i during the 1920s and '30s.

All of the state's top male and female teams are expected to participate in the Queen Lili'uokalani Races this weekend at Kailua, Kona.

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Final results

Open

1, Hui Lanakila-2 (Michelle Arnold, Vi Coito, Jessie Eames, Sera Eames, Gail Grabowsky, Pauahi Ioane, Jodi Kono, Deborah Rosenblum, Katie Slocumb, Bernie Suafoa), 3:20:04.59. 2, Hawaiian, 3:20:04.95. 3, Outrigger Red, 3:20:12. 4, Keahiakahoe Red, 3:26:48. 5, Outrigger White, 3:27:49. 6, Hui Lanakila-1, 3:29:07. 7, Hui Nalu-II, 3:34:34. 8, Waikiki Beach Boys-I, 3:35:35. 9, Lokahi-1, 3:37:09. 10, Hui Nalu-I, 3:40:37. 11, Kailua-1, 3:43:05. 12, Healani Blue, 3:44:29. 13, Outrigger Blue, 3:45:36. 14, Hui Lanakila-3, 3:47:49. 15, Waikiki Surf Club, 3:49:52. 16, Lanikai-I, 3:52:52. 17, Keauhou, 3:55:13. 18, Waikiki Beach Boys-II, 3:56:39. 19, Lanikai-II, 3:57:37. 20, Hui Lanakila-4, 3:59:00. 21, Kailua-3, 3:59:09. 22, Lokahi-2, 3:59:09. 23, Keahiakahoe-Black, 4:02:23. 24, Koa Kai, 4:03:22. 25, Healani White, 4:06:17. 26, New Hope-3, 4:10:29. 27, I Mua, 4:11:23. 28, Ka Mamalahoe, 4:14:51. 29, New Hope-1, 4:18:00.

Masters 40-older

1, Kailua (Lisa Barney, Shari Broad, Kathy Erwin, Ann Farrell, Kalei Javellana, Donna Kohl, Ginger Lockette, Donna Meyer, Nina Pacewitz, Peggy Rupe) 3:39:19. 2, Niumalu, 3:41:53. 3, Waikiki Yacht Club, 4:01:49. 4, New Hope-2, 4:02:12. 5, Lanikai, 4:06:26. 6, Waikiki Yacht Club, 4:14:52.

Youth 16-18

1, Hui Lanakila (Kelsi Campos, Leahy Frias, Jasmin Heimuli, Jayna Kaponu, Kaipo Martinez, Kauai Martinez, Melissa Matsuda, Kanoe Naauao-Kipapa, Faren Salis, Amanda Snodgrass), 4:02:38.

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