



Sports

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CANOE PADDLING



By Kathryn Bender, Star-Bulletin

The Waimanalo Canoe Club put up a good fight, but couldn't keep Australia's Panamuna Rigaroos from celebrating a second consecutive victory in the Na Wahine O Ke Kai women's long-distance paddling race.

Australians make it two in a row

Panamuna Rigaroos edge Waimanalo wahine in world long-distance championship

By Catherine Toth
Special to the Star-Bulletin



Expectations were high for a Hawaii crew to win back the Na Wahine O Ke Kai title.

With 54 of the 67 crews hailing from the islands, Hawaii's chances appeared good.

Clubs toyed with lineups, mixing veterans with first-timers in an attempt to find a winning combination.

In the end, experience and teamwork allowed Australia's Panamuna Rigaroos to defend their title in the world championship of women's long-distance paddling.

"It's so fantastic," Rigaroos crew member Brooke Harris said. "It just proves to everybody that it wasn't a fluke last year and that we're a strong team who can do it again."

The crew, which has been together for three years and was competing in the Na Wahine for the third time, completed the 41-mile Molokai-to-Oahu race in five hours, 54 minutes, 26 seconds.



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*Australia's Panamuna Rigaroos celebrate their second
consecutive victory in the Na Wahine O Ke Kai.*

"It was quite favorable conditions," Harris said. "The swell was running with us and the wind was behind us as well. It's a big event for our team, and for Australia, to win an American event like this."

Waimanalo Canoe Club, comprised of 10 select paddlers from the state, and the Rigaroos constantly traded the lead across the Kaiwi Channel. Waimanalo, whose members were criticized for leaving their clubs, finished second at 5:56.15.

"I'm disappointed we didn't win, but I'm really proud," Waimanalo's Traci Phillips said. "Although some people disagreed with what we did, that we shouldn't mess with the club system, I think we showed them we could do it."

"There was so much pressure because of what we did, combining girls from other clubs. People were thinking we weren't going to do well or they were saying we had to bring (the title) back home to Hawaii. Of course we wanted to do well, and I think we did."



Last year, Rigaroos finished almost five minutes ahead of the second-place crew, and seven minutes in front of Hawaii's top crew. But this year, the all-star crew from Australia faced fierce local competition from the start.

"We were in fifth place for the first change and last year we were first by a long way," Rigaroos' Robyn Singh said. "We were coming from a different perspective, coming from behind."

"(Waimanalo) got out faster than us at the start and we had to work really hard to catch them," Harris said. "They did a great job and were ahead of us at times. But we were just so stoked to get first."

Healani Canoe Club was third in 6:06.25. Ten-time world champion OffShore Canoe Club from California was a surprising ninth.

Seven of the top 10 finishers were from Hawaii, the best local showing since 1995.

"We really wanted to win," Waimanalo steersman Nicole Wilcox said. "I think we pretty much gave it our all and it just didn't happen that way."

"It was great because for the first time in a long time we were right in the fight," Waimanalo's Donna Kahakui said. "To be perfectly honest, I think Australia took the best out of their country. I don't think we're the best Hawaii has to offer, but to me you couldn't have had a better crew. It was hard as hell, but it was nice to be in the fight. No complaints."

PADDLING

Na Wahine O Ke Kai

From Molokai to Oahu

Final results

■Open

Top twenty--1. Riggeroos, 5:54:26. 2. Waimanalo, 5:56:15. 3. Healani, 6:06:25. 4. Wailua Kayak & Canoe, 6:07:58. 5. Outrigger, 6:14:40. 6. Hui Nalu I, 6:15:28. 7. Hanohano, 6:19:12. 8. Lokahi I, 6:21:41. 9. Offshore, 6:23:52. 10. Kailua I, 6:25:54. 11. Kai Elua, 6:29:18. 12. Lanikai I, 6:29:43. 13. Waikiki Beach Boys I, 6:30:11. 14. Kona Athletes, 6:34:57. 15. Santa Barbara, 6:39:39. 16. Jericho, 6:39:50. 17. Waikiki Yacht Club I, 6:41:55. 18. Kai Opuua, 6:44:50. 19. Umbi Gumbi, 6:45:59. 20. Kaiola I, 6:48:19.

■Masters 35

1. Ho'opili, 6:28:25. 2. Magnetic Island, 6:42:25. 3. Waikiki Surf Club II, 6:44:30. 4. Pupu O Hawaii, 6:46:30. 5. North Shore I, 6:54:58. 6. Koa Kai I, 7:06:02. 7. Keauhou, 7:28:00.

■Masters 45

1. Anuenue, 7:10:26. 2. Hui Nalu IV, 7:18:22.