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## Outrigger stuns Kai 'Opua

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As far as upsets go in the sport of canoe paddling, this one was huge.

Outrigger Canoe Club won the Dad Center Long Distance Race for Women yesterday, upending the powerful Kai 'Opua Canoe Club from the Big Island.

Relying on experience and a fast inside course, Outrigger completed the 24-mile race from Kailua Beach to the Outrigger Canoe Club, Waikiki, in 3 hours, 29 minutes, 25 seconds.

Kai 'Opua was second at 3:30:44, followed by Team Eyecatcher (3:34:29), Hui Nalu (3:35:56) and Kailua (3:45:35).

"I think everybody looks at Kai 'Opua as being untouchable, and with good reason," said Bret Chuckovich, the Outrigger women's coach. "They've kicked everybody's butts the last two years. So this is a huge surprise for us. I don't think anybody could have expected this."

Indeed, the Kai 'Opua women had not lost a race in Hawai'i in two years. The club from Kailua, Kona, is the two-time defending Na Wahine O Ke Kai champion, and nine of the 10 paddlers from last year's championship team returned this year.

"Before this race, we were hoping to be in the top five, maybe top three," said Kisi Haine, who steered the Outrigger crew. "This is a total surprise, it really is."

Members of the winning Outrigger crew: Haine, Katy Bourne, Kelsey Buell, Paula Crabb, Karin Hansen, Jen Horner, Malia Kamisugi, Lisa Livingston, Mary Smolenski and Jen Thayer.

Seven of those 10 paddlers are actually eligible for the masters division (for paddlers age 35 and older).

"This is not a young crew by any means," Chuckovich said. "But experience plays a big role in this sport, and that's what we have. They're all team players — they realize they have to work together to make it work. That comes with experience."

That experience paid dividends during a brief stretch of the race off Makapu'u. Up to that point, Outrigger trailed Kai 'Opua by about 200 yards.



Outrigger finished the 24-mile Dad Center Long Distance Race for Women in 3 hours, 29 minutes, 25 seconds.

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With the tide pushing out and waves of 2 to 3 feet crashing in, the ocean off Makapu'u swirled like a washing machine. Kai 'Opua got stuck in the middle of it.

"Unfortunately, they paid the price for being in the lead," said Walter Guild, who guided the Outrigger escort boat. "We had the advantage of seeing what was happening to them and we decided not to follow."

Instead, Outrigger sneaked inside and paddled close to shore, where the water was more calm. Haine said jokingly that the Outrigger canoe came so close to the rocks that "we were picking opihi."

The maneuver proved to be the difference in the race.

"It was pretty exciting," Smolenski said. "Things just started to click for us and we could see that we were moving past (Kai 'Opua) pretty quick."

Jackie Taylor, who steered the Kai 'Opua canoe, said: "It was horrible. We were going this way and that way, getting tossed around. One minute we had the lead, then we looked up and saw (Outrigger) scooting right on by us on the inside. It happened that quick."

By the time Kai 'Opua made it out of the sloppy water, Outrigger held a 200-yard lead.

Outrigger maintained the advantage the rest of the way by surfing along the waves they normally practice on.

"Kisi (Haine) knows the water over there and she kept us going," Smolenski said. "But we have so much respect for (Kai 'Opua), we were nervous the whole way."

In any case, the Outrigger victory proved that Kai 'Opua is not invincible.

"That's a good thing," Taylor said. "This puts a little fire under our butts. This means we have to go home and train even harder ... I hate that."

Team Eyecatcher's third-place finish was impressive considering it was the first time this year that the crew was paddling together. The team is comprised of elite paddlers from Maui, Kaua'i and O'ahu.

Waikiki Surf Club placed 15th overall at 4:06:28, and won the masters 35-and-older division. Kailua won the masters 45-and-older division in 4:32:44.

The race was open only to all-female crews. Each team was allowed to use 10 paddlers — six in the canoe at a time, and four available for relief changes. Thirty-five crews completed the race.

## **Final results**

Open: 1, Outrigger-I (Katy Bourne, Kelsey Buell, Paula Crabb, Kisi Haine, Karin Hansen, Jen Horner, Malia Kamisugi, Lisa Livingston, Mary Smolenski, Jen Thayer), 3:29:25. 2, Kai 'Opua, 3:30:44. 3, Team Eyecatcher, 3:34:29. 4, Hui Nalu-I, 3:35:56. 5, Kailua-I, 3:45:35. 6, Kaiola, 3:47:04. 7, Lokahi-I, 3:48:16. 8, Lae Ula O Kai, 3:49:37. 9, Healani Blue, 3:58:32. 10, Hui Nalu-II, 3:59:50. 11, Waikiki Beach Boys-I, 4:01:03. 12, Outrigger-II, 4:02:23. 13, Hawaiian, 4:03:25. 14, Hui Lanakila, 4:05:58. 15, Lanikai White, 4:07:32. 16, Healani Red, 4:09:08. 17, Waikiki Beach Boys-II, 4:09:15. 18, Lanikai-A, 4:09:36. 19, Kahakai, 4:12:46. 20, Kailua-II, 4:14:06. 21, Waikiki Surf Club, 4:16:51. 22, Healani White, 4:22:58. 23, Waikiki Yacht Club-II, 4:23:34. 24, New Hope, 4:25:06. 25, Lanikai-B, 4:30:41. 26, Lokahi-II, 4:31:50. 27, Hui Nalu-III, 4:34:55. 28, 'Anuenue-I, 4:36:35. 29, 'Anuenue-II, 4:39:17. 30, Waikiki Yacht Club-I, 4:57:09.

Masters 35-older: 1, Waikiki Surf Club Masters (Lei Marks, Konia Freitas, Niulii Heine, Giovanna Aguilera, Lenora Alama, Kalei Javellana, Cathy Kam-Ho, Sue Garner, Arlene Reventas, Kuumea Gora), 4:06:28. 2, Lanikai Masters, 4:07:08. 3, Outrigger-III, 4:28:48.

Masters 45-older: 1, Kailua-III (Mary Martin, Sarah Jane Watson, Amy Crews, Lynn Woehrle, Molly Mosher-Cates, Linda Shea, Lurlene McGregor, Peggy Spencer, Lynn Kaita, Carole McLean), 4:32:44. 2, Waikiki Yacht Club-III, 4:53:51.