



Sports

Monday, September 25, 2000

CANOE PADDLING



By Ronen Zilberman, Star-Bulletin
Victory sinks in for members of the Kai Opua canoe club yesterday at the finish of the Bank of Hawaii Na Wahine O Ke Kai in Waikiki.

Big Isle paddlers prevail in channel race

The conditions between Molokai and Oahu were just right for the

Kai Opua team in the Na Wahine O Ke Kai

By Jason Genegabus
Special to the Star-Bulletin

Calm seas and light winds made the Bank of Hawaii Na Wahine O Ke Kai a grueling test of endurance and desire this year.x

While the desire to win was evident among all 62 crews, Kona's Kai Opua team showed its strength in flat ocean conditions, winning the 22nd annual crossing from Molokai to Oahu in 5 hours, 56 minutes and 45 seconds.

The victory was the first ever for a team from the Big Island and the second in eight years for a Hawaii-based club.

"We had really good water today," said Kai Opua member Jessie Eames. "That's our strength, the flat water. Our women are strong."



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Kai Opua's Patty and Jessie Eames walk
under an of arch of paddles at Duke Kahanamoku
Beach after winning the Na Wahine O Ke Kai.

Defending champion Wailua Kayak & Canoe steerswoman Noelani Sawyer agreed. "We do better with some wind. Hui Nalu does too," she said.

"But we were doing pretty well toward the end. We had a great race and had a lot of fun."

The Hui Nalu and Wailua teams kept the race interesting all day. Hui Nalu finished less than two minutes behind Kai Opuu, and the lead changed hands six times during the 41-mile crossing.

"Our steersman got us on just about anything there was to ride," said Hui Nalu member Tammy Kaneaiakala. "I think we paddled awesome. They went inside, we went outside, and they won."

"Everyone worked hard," she said. "I'm totally happy with our effort."

The calm ocean conditions didn't only help Kai Opuu. Although they finished about 30 minutes off the winning pace, Canada's Jericho Canoe Club felt right at home with the calm sea conditions.

"We're from Vancouver, so we're right on the ocean," said Jericho member Sabrina Schwanebeck. "It doesn't get quite as big (there), but this was actually pretty comparable."

"It was a great run. There's just a ton of great crews out here, so it was very challenging."

California's Hanohano led the finishers from out of state, completing the course in 6 hours, 18 minutes and 55 seconds. They held off the Lanakila Outrigger and Kai Elua teams to claim seventh place.

For some crews making the journey yesterday, just finishing the race was a considerable achievement.

Healani Canoe Club's novice team finished the race with 10 women who have just started paddling. Most have taken up the sport this year. But while they lack experience, their energy level helped carry them to Waikiki.

"It was unreal," said Healani member Sheryl Yamashiro. "All the girls have been together from day one. Everyone gave 200 percent."

"We wanted to finish it, and we did," she said.

Yamashiro's teammate Kelli Yamamoto agreed. "We really wanted to get back here. We were enthusiastic all the way."

The two also expressed an opinion shared by most of the 600-plus women who participated in yesterday's race.

When asked if it was worth making the trip and would they do it again, both women smiled.

"Oh yeah. More than likely, we'll be back," Yamashiro said.

PADDLING

2000 Na Wahine O Ke Kai

Outrigger Canoe Championship

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

Yesterday's final leaders, 41-miles

Open--1. Kai O Pua Kinaole, 5:56:45. 2. Nui Nalu Yellow, 5:58:25. 3. Wailua Kayak & Canoe Us Hawaiians, 6:03:19. 4. Outrigger Red, 6:06:10. 5. Kailua Blue, 6:09:56. 6. Lokahi Black, 6:14:30. 7. Honohano, 6:18:55. 8. Lanakila Outrigger, 6:19:12. 9. Kailua Gold, 6:21:43. 10. Santa Barbara, 6:23:29.

11. Newport Aquatics, 6:26:12. 12. Lae Ula O Ke Kai, 6:28:22. 13. Jerico, 6:28:35. 14. Kaiola I, 6:30:54. 15. Hui Nalu Blue, 6:32:29. 16. Lanikai I, 6:33:21. 17. Lokahi White, 6:37:01. 18. Waikiki Beach Boys I, 6:38:03. 19. Puna, 6:43:10. 20. Outrigger White, 6:43:41.

21. Hawaiian, 6:45:07. 22. Hui Lanakila, 6:49:46. 23. Kona Athletics, 6:50:45. 24. Raging Thunder, 6:51:34. 25. Nui Nalu Keawe O Hawaii, 6:52:37. 26. Dana Point Kai elua, 6:52:42. 27. Kaiola II, 6:56:15. 28. Anuenue, 6:57:25. 29. Waikiki Beach Boys II, 6:58:10. 30. Lanikai II, 6:58:30.

Master 35--1. Kai Elua, 6:21:22. 2. Newport Aquatic Center, 6:27:44. 3. Ho'Opili, 6:29:51. 4. Wailua Kayak & Canoe Punikaiwa, 6:35:13. 5. Hui Lanakila Kaholoaliwa'a, 6:40:27.

6. Sacramento Outrigger, 6:42:12. 7. North Shore, 6:47:53. 8. Keaukaha, 7:05:09. 9. Kihei I Ka Lewa, 7:10:58. 10. Kamehameha Oahu, 7:20:08.

Master 45--1. Kai O Pua, 6:39:32. 2. Kihei, 7:07:55. 3. Hui Nalu, 7:11:24. 4. Pupu O Hawaii, 7:15:30. 5. Waikiki Yacht Club Kaholonai'a, 7:29:28. 6. Waikoloa Kialoa Kou Po'okela, 7:30:11.

Koa--Kamehameha Hilo, 6:59:37.