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Hawaiian finishes with win, record

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After an expected slow start, the Hawaiian Canoe Club paddled to an unexpected record time to win the Dad Center Long Distance Race for women yesterday.

Hawaiian completed the 25-mile course from Kailua Beach to Kaimana Beach in 2 hours, 55 minutes, 48 seconds. It was two minutes faster than the previous best time set by Outrigger in 1996.

"We didn't come into this race expecting to win," crew member Lauren Spalding said. "We kind of wanted to use this race as a training run since we don't really practice together. We just wanted to have a good day together, but we ended up winning so it was a really good day."

Forty-four female teams participated in the race, which is considered one of the prelude races for the Na Wahine O Ke Kai on Sept. 25.



Despite not practicing together, paddlers from O'ahu, Maui, Kaua'i and the Big Island paddled as the Hawaiian Canoe Club yesterday and won the Dad Center Long Distance Race for women in a record time of 2 hours, 55 minutes, 48 seconds.

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Members of the winning crew were Spalding, Noe Auger, Cherisse Keli'i, Dane Ward, Theresa Felgate, Margie Kawaiaea, Jenni Horner, Darcy Gray, Alesa Kneubuhl and Kelly Fey.

Although the crew registered under Hawaiian's club name, it actually featured five paddlers from Maui, two from O'ahu, two from Kaua'i and one from the Big Island.

Because the paddlers reside on different islands, they did not practice together before yesterday. The last time they were together in a canoe was when they finished third at last year's Na Wahine O Ke Kai.

"We never get to paddle together that much, so we're still working through the quirks," said Auger, who steered the canoe.

What's more, the crew paddled a new canoe recently completed by Sonny Bradley. "I'm still trying to figure out how to steer it," Auger said.

Perhaps because they were trying to figure out the canoe — and one another — Hawaiian fell behind early in the race.

Lanakila Outrigger of Redondo Beach, Calif., and the Waikiki Beach Boys were the early leaders.

"We were in first for the first 30 minutes and that was incredible," Lanakila captain Jill Schooler said. "We didn't expect to be ahead at all."

Hawaiian caught the leaders off Waimanalo Beach and slowly increased the lead after that.

"We pushed ahead and they never caught us, but they never went away," Auger said. "They were right there, breathing down our backs."

Crew member Keli'i added: "We don't paddle together like the other clubs that are centered every single day. But paddling with the talent we have, it feels good when it starts to click."

Lanakila finished second in 2:57:33, and the Waikiki Beach Boys were third in 2:58:02.

Last year's winner, Hui Lanakila, was fourth in 2:58:30, and host Outrigger was fifth in 2:59:54.

The times were exceptionally fast, considering there were only small waves along the course.

"We like the (wave) bumps, and there wasn't much out there, so for us to do what we did is great," Auger said.

Lanakila turned in perhaps the most surprising performance of the day with its runner-up finish. After crossing the finish line, the paddlers stood up in the canoe and celebrated with screams and hugs.

"It's always challenging to come over and everybody already knows the course, everybody knows their own water — they're all dialed in and we're guessing a little bit," Schooler said. "We kind of wanted to do this as a precursor for Moloka'i. We're gunning for a big Moloka'i race this year, so we're really excited."

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

All the top men's and women's teams in the state are expected to participate in the Queen Liliu'okalani Canoe Races this weekend at Kailua, Kona.

TOP FINISHERS

Open: 1, Hawaiian-II (Lauren Spalding, Noe Auger, Cherisse Keli'i, Dane Ward, Theresa Felgate, Margie Kawaiaea, Jenni Horner, Darcy Gray, Alesa Kneubuhl, Kelly Fey), 2:55:48. 2, Lanakila, 2:57:33. 3, Waikiki Beach Boys-I, 2:58:02. 4, Hui Lanakila Blue, 2:58:30. 5, Outrigger Red, 2:59:54. 6, Hui Nalu-I, 3:07:56. 7, Kailua-I, 3:09:42. 8, Lae Ula O Kai, 3:10:30. 9, Hui Lanakila White, 3:12:50. 10, Lokahi, 3:13:23. 11, Waikiki Beach Boys-II, 3:13:44. 12, Hawaiian-I, 3:15:34. 13, Niumalu, 3:15:43. 14, Kailua-4, 3:16:23. 15, Healani-I, 3:16:28. 16, Lanikai-I, 3:18:56. 17, Hui Lanakila Yellow, 3:21:06. 18, Healani-II, 3:21:08. 19, Kailua-II, 3:23:58. 20, 'Anuenue, 3:24:19.

Masters 40-older: 1, Niumalu (Laola Lake, Cindy Grover, Katy Bourne, Deb Robison, Jill Dawrs, Margie Goodno, Laurie Denton, Mary Jo Gumbert, Mary Jo Bye, Vanessa Weiss), 3:20:04. 2, Kailua, 3:21:29. 3, Healani-III, 3:38:35.

Masters 50-older: 1, Lanikai (Judy Allen, Mauiola Aspelund, Renee Conner, Libby Dingeldein, Darrylann Ferreira, Sue Garner, Kristine Giannasio, Margaret Lefton, Pam Monahan, Gail Quitevis, Joy Schoenecker, Lani Twomey), 3:46:40.

Koa canoe: 1, Outrigger (Kristin Lee, Meleana Carr, Genie Kincaid, Lisa Livingston, Jane Stevens, Jennifer Bossert, Erika Eberhart, Annie Rosa, Tiare Finney, Viama Philpotts), 3:21:36.

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