

HCRA title returns to Maui

By [Christie Wilson](#)

Star Advertiser

POSTED: 1:30 a.m. HST, Aug 7, 2011



CHRISTIE WILSON / CWILSON@STARADVERTISER.COM

Members of Kahului's Hawaiian Canoe Club celebrated Saturday after claiming their ninth title in the past 11 years, and first in three years.

LAHAINA » The Hawaiian Canoe Racing Association returned to Maui for the state championships Saturday and so did the crown, as Kahului's Hawaiian Canoe Club claimed its ninth title in 11 years.

The Maui club had seen its string of eight state championships end in 2009 when Lanikai of the Oahu Hawaiian Canoe Racing Association edged Hawaiian for the title, and then repeated as champion in 2010.

This time, Hawaiian came out on top in convincing fashion, capturing six golds and a slew of other medals throughout the day at Hanakaoo Beach. The club finished atop the AAAA division with 366 points, followed by Lanikai with 307 and Kailua with 293.

Keauhou was the overall AAA division winner, Puna Canoe Club grabbed the AA title, and Na Kai Ewalu was the top A division club.

Lanikai head coach Jimmy Bruhn said he was not surprised at Hawaiian's resurgence.

"I always expected them to do well. I told our guys that Hawaiian had a down year last year and that they would come back strong this year. You cannot keep a good club down," he said.

Hawaiian entered the regatta with crews in 37 of the 39 races, and Lanikai was only one short of that, but the Windward Oahu club had to scratch two races Saturday when paddlers became unavailable.

Even still, Lanikai racked up seven gold medals, including in the 1-mile boys 18 race. The club was second at the halfway turn to Leeward Kai, which had beaten its Lanikai rivals in all but one race during the OHCRA regatta season.

"We had a good start, a good turn and we just pumped each other up coming back," said Kalai Stern, a member of Lanikai's winning boys 18 crew.

Other crew members were Matt Mench, Cheyne Mench, Derek Ruebenstahl, Walker Smith and Cole Caster.

Hawaiian followed the usual script throughout the keiki division races, which it has traditionally dominated. HCC crews medaled in nine of the 11 races the Maui club entered, and it would have won another silver in the boys 15 if the crew hadn't been disqualified for burying its flag at the quarter-mile turn. As it was, Hawaiian took gold in boys 12, girls 14, boys 14 and girls 16, along with four second-place finishes and a third.

"It was a great start to our day. We couldn't ask for anything more, from the little ones to the teens, they all did so well," said Hawaiian keiki coach Paul Luuwai.

Hawaiian wrote in some plot twists in the adult division, winning gold from the women's novice A and mixed 40 races, silver in mixed novice B, freshman men and freshman women and bronze in the women's open four to maintain its big lead in overall points.

Lanikai surged with wins for its freshman and junior men and senior masters men's and women's crews.

But the clincher for Hawaiian came when the Maui club pulled out an easy victory in the mixed 40s after a blazing start, with only three races left in the day. The HCC winning crew was Bruce and Cathy Uu, George Dagan, Rory Frampton, Theresa Gerry and Trez Harrison — all but Harrison paddling with Hawaiian since they were keiki.

Head coach Diane Ho said the Maui club had extra incentive to reclaim the state title, as the Valley Isle was hosting the championships.

"This is Maui and we tried to show the best we could be — because it's Maui, it's home," she said.

Spirits were high throughout the day in the Hawaiian tent, as Tahitian drummers pounded out a beat to pull HCC paddlers to the finish line.

"That kind of energy was created when we won the first race we entered and it took off from there," Ho said. "No one wanted to drop the ball."

Hui Wa'a's Waikiki Beach Boys pulled off what is believed to be the first sweep of the top women's races, using two crews to easily win the freshman, sophomore, junior and senior contests.

The senior women's crew of Raye Powell, Jen Polcer, Laura Birse, Rachel Bruntsch, Kaui Pelekane and Frances Lichowski beat Hui Lanakila by 13 seconds after having also won the sophomore race.

"We had a slight lead going into the half-mile turn, but we lost ground and we had to work hard to open the gap on the way back," Pelekane said.

Lindsey Shank, Dana Gorecki, Alexia Lopez, Eko Lapp, Andrea Messer and Shien-Lu Stokesbary contributed to the sweep by winning the freshman and junior races.

The club's women's coach Sean Monahan — a member of the Honolulu Fire Department's search and rescue team — had to work and couldn't make the trip to see his crews make history.

Waikiki Beach Boys has had success before with its women's program, but not to this extent.

"It was a lot of hard training and the girls stepped it up. Our goal was to come and win all four," Pelekane said.

Maui's Wailea senior men's crew members, who double as the elite Team Primo long-distance team, stroked to a comfortable 10-second win over previously unbeaten Lanikai in the mile and a half race. The team of Kai Bartlett, Jacob Abeytia, Tyson Kubo, Mael Carey, Felipe Gomes and Kekoa Cramer used the mile-long sophomore men's race as a warmup to the marquee event, also besting Lanikai in that race.

