

# 7th Place Finish for OCC 18's at Junior Nationals in Denver

By Scott Rigg

The Outrigger Boy's 18's volleyball team competed in the Kaepa Boys USA Junior National Volleyball Championships held July 5-8 in Denver, Colorado. This year's team consisted of 10 players from Kamehameha, Punahou, and McKinley.

Although less experienced than last year, this year's group decided that with a solid effort, another appearance in the finals was not out of the question. Their short term goal was to qualify for the prestigious gold division.

Outrigger arrived in Denver to a 6th place seed in the highly competitive 18/under division. Throughout the four day tournament, OCC would play teams from Mainland USA, Canada, Puerto Rico, and Switzerland. Gold qualification requirements included placing first or second in all pools during the first three days of competition.

Days one and two saw Outrigger hammering its way past teams from Canada, New Jersey, Milwaukee, San Diego, and Santa Cruz to an undefeated record. Day three was more of the same, as OCC posted straight set wins against the "giants" from Lausanne, Switzerland and a very

scrappy Puerto Rican team.

Team Iowa took Outrigger to three sets, with OCC pulling out a 15-11 rally scoring victory in game three. The 18's entered the gold bracket double elimination tourney with an 8-0 match record.

The 18's first opponent would be defending champion Los Angeles Athletic Club, the team which handed Outrigger its only two losses in last year's tournament in San Jose. This "grudge match," played on center court, proved to be one of the most exciting of the tourney. Trailing in both sets, Outrigger rallied to squeak past LAAC 16-14, 17-15. On to Orange Coast Athletic Club, which dismantled the Hawaiians with a 6-15, 7-15 "spanking." Now in the brutal loser's bracket, OCC had to play Borniquen Gardens of Puerto Rico immediately. Still reeling from their OCAC trouncing, Outrigger lost badly in game one, barely pulled out a win in game two, then dug deep for a rally scoring victory in set three. Still Alive!!

Outrigger's 8 a.m. match on the final day was against second seed Saddle Back Volleyball Club from Irvine, Ca. OCC played even with

the Californians, but could not hold on to leads in both sets, going down 13-15, 12-15, and finishing 7th in the 96 team field.

Although disappointed at not reaching the finals, the team left Denver with an overall record of 10-2, a top ten performance, and two memorable wins over LAAC and Puerto Rico. Scott Wong received All-American honors. And best of all, they got to go home to Hawaii. Sooo lucky!

Team members included Keone Kowalski, Brendan Watumull, Lindsey Breeden, Pono Kahale, Craig Gamble, Scott Wong, Dominic Griffin, Maui Tauotaha, Dylan Fern, and Naia Blankenfeld. The team was coached by Scott Rigg.

The team would like to thank the Outrigger Canoe Club and the Outrigger Duke Kahanamoku Foundation for making the trip financially possible. A special thanks to Alika Williams and Ralph Smith for volunteering their coaching expertise again this year. And last but not least, mahalo to the parents for their awesome support on and off the court. ☺