

# Team Bradley repeats in Na Wahine race

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Team Bradley paddlers, from right, Lori Nakamura, Andrea Moller, Mahealani Botelho, Lauren Spalding, Kristen Foster and Noelani Sawyer crossed the finish line in Waikiki to win the Na Wahine O Ke Kai race on Sunday.

The legacy lives on.

Rose Lum helped make history in the first unofficial women's crossing of the Kaiwi Channel in 1975. That's when "Auntie Rosie" paddled with Onipaa, one of two 18-woman crews that completed the Molokai-to-Oahu crossing on that monumental day in October, nearly 38 years ago.

While Lum and her crewmates lost that race to Healani, the accomplishment resulted in a giant step toward gender equality in outrigger canoe paddling.

On Sunday, Lum had a front-row seat for the 35th annual Na Wahine O Ke Kai — the 41-mile women's paddling championship that stretched from Molokai's Hale O Lono Harbor to Waikiki's Duke Kahanamoku Beach. As one of the race's emcees, Lum sat at the finish line as her daughter Mahealani Botelho and fellow Team Bradley crew members claimed their eighth Na Wahine O Ke Kai title in nine years Sunday afternoon.

"Right now I want to cry — she's my baby, and seeing her carry on gives me great pride," said Lum. "I'm humbled that she's doing so well. But I'm a little angry at her for doing so much better than me!"

Lum went on to explain that she had a good reason for not paddling in the inaugural Na Wahine O Ke Kai in 1979 — she was pregnant with Mahealani.

"She's now a very integral part of this, and not only does she love the paddling, but she loves the people that embrace each other. That's what it's all about," Lum said. "To have her love paddling as much as I do, and maybe more, it's awesome."

The event is considered the world championship of outrigger canoe paddling, and featured 68 crews representing Hawaii, California, Australia, the United Kingdom, Tahiti and Japan. Team Bradley's victorious bunch crossed the line in 6 hours, 12 minutes, 23 seconds and fended off Waikiki Beach Boys-1 (6:19:46), Hui Nalu-Mike's Revolusun (6:32:23) — which claimed gold in the masters 40-plus division — and Hui Nalu-Gold (6:36:19).

The winning crew also featured Kristin Foster, Lauren Spalding, Andrea Moller, Noelani Sawyer-Auger, Alana Goo, Lori Nakamura, Claire Townsend, Nicole Pederson and Arlene Holzman.

"The conditions were hard today with a dropping tide, but it was a good day on the ocean nonetheless," said Botelho, who returned to the Na Wahine after taking last year off following the birth of her son. "I'm lucky that the girls stayed strong — they carried me around out there."

Team Bradley — an experienced group of paddlers hailing from Oahu, Maui and Kauai that bears the name of outrigger canoe maker Sonny Bradley — repeated as champions as it attempts to build another lengthy win streak similar to the six straight titles collected from 2005 to '10. The team holds the record in the event at 5:22:05, which it set in 2008.

"The number of times (we've won) really doesn't matter. It's more important that we're together and we did it," Botelho said after her eighth overall channel crossing. "It's amazing."

According to reports from officials on the water, Team Bradley — which braved rough, sloppy conditions to post a victorious mark of 6:14:47 last year — pulled ahead by a half-mile as the crew passed Koko Head. Paddlers took advantage of steady winds at their backs and calm seas

## NA WAHINE O KE KAI

*Hale O Lono, Molokai, to Duke Kahanamoku Beach, Oahu*

**Overall** — 1. Team Bradley, 6:12:23; 2. Waikiki Beach Boys-1, 6:19:46; 3. Hui Nalu-Mike Revolusun, 6:32:23.

**Koa** — 1. Offshore Outrigger, 7:09:17; 2. Lanikai, 7:33:48; 3. Kukui'ula, 7:34:51.

**Open Glass** — 1. Team Bradley, 6:12:23; 2. Waikiki Beach Boys-1, 6:19:46; 3. Hui Nalu-Gold, 6:36:19.

**Masters 40+** — 1. Hui Nalu-Mike Revolusun, 6:32:23; 2. Kai Opua-40's, 6:45:19; 3. Kailua-40 yellow, 6:57:14.

**Masters 50+** — 1. Team Aussie Aunties, 6:51:40; 2. Outrigger-50, 7:05:34; 3. Kailua-50, 7:15:08.

— a much different scene than the one created by near 25-foot waves that greeted competitors at the start of the 2012 race.

As paddlers passed Portlock just off Maunalua Bay in Hawaii Kai, crews were treated to larger "surfable" waves, which added an extra element of strategy down the race's home stretch.

Waikiki, the 2011 Na Wahine O Ke Kai champion and the only crew able to dethrone Team Bradley during its dynastic run, led from the start but could not stave off a steady rally by Team Bradley, which officials say advanced from as far back as fifth place.

"We were surfing a lot, connecting bumps left and right," said Waikiki's Chelsea Bizik, who noted the runner-up finish was her best in four career channel crossings. "We had an awesome start, and it was such a good experience. Dropping in on all those waves was a lot of fun, too."

Team Aussie Aunties (6:51:40) claimed the masters 50-plus division, while Offshore Outrigger (Calif.) took the koa canoe division in 7:09:17.