

## Offshore dominates with record crossing

By Robert Collias  
Advertiser Staff Writer

They may not want to admit it, but the Offshore Canoe Club of Newport Beach, Calif. is quickly establishing a dynasty in the Steinlager Na Wahine O Ke Kai Molokai-to-Oahu women's canoe race.

Yesterday, the California ladies paddled away and hid from the field for their fourth straight victory and became the first team in the 11-year history of the race to complete the 40.8-mile course in less than six hours.

As the Offshore crew paddled past Diamond Head and found the finish line at the Duke Kahanamoku Beach in Waikiki in view, the only drama left in the race would be whether the six-hour barrier would fall. It did, but just barely. Offshore finished

in 5 hours, 59 minutes, 36 seconds. The time shattered the old course record of 6:12:11 set by Outrigger Canoe Club of Oahu in 1984.

It was more than 17 minutes after Offshore started celebrating when Healani Canoe Club of Oahu won a tight local battle with Outrigger and Hui Nalu for second place. Healani finished in 6:17:02, Outrigger was third in 6:19:00 and Hui Nalu fourth in 6:20:50.

All 22 entrants finished the race. Although no other team has won this race more than twice in a row, Offshore coach Billy Whitford says Offshore's stranglehold on the title is not a dynasty. Whitford lives in Palolo Valley and only coaches Offshore for one month before this race. Nine of his crew were on the winning team last year.

"This goes in cycles," Whitford said. "We have girls who have paddled a lot in this race, but it was real good competition today. I was afraid somebody was going to get into an alley and get to the finish line before us."

Whitford didn't need to worry, the race belonged to Offshore from the beginning. They had a 30-second lead over Healani as they passed Laau Point in Molokai into the Kaiwi Channel.

"They had that 30-second lead on us at Laau Point and it never got better," Healani coach Marshall Rosa said. "We competed very well, but it just one of those deals — you go with what you've got."

Denise Darval, a veteran of eight Na Wahines for Hui Nalu, says Offshore may be nearly unbeatable.

"I thought we had a good chance," Darval said. "But now I don't see anyway to beat them unless we use the best 12 paddlers in Hawaii. Look at them. They are different — the best. Maybe if we used our best, we could beat them."

Smooth conditions were ripe for a record.

"We knew we had a chance to break to the record," said Offshore's JoJo Toepfner, a veteran of all 11 Na Wahine races. "We didn't know we had a chance at sub-six hours until we got to Diamond Head when the support boat yelled we had a shot at it. Really you have to be lucky to get that kind of time. Mother Nature plays a big part."

No one was about to stop Offshore yesterday, not even Mother Nature.

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## Offshore comes up with extra(s) effort to set record

□ In four key spots, they find the energy

By Jack Wyatt

Special to the Star-Bulletin

Coach Billy Whitford of California's Offshore Canoe Club announced to his 12 paddlers at the Hale O Lono start of the 11th Na Wahine O Ke Kai — the 40.8-mile Molokai-to-Oahu canoe race for women — that Hawaii teams have never looked better.

It would take a good second effort for Offshore to win its fourth consecutive race, he said.

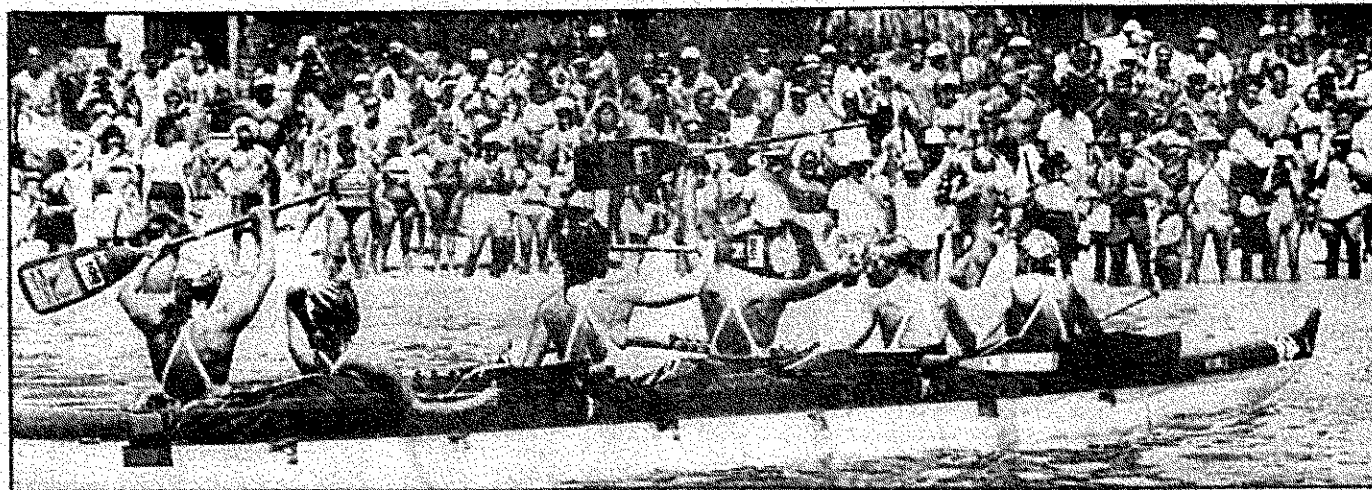
Offshore's women responded, powering away from the 22-boat fleet at the beginning and never slowing their pace.

