

The Solo Channel Crossing Never Truly Alone Even When Going Solo

By Mary Smolenski

The Kanaka Ikaika Solo Challenge requires one to paddle the entire Molokai Channel alone, but it is not a solo effort, or a solo achievement. Through the experience of that race, I now have greater clarity and respect for the interconnectedness of life.

My participation in the Solo Challenge depended upon the time and energy of the racing community, the sharing of knowledge by which to learn and grow in our sport, and the respect for the power of our natural surroundings in which I had to find my place to perform. Consequently, I would like thank the following:

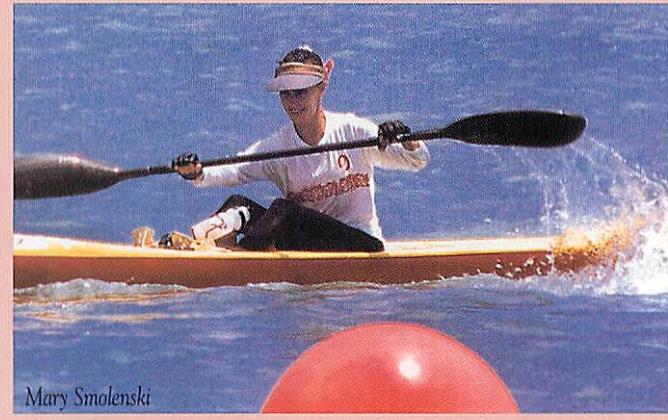
- Kanaka Ikaika, for continuing to run a successful racing season that leads up to the solo. The season provided a great arena in which to gain experience with open ocean racing.
- The dawn patrol one-man paddlers, Chris Crabb and Chris McKenzie. To have their company while training in the dark, cold winter mornings helped me train harder.
- Randy Shibuya, for a pre-race adjustment to get the kinks out (he is my chiropractor).
- Kala Judd, for his help ensuring my kayak made it safely to Molokai on the barge, and for his proficiency with fish tank tubing and electrical tape to make my much needed water bottles for the race.
- Mike Beyer, Kelly Fey and Megan Harrington who selflessly shared their kayaking technique with me when I asked for much needed help. Their words of

wisdom were my mantra all the way across the channel.

- My escort for the race, Chris McKenzie and his motor boat, along with the support crew of Tom Merrill and George Pray. The morning of the race they were full of good humor, and this kept me smiling the entire way.
- The Outrigger Canoe Club, for its generous funding for participation in the race.
- The beautiful conditions on race day, light but favorable winds, an incoming tide on which to ride to the finish, and lots of sunshine.

I will continue on my journey with great appreciation of the knowledge that I am never truly alone, even when going solo.

(Editor's Note: Mary completed the Solo Crossing in 4:20:25 and was the second overall female to finish.)



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