

Myrtles Given Edge For Blue Ribbon Event Next Saturday In the Harbor

How Club Got Its Name Is One of Stories Told By the 'Father of Regatta Day'; Navy Is 'Dark Horse' and Is 'Due To Spring Something

MIKE JAY'S COMMENT

PLAY "the Red" for a favorite in the blue ribbon classic of the annual regatta to be staged in Honolulu harbor one week from today. That's the red-hot tip . . . Myrtles to win the senior race, with Navy as "the dark horse" in the battle. Hilo and Healanis seem to be left out of the dead reckoning of the experts, or have we got it twisted and the experts have them dead on reckoning? So's your old man!

SWITCHING away from the subject of crews for the moment, how many know that this coming regatta is the thirtieth annual one held on the third Saturday in September? That the territorial legislature of that time passed a bill setting aside the third Saturday in September as a legal holiday?

The sport had flourished in the '80s during the reign of King Kalakaua and the regattas had been held in November; but the game commenced to fade shortly after his death.

Then in the midst of the political upheavels the sport of rowing was tossed temporarily to one side. But one man refused to let it die. He sponsored and put through the bill that made the third Saturday of September a legal holiday.

That man is Judge A. G. M. Robertson, known as "Father of Regatta Day," and it is through his efforts that the sport was saved from death 30 years ago.

HOW THE MYRTLES WERE NAMED

MYRTLE is rather an odd name for a boat club, especially in Hawaii, where there are so many flowers with beautiful Hawaiian names which might have been selected.

Judge Robertson tells the story of how the club was named.

"The Myrtles were organized in 1883 and the meeting was held in the home of J. L. Torbett, one of the original members. The house was on a road that is now Likelike St.

"Torbett was of Scotch descent and, true to his ancestry, insisted that the club be named THISTLE.

"The other chief organizer, Dr. Monsarrat, was Irish, and he insisted that the club be named SHAMROCK.

"There was a warm argument that threatened to break up the organization meeting. As a compromise somebody suggested Myrtle out of a clear sky, and so Myrtle it was and has remained."

Any time the judge tells the story of how the Myrtle club got its name he is sure to add:

"Well, anyway, they would 'say it with flowers.'"

HOW THE MYRTLES GOT ON THEIR FEET

THE Myrtles were the first oarsmen to really dare question the superiority of King Kalakaua's crews, which had ruled the waves for some years by defeating everything that had been organized in an effort to trim them.

The Myrtles organized in February, 1883, and in November of that year, in a boat owned by George Ashley, defeated the J. A. Cummins crew and the D. W. Kamanuwal crew.

It was in 1884, however, that the Myrtles really became established. They beat two of the king's boathouse crews in the main race, as well as Honolulu club and the Kapitolania, the latter a crew of Irishmen.

The Myrtles put one over that day. The other boats had been using stationary seats, but in that regatta the "Reds" introduced sliding seats.

The first victorious club-owned boat was "The Stranger" and was built by Alf Rogers of Oakland, who is still building boats after 30 years for island crews.

WHY THE REDS ARE FAVORED

BECAUSE they won in Hilo on July Fourth of this year, because they won the senior race last regatta and because prior to that they took the measure of three or four other senior Myrtle crews in trials, the present aggregation is regarded as the best bet in the blue ribbon event a week from today.

There is only one thing which may upset all the calculations of the experts.

That's the fact that Bob Swan is not present. Swan was the life, the throb, the pivot of the crew which rose from the ash heap as cast-offs in the spring of 1924 to the champions of the 1924 fall regatta.

The fact that Swan is gone, flown to the mainland for football and studies at Dayton University, is bound to have a material bearing on how that crew will handle itself in the coming race.

That's one reason the Pearl Harbor Navy team, working out under the watchful eye of Charles Chillingworth, Jr., is regarded as the senegambian in the woodpile.