Channel conditions were perfect, in the most part, calm waters broken only by an occasional surfing swell.

Nearing Koko Head with a comfortable lead, Whitford told the crew that a good "third" effort may result in a course record.

"Tough but a terrific motivator. Billy never lets up," co-steersperson Mindy Clark said.

Offshore again responded by picking up the stroke. "As we approached Dia-



By Dennis Oda, Star-Bulletin

Offshore arrives at Waikiki, winning the women's Molokai-to-Oahu canoe race in a record 5 hours, 59 minutes, 36 seconds.

mond Head breaking the record (6:12:11, by Outrigger Canoe Club in 1984) became a certainty," Clark said.

Off Waikiki Whitford informed the crew know that with another extra effort a six-hour crossing could be realized.

"We were 5:25 into the race and the finish was still a long way off," Leslie Davis said.

The Offshore women again dug deep and began their sprint to the finish. They arrived at the Duke Kahanamoku Beach in a record 5:59:36.

"A perfect ending to a perfect race," Whitford said.

Led by Healani Canoe Club (6:17:02), Island crews swept the next four spots. Outrigger placed third in 6:19:00, followed by Hui Nalu in 6:20:50 and by

Surfsports in 6:25:12. Each team consisted of 12 paddlers — six in the boat at any one time.

For Jo Jo Toepfner and Davis, Offshore's only paddlers completing all Na Wahine O Ke Kai races, yesterday's win was nice but not their most memorable. "Our first win in 1986 was special for me," Toepfner said.

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## OFFSHORE: Extra effort for a record

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Davis says Offshore's second victory was sweetest. "Repeating proved our first win no fluke — that Offshore was for real," she said.

But for Sheila Beuler, Anna Olsson and Dru Van Hengel — Offshore's three first-time Molokai paddlers — yesterday's race was like no other.

"Kayak heats are 500 meters, are held in flat water and take less than two minutes. Nothing like this," said Olsson, 25, a Swedish Olympic kayak medalist (gold and silver) at Los Angeles in 1984.

### Top 10 finishers

1. Offshore Canoe Club (Newport Beach, Calif.) 5:59:36 (course record). Winning crew: Chris Acton-Bresler, Sharon Atkinson, Sheila Beuler, Mindy Clark, Leslie Davis, Pam Fletcher, Sue Haverka, Kim Nygaard, Anna Olsson, Bonnie Sherar, JoJo Toepfner and Dru Van Hengel.  
2. Healani Canoe Club 6:17:02. 3. Outrigger CC 6:19:00. 4. Hui Nalu CC 6:20:50 (1st local div.). 5. Surfsports CC 6:25:12. 6. Lanakila Outrigger CC (Oahu) 6:40:56 (2nd local). 7. Kalua CC 6:42:07. 8. Santa Barbara CC (Calif.) 6:44:51. 9. Lanikai CC 6:48:15. 10. Waikiki Yacht Club 6:51:03.



By Dennis Oda, Star-Bulletin

Offshore paddlers, from left, Dru Van Hengel, Sheila Beuler, and Anna Olsson, celebrate. These three in this race for the first time.

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## Bankoh Molokai Hoe race

Gov. John Waihee, in a proclamation issued last week, has designated next Sunday as Bankoh Molokai Hoe Day in Hawaii in honor of the 38th annual Bankoh Molokai-to-Oahu Hawaiian outrigger canoe race from Molokai's Hale O Lono Harbor to Fort DeRussy Beach on Oahu.

"The Bankoh Molokai Hoe perpetuates an ancient Hawaiian tradition rich in history and culture," the proclamation states. Further: "Our Hawaiian ancestors first crossed the treacherous Kaiwi Channel more than 1,000 years ago. Today, that tradition lives on through the Bankoh Molokai Hoe, a grueling 40.8-mile journey which tests the spirit and stamina of each paddler."

