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Big Island dominates small field

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Big Island clubs came up big in the smaller divisions of the Hawaiian Canoe Racing Association State Championship Regatta yesterday at Ke'ehi Lagoon.

Kai 'Opua, Keauhou and Kawaihae all took home first-place trophies for winning their respective divisions.

"We had record turnouts for our regattas this year, and that's in the face of higher fuel charges," said Jonathan Grayson, president of the Big Island's Moku O Hawai'i Outrigger Canoe Racing Association. "Some clubs have to travel 200 miles just to get to a regatta on our island. So to see it pay off with a performance like this is definitely pleasing."

Next year's state championship regatta will be held at Hilo Bay, and Grayson said he would like at least one Big Island club to try to challenge the state's biggest clubs in the AAAA Division.

AAA DIVISION

Kai 'Opua won the AAA Division, which was for clubs with 13 to 20 crews.

It won three races — boys 14, boys 16 and men novice A — and scored 165 points.

Puna — also from the Big Island — placed second with 160. Puna was one of several clubs penalized for a false start, and that cost it a first-place trophy.

Puna lost six points after it was disqualified in the mixed open-6 race, which was the 37th race of the day.

Kai 'Opua was the Big Island champion, and Puna also placed second to Kai 'Opua during the regular season.

Waikiki Beach Boys placed third with 145 points behind a strong showing from its women paddlers.

Most impressive, Waikiki Beach Boys won the women's novice B race for the sixth consecutive year. Members of the crew were Michelle Abraminko, Joan Bennet, Jenny Lutz, Annette Porter, Nicolette Rowe and Kathryn Stanaway.

What's impressive about the streak is paddlers can compete in the novice B division for only one year. In essence, the Waikiki Beach Boys have won that race six years in a row with six entirely different crews.

Waikiki Beach Boys also placed an extremely close second to Hui Lanakila in the prestigious women's senior race.

Hui Lanakila completed the 1 1/2-mile course in 12:23.06; Waikiki Beach Boys came in at 12:23.37.

AA DIVISION

Keauhou was perhaps the most efficient club of the entire regatta, winning six races while entering 12.

The AA Division was for clubs with seven to 12 crews, and Keauhou dominated with 151 points.

Keauhou won the women's junior, women's 60-older, women's 55-older, men's 50-older, mixed 55-older and mixed 40-older races.

"Our club is kind of built around the older paddlers," Keauhou athletic director Bill Armer said. "But we've grown significantly this year, especially with our women."

The six gold medals won by Keauhou was second only to Hawaiian's seven.

Kane'ohe placed second behind a strong performance from its youth paddlers. Kane'ohe scored 132 points, including 100 from its youth crews.

Keahiakahoe placed third with 116 points, and scored wins in the boys 18, men open-4 and mixed open-6 races.

A DIVISION

The A Division featured 34 clubs, and Big Island clubs took the top five places. The A Division was for clubs with six or fewer crews.

Kawaihae did not win a race, but scored 48 points to win the division.

Keoua was second, followed in order by Kamehameha (Hilo), Keaukaha and Hui Wa'a O Waiakea.

Kalihi Kai of O'ahu tied for sixth place and won the women's open-4 race.

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