

## In Women's Molokai Race

## Tahitians a Big Threat

By Catherine Enomoto  
Star-Bulletin Writer

A bevy of pareau-clad paddlers has hit Waikiki. Fifteen regional all-stars from Tahiti will represent that South Pacific nation for the first time in the "Na Wahine o ke Kai" Molokai-to-Oahu women's outrigger canoe race Sunday.

"This team is the best of all the islands to represent Tahiti," spokesman Pierre Kimitete said about the Ihilani Teva Tahiti crew. "For them it's gonna be the first time they came down to race. It's a big honor on their back to compete in Na Wahine. They came down for the race because they never once had a team of Tahiti girls; all these years the men have been coming (for the Molokai Ho'e). It will be one big challenge for them to come for the Na Wahine o ke Kai."

Ihilani Teva Tahiti joins a record field of 21 crews for the fifth 40.8-mile women's race traversing Kaiwi Channel.

"They just came as tourists to try to do it," Kimitete said, trying to temper any speculation that the Tahitian women represent contenders. "I think they don't like to tell they come to be first (finishers). It's better to be coming down to try as the first team from Tahiti."

KIMITETE, interpreting for

French-speaking Coach Star Teritahi, said the Tahitian competitors number 15, of which 12 will be chosen to race. They range in age from 20 to 45 years old with a 59-year-old paddler as honorary captain. They wield a tear-shaped blade and will use the koa canoe, Māheaa, which Tahitians have stationed in Kailua-Kona for the past 10 years.

"The Tahitians still keep their own stroke, using a long stroke like the Hawaiians have used all these years," Kimitete said of the club's traditional paddling style. "Only one thing have they improved—a faster stroke."

Ihilani Teva Tahiti crew members will churn 50-55 strokes per minute, Kimitete explained. This rate compares to the reported 72-78 strokes per minute by two-time winner Outrigger Canoe Club. OCC's demonic pace, if sustained across the channel, would be like a runner sprinting at a four-minute pace over a 26.2-mile marathon.

OUTRIGGER AND RIVAL Hui Nalu will clash in a "rubber match" Sunday. Nalu is two-time defending champion while OCC won the first two contests in 1979 and '81 (the '80 race was canceled due to rough conditions).

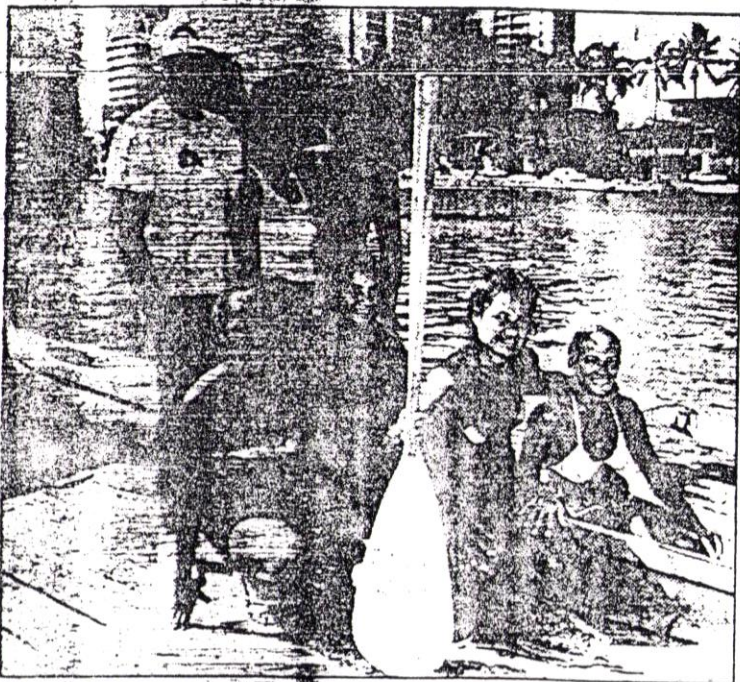
Outrigger appears to be the frontrunner for an unprecedented third victory and Na Wahine

bragging rights. OCC's Tom Conner has the Midas touch in the women's Molokai Channel race. The veteran paddler and kayaker coached the initial two Outrigger championship crews plus last year's first-place Nalu squad. Conner has returned to Outrigger and guided its women to a near sweep of the current long-distance season.

HOWEVER, THE FIELD features perennial contender, Off-shore of California, led by Olympic kayaker Sheila Conover; a surging Kailua Canoe Club, and three other first-time entrants besides Tahiti—Ka Moi of Waianae and Keokaha and Wailani canoe clubs of Hilo. They among others will attempt to displace the old guard.

Crews also represent Anuenue, Hanalei of Kauai, Hui Lanakila, Kai Opua of Kona, Kamehameha of Hilo, Lanikai, Lokahi, Molokai, Maui's Na Kai Ewalu and Napili, Waikiki Beach Boys and Waikiki Surf Club.

A flotilla of Hawaiian-style koa and fiberglass canoes will take off at 7 a.m. Sunday from Hale o Lono Harbor on Molokai. Twelve-woman crews will include six paddlers and six alternates. Race officials anticipate calm seas, which should favor non-Hawaii crews. The winner is expected to cross the finish line between 1-1:30 p.m. at Hilton Hawaiian Village pier.



**FEMMES DE TAHITI**—Coach Star Teritahi (left) shows off the starting six of Tahiti's first entry in the Molokai-to-Oahu women's canoe race set for Sunday. Tahitian all-stars are (left to right, back) Dolly Teritahi, Flores Manina; (front) Lydia Tematahotoa, Maruia Bernardino, Flores Apetahi, Emelyne Motet.—Star-Bulletin Photo by Ken Sakamoto.