Over 50 clubs from Canada, England, Tahiti, the Mainland and Hawaii are returning this year. Several new crews include Waikiki Yacht Club and Windward from Oahu, Nihoa from California and Australia's champions, the Gold Coast Australian Outrigger Canoe Club, comprised of 10 national surf lifesaving champions from Burleigh Heads, Queensland.

"The latest competitive team came to Hawaii in 1984 and they were fifth that year," said co-captain Peter Ridley. "That was the first and last time an Australian team had a serious go at the race." Four of the 1984 competitors are part of the 1989 paddling team.

Last June Honolulu's Outrigger Canoe Club raced the 42-kilometer Hamilton Island Cup on the Gold Coast. OCC Honolulu, the Bankoh Molokai Hoe defending champions who established the channel record in 1988, beat OCC Australia on their home turf.

"We've been training fairly hard and we hope to do pretty well in Hawaii," Ridley said. "When we raced against Outrigger last June they beat us by three minutes. Not so much because they were faster, but because they were better in rough water conditions. So we've spent the last few months practicing and doing a lot more work in the swells. We're coming over there to win."

The race next Sunday begins at 7:30 a.m. The first finisher is expected to cross the line shortly after 1 p.m. The record, held by OCC Honolulu, is five hours, eight minutes and 11.54 seconds.

Bank of Hawaii is also sponsoring finish line musical entertainment at Fort DeRussy beach stage. From 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. spectators can enjoy Nueva Vida, a five-piece rock fusion/jazz group, the three-piece group Peter Apo and Friends and Abe Keala and Something Special playing Hawaiian and contemporary music.

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MAUI NEWS

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## Offshore too fast, Hawaii loses fourth Na Wahine

HONOLULU — Offshore Canoe Club of California completed its domination of Hawaii yesterday in the Kaiwi Channel.

The wahines from Newport Beach, who in 1986 became the first non-Hawaii crew to win the Na Wahine O Ke Kai, finished first in the race from Molokai to Oahu for the fourth consecutive time, and did it in record time.

In calm seas and perfect racing conditions, the 12 California women, coached by Billy Whitford of Oahu, covered the 41 miles across the Kaiwi Channel in five hours, 59 minutes and 36 seconds.

Healani of Oahu finished second, more than 17 minutes behind Offshore at 6:17:02. Outrigger of Oahu placed third in 6:19:00.

The previous record of 6:12:11 was set in 1984 by Outrigger Canoe Club. A club from Hawaii has not won the Na Wahine since 1985, when Outrigger made the crossing in 6:50:32, about 10 minutes ahead of Offshore.

In the race's 11-year history, no other crew has won the race more than twice in a row. Outrigger has won four times, but Hui Nalu's two victories came in between the Outrigger run (1982, '83). The race was canceled in 1980 because of 25-foot surf.

A fleet of 22 canoes, the largest fleet ever to compete in the race, left Hale O Lono Harbor yesterday morning and paddled into flat seas and light winds. By the time Offshore reached Laau Point, where the canoes make their turn into the Kaiwi Channel, the California girls had already opened a 30-second lead on Healani. With nine veterans from Offshore's 1988 championship crew to call on for support, Offshore never let that lead grow smaller, only bigger.

"From looking at those (Offshore) women I don't know how a team from Hawaii can beat them," said Vanessa Weiss, a coach and paddler for Lahaina Canoe Club. "They're incredible athletes who spend most of their time training. An all-star team could probably do it."

Weiss and her women broke into the standings for Maui by finishing 11th overall and third in the koa division, 6:52:54.

The top team from Maui consisted of Weiss, Carol Areola, Laura Blears, Mary Rodriguez, Ann Blanchard, Vicki Nisvold, Iao Beebe, Sheryl Longsdon, Janet Sosner, Carol Wendling, Cathy Firor, and Jody Fisher.

Each crew had 12 women, six in the starting crew, six for relief. Hui Nalu, fourth overall, won the koa division in 6:20:50. Lanakila of California, sixth overall, finished second in the koa (6:40:58).

"We probably could've finished better in our fiberglass canoe," said Weiss. "But doing the channel in a koa canoe is something that every paddler should do at least once. We wanted to give Lehia (Lahaina's koa canoe) a chance in the channel, and she proved herself."

Weiss called Lehia's performance excellent.

Lahaina paddled with the top five canoes until Laau Point then dropped back into the pack. When the Lahaina women reached Oahu, they found themselves jammed in a three-way race with Hui Lanakila of Oahu and Kai O Pua of Hawaii.

"It was like a regatta out there," said Weiss. "I had my six strongest women in the canoe and when I saw how close the race was, I knew we couldn't call for relief paddlers. They were going to have to go all the way."

Lahaina won the race, finishing seconds ahead of Hui Lanakila (6:53:09) and two minutes ahead of Kai O Pua (6:54:24).