

PADDLING



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Lauren Bartlett and Cherrisse Kelii of Team Bradley were all smiles after yesterday's win.

Bradley sews up Na Wahine

The crew earns \$5,000 for winning the long-distance race

By Kyle Galdeira
Special to the Star-Bulletin

In what appears to be the beginning of a dynasty, Team Bradley won its second consecutive Na Wahine O Ke Kai Molokai to Oahu canoe race, an event that has become the world championship of women's long-distance outrigger canoe paddling.

The 28th edition of the 41-mile race from Hale O Lono Harbor, Molokai, to the beach fronting the Hilton Hawaiian Village in Waikiki got under way yesterday at 7:26 a.m. and featured 69 crews that included paddlers from Hawaii, Tahiti, Australia and California.

Team Bradley, which is named after canoe builder Sonny Bradley, who crafted and maintains the team's racing canoe, finished the race in 5 hours, 41 minutes and 37.7 seconds and also claimed the \$5,000 prize from race sponsor Anheuser-Busch. Hui Lanakila finished a close second (5:41:53.5), followed by the Waikiki Beach Boys (5:47:17.2), Venus Va'a Te Uira of Tahiti (5:57:46.9) and Outrigger Canoe Club (5:58:52.4).

"It's beautiful," said Mahealani Lum of Bradley. "It's an amazing honor. You feel proud and excited that you accomplished something that our parents and kupuna did before us."

While Bradley led the race from start to finish, Hui Lanakila made a push for the lead as the teams approached the point of Diamond Head. When Bradley took an inside route through Maunalua Bay fronting Hawaii Kai, Hui Lanakila countered by staying on an outside track in the open ocean and took advantage of some swells.

When the two crews' paths merged just after rounding Diamond Head, Hui Lanakila moved out to a slim advantage. But a wave pushed the crew slightly off course, allowing Bradley to regain the lead for good.

Making the victory even more memorable for Lum was the fact that her mother, Rosie Lum, a race director for the event, was present throughout the race on an escort boat and at the finish line announcing the race results. In 1975, the elder Lum, along with 17 other paddlers from the Waikiki Surf, Outrigger, Lanikai and Kailua canoe clubs, challenged an 18-woman crew from Healani Canoe Club in a race that became the first unofficial crossing between Molokai and Oahu by an all-female team.

"Every stroke, every change, that's all I thought about: who I'm doing it for," Mahealani said about carrying on the tradition started by her mother. "I'm doing it for my Mom, my kupuna, my family, and all the girls I paddle with. I've never paddled with such studs in my life. These girls are so amazing. They're all hammers and they've got minds of warriors."



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The crew of Team Bradley celebrated after crossing the finish line to win yesterday's race.

The other nine members of Bradley's victorious crew were: Kelly Fey and Denise Darval-Chang of Oahu; Lauren Bartlett, Theresa Felgate, Margie Kawaiaea and Dane Ward of Maui; Cherisse Kelii of the Big Island; Darcie Gray of Kauai; and Shelly Wilding-Oates of Australia.

According to Rosie Lum, paddlers faced relatively calm ocean conditions as they made their way across the Kaiwi Channel, one of the world's roughest spans of ocean. There was a small south swell that created "5-foot, rolling swells," which the crews attempted to ride as they maneuvered through the course. But according to Fey, Bradley's stoker, the ocean was a bit rougher than it looked.

"Most of the waves were sloppy and it was hard to drive off," Fey said. "It felt like the current was backing up the whole way, so we really had to work hard. We just kept it together and stayed calm. It feels awesome to be part of this crew."

The paddlers competed in three divisions: open (ages 18 and over), senior masters (40 and over) and golden masters (50 and over). The open division crews were allowed 10 paddlers, while the senior and golden masters crews were allowed 12 apiece. Throughout the race, the canoes were accompanied by an escort boat that carried the substitute crew members that were brought into the canoe in accordance with a particular coach's strategy.

The Hawaiian Kanaktion ran away with the senior masters crown, finishing in 6:05:56. North Shore (He'e Nalu) finished second (6:47:20.1) followed by Pu'uwai (6:48:00.6).

The golden masters title went to Kailua Wa'a Ka Maka'ala (6:26:46.4), which finished ahead of Keauhou (6:43:59.1) and Hawaiian Canoe Club (6:59:56.4).

As the paddlers made their way across the finish line, they were greeted by hundreds of supporters bearing flower leis and a throng of hula dancers performing on the beach. The Honolulu Fire Department's fireboat crew shot fountains of water into the air just beyond the buoy marking the race's final turn leading into shore.

The men will race the same course on Oct. 8 in the 54th edition of the Molokai Hoe. More than 1,000 paddlers are expected to take part in the race, which Lanikai won last year. It will be a global event, as crews from Tahiti, Japan, Singapore, Italy, Australia, California and Hawaii are expected to participate.

PADDLING

Na Wahine O Ke Kai

Hale O Lono to Duke Kahanamoku Beach

(40.6 miles)

OC-6

Masters 40-49--1. Hwn Kanaktion, 6:05:56.0; 2. North Shore, 6:47:20.1; 3. Puuwai 40's, 6:48:00.6; 4. Kawaihae 40, 6:53:59.8; 5. Imua, 6:55:16.5.

50-and-over--1. Kailua, 6:26:46.4; 2. Keauhou 50, 6:43:59.1; 3. Hawaiian CC 50, 6:59:56.4; 4. Puuwai 50, 7:04:13.9; 5. Lanikai 50, 7:04:45.8.

Koa open--1. Outrigger CC III, 6:47:25.7; 2. Puakea Foundation, 7:18:55.6.

Fiberglass open--1. Team Bradley, 5:41:37.7; 2. Hui Lanakila I, 5:41:53.5; 3. Waikiki Beachboys I, 5:47:17.2; 4. Venus, 5:57:46.9; 5. Outrigger CC I, 5:58:52.4; 6. Lanakila, 6:06:51.7; 7. Nui Nalu Black, 6:08:01.1; 8. Team West Hawaii, 6:10:22.9; 9. Hui Lanakila II, 6:13:02.2; 10. Niumalu Makani, 6:13:37.0; 11. Kai Opua II, 6:13:44.9; 12. Outrigger CC II, 6:14:12.4; 13. Na Molokama, 6:16:00.0; 14. Kaiola, 6:17:55.6; 15. Lanikai I, 6:18:33.9; 16. Kahana, 6:22:18.0; 17. Lanakila II, 6:23:16.4; 18. Laeula O Kai, 6:24:21.5; 19. Healani I, 6:27:26.7; 20. Waikiki Beachboys II, 6:27:28.6.