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Outrigger captures Macfarlane Regatta

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Waves were breaking small, but pride was running high for the Outrigger Canoe Club yesterday.

As a result, Outrigger scored a convincing victory in the 60th annual Walter J. Macfarlane Memorial Regatta at Waikiki Beach.

Outrigger, which serves as the host club for the contest, amassed a season-high 88 points in 36 races to win the prestigious event. It was Outrigger's second victory in five regattas so far in the O'ahu Hawaiian Canoe Racing Association season.

"This really is a special regatta for our club," said Outrigger head coach Mike Mason. "There was a lot of excitement in our tent that I haven't felt in a while."

It was Outrigger's first Macfarlane Regatta victory since 1997. The regatta has been staged at Waikiki Beach — about a mile away from the Outrigger Canoe Club — every year since 1943, making it the longest-running canoe race in the state.

Lanikai, which finished second yesterday with 72 points, had won the last four Macfarlane Regattas.

"We gave it our best and came up short," said Lanikai head coach Kalani Irvine. "It was nothing that we did or didn't do; Outrigger just had a great day."

Indeed, Outrigger won a regatta-high 12 races, including impressive performances from its masters (paddlers ages 35 and older) and women paddlers.

Outrigger won five of the seven masters races (men 35-and-older, women 35-and-older, men 45-and-older, men 55-and-older and women 55-and-older). The victory by the 55-and-older men's crew was especially significant.

In addition to honoring former Outrigger president Macfarlane, yesterday's regatta was dedicated to longtime Outrigger paddler Henry Ayau, who died earlier this year. Ayau was a member of the Outrigger 55-and-older crew.

"We were all very, very close and paddled with each other for a long time, and it's been hard not having Henry here this year," said Roger Cundall, a member of the crew. "We wish he were in there with us, but we knew he was watching over us. We paddled for him."

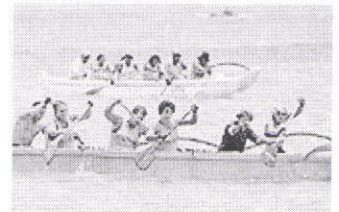
It was that crew's first victory this season.

The Outrigger women also did their share, winning the freshman, sophomore and senior races.

"Everybody in the club takes a lot of pride in the history and tradition of this regatta," said Mary Smolenski, a member of the winning women's senior crew. "It really does bring the club together."



Despite catching one of the few small waves to appear at Waikiki Beach yesterday, this Hui Nalu crew placed sixth in the men's 45-and-older division of the 60th annual Walter J. Macfarlane Regatta. Hui Nalu placed third in the overall team standings, behind Outrigger and Lanikai.



Kailua's 45-and-older women's crew, in front, paddled to a second-place finish, while Waimanalo placed sixth.

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The Outrigger crew of Smolenski, Jennie Horner, Paula Crabb, Kisi Haine and Jennifer Thayer paddled with steersman Walter Guild to win the 1 1/2-mile women's senior race by 24 seconds over Kailua.

"We got on a nice little wave after the first half-mile and we never slowed down after that," Smolenski said. "It helped to have Walter back there (steering) too."

For safety reasons, each club is asked to use experienced steersmen throughout the Macfarlane Regatta. The theory is that experienced steersmen will navigate the waves successfully while avoiding the crowds in the water at Waikiki.

Guild steered four different Outrigger crews to victory yesterday.

It was the fourth consecutive year that Outrigger won the women's senior race. As a result, they got to drink champagne out of the silver trophy presented to them at the awards ceremony.

The premier race of the regatta, the 1 1/2-mile men's senior race, provided the most excitement.

Healani Canoe Club, which is suddenly a men's contender this year with the addition of a few new paddlers, edged Lanikai by 0.84 seconds to win the men's senior race at the Macfarlane Regatta for the first time since 1967. The winning crew of Kea Pa'iaina, Andy Penny, Bill Pratt, Maui Kjeldsen, Kris Ahsam and Tad Yamashita also got to sip champagne out of the winning trophy.

"Every time we got ahead of (Lanikai), I thought we were in the clear," Pa'iaina said. "Then they would come right back up on us again. I don't know how we did it at the end. I just know we had to give it everything. I was winded at the end."

Penny, Pratt and Kjeldsen transferred to Healani this year. All three, and Pa'iaina as well, paddle for Team New Zealand/Hawai'i during the long-distance season. Team New Zealand/Hawai'i is the defending Moloka'i Hoe champion.

"We always had a good core of men, but these new guys bring that winning experience to the club," Pa'iaina said.

Lanikai started the regatta strong, winning four youth races and two novice races. After 24 of the 36 races were completed, Lanikai held a 52-49 lead over Outrigger.

However, Outrigger won seven of the final 12 races of the day, outscoring Lanikai 39-20 down that stretch. Hui Nalu placed a distant third overall with 50 points, while Healani was fourth with 44.

Keahiakahoe won two races (boys 12-younger and women open-4) to win the A division for smaller clubs with 26 points.

The next OHCRA regatta is scheduled for July 14 at Ke'ehi Lagoon.

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