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# Always the Tearful Finish

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Henry Van Gieson, coach of the Leeward Kai Canoe Club, provides his own shade and refreshments.



Canoe racing is one sport where the contestants stay dry and the spectators get wet.

OK. So you're a 13-year-old girl and you've been training for three months, paddling a water-logged canoe tied to a pier, and in your first race you're beaten by 20 seconds by your arch rivals. You cry. Anybody would.

But consider this. You're a 13-year-old girl and you've been training for three months, paddling a water-logged canoe tied to a pier, and in your first race you beat your arch rivals by 20 seconds. What do you do? Certainly. You cry.

Canoe paddling, on the 13-year-old level, is a very wet sport, and a highly emotional one. Paddling teams seem to enter the races with the same peculiarly defeatist philosophy as do candidates to the Miss America contest. Has anybody ever won the title of Miss America without immediately bursting into tears and sobbing, "Oh, there were so many prettier girls?"

YESTERDAY, canoe paddlers from 11-year-old on upward surprised themselves

one way or the other by winning or not winning a slate of 16 races in front of the Surfrider Hotel at Waikiki and a wall-to-wall gallery of race fans.

The first race, scheduled to begin at 10 a.m., started on Hawaiian time, about 20 minutes late. By noon, the beach was so crowded that the Hawaii Visitors Bureau should buy and burn all snapshots of the mob.

The few people who found enough space to lie prone on beach mats frequently found themselves stood or sat on and had mouthsful of sand kicked into their faces by passersby.

THE PARTICIPATING canoe clubs in yesterday's Walter MacFarlane Memorial Regatta were the host club, the Outrigger, and Hui Nalu, Healani, Kailua, Kai Oni, Lanikai, Leeward Kai and Waikiki Surf. Not each of them fielded a team in every event. The races began anywhere from a quarter of a mile to a full mile out at sea and ended at the beach.

This means that before the

race begins, the contestants had to paddle their heavy koa canoes all the way out to the starting line. This is roughly the equivalent of expecting Cananero II to gallop 10 miles from his stables to the starting gate before the Kentucky Derby.

Each of the eight clubs staked out an area of its own on the beach between the Royal Hawaiian and the Moana Hotels, and flew its own pennant from a tall bamboo pole.

THE SENIOR paddlers tended to make their headquarters at the Bikini Bar of the Moana, but the younger club members, in a frenzy of competition, huddled together in their own enclaves and told each other how much they wanted to win. And how they probably wouldn't.

Canoe racing is like a track meet in that for five minutes of competition, the contestants sit around all day, and that seems to be a large part of the appeal among the younger paddlers.

"We talk stories," said Vernon Correa of Kai Oni's record-breaking crew of boys 13 and under, as he fingered the medal he had just won and caught the sun's reflection in it.

"Oh, we talk about the same kind of stuff we talk about at school," said Cecily Quinn of the Outrigger's Novice A crew, "and we worry a lot."

WHEN NOT WORRYING, the paddlers made plans for the club picnics held last night after the races. Some worried they'd be too tired. "Canoe paddling is a lot of work," explained DeeDee Watanabe, "and that's why we have to train so hard. Do you know what the coach makes us do? He ties the heavy practice canoe up to the pier, and we paddle as hard as we can against the rope that holds it there."

"Sometimes we drag old tires off the bow and stern as we paddle. Wow, when we finally get into the racing canoe, it's like glass."

DeeDee's Hui Nalu Novice A crew placed third in their race.

LESS THAN MOST junior sports is canoe racing cursed with the pressuring mama. The hollering moms who dominate the Little League scene and the age group swim meets don't raise their kids to be canoe paddlers. The parents who watched the MacFarlane races yesterday stayed well in the background except to provide food and cold drinks for the paddlers.

Some of them had torn allegiance. Cynnne-Belle Ayau who 15 years ago was a star paddler for the Outrigger senior women's crew, cheered for Hui Nalu and her 11-year-old son. "I see a lot of my old crew whose kids are paddling for different clubs. It's still pretty hard to win a seat paddling for the Outrigger," she said.

AND ONCE having won a seat in any racing canoe, most paddlers aren't willing to give it up. Punky Teramo-

to of Healani's women's senior crew paddled the exhausting mile-long course with her team, although a teammate said that Punky is five months pregnant.

The younger paddlers were allowed to use adult steersman because extra strength was needed to pilot the canoes through yesterday's surf. Before leaving the beach, the steersman sometimes led his crew in a brief Hawaiian prayer and other times delivered a kind of locker room harangue to the kids.

"LISTEN, you wahines," began the steersman for a freshman girls' team, "we're going out there, and we're gonna win. We're gonna paddle so hard and be so far ahead that the rest of the boats won't even see us coming down that last wave. Are you ready?"

"No," wailed a freshman, "the strap on the top of my suit snapped." And what followed was the only case of tears before the race even began.