

Photo Finish For Second Features '71 Molokai/Oahu Classic

Blow-by-blow account
of epic struggle

by Jerry Ober

This year's assault by the Club on the Molokai Channel was as formidable as it was successful. We fell short of winning by one position and took second place. The effort, however, was first class in all respects and even though we lost to a superior Healani crew.

Coach George Downing began his training effort just 5 weeks before the race with a rigorous training schedule and with the able assistance of member Dr. Jack Scaff brought the crew to a fine point of physical condition. The crew proved their ability and condition in what turned out to be an unbelievable duel for second or third place honors against Hui Nalu.

The race itself was run under almost too ideal conditions. There was almost no wind, hardly any clouds and no seas at all. In brief, the channel was in one of its rare flat moments. We had hoped for fairly heavy seas as our shorter canoe, the Kakina, runs well in a heavy sea and the paddlers are cooled by the constant splashing. The sea was so flat and the air so clear that almost every boat in the fleet could be seen from any other boat all the way across.

This year our crew spent the night before the race at a home generously loaned by the Molokai Ranch where our host was Blake Johnson. The crew enjoyed both the Island hospitality and the special diet prepared for them by team physician, Dr. Jack Scaff.

Before the race, Coach George Downing gave the crew an inspired talk on what would have to be done to win it. Both George and the crew knew well the tough competition they faced and the super effort that would be needed.

The race started exactly at 7:30 a.m., the appointed hour, a blast of dynamite signaling the start. The first leg was to Laau Point, about two miles up the Molokai coast line, and each crew was striving to reach the point first, since it was where crew changing could commence. We arrived at the point neck and neck with Healani and Hui



In mid-channel on a windless day, Outrigger's Molokai/Oahu race crew digs in to keep pace with Hui Nalu and try to overtake the eventual winners representing Healani.

Nalu, the three sure leaders. Thirteen canoes were entered in the race and there were thirteen different ideas of what might be the quickest way across.

Healani, the eventual winner, took the most southerly route. We steered as close to a straight line as possible, while Hui Nalu took a northerly heading. The race then settled down into the hot man-killing race it can be on a calm windless day in the channel. Healani took the lead far to our left and we constantly tried to overtake them. At times we would close the gap to about a quarter mile, only to see them pull away again. Hui Nalu, far to the right of our course, stayed about even, but they were almost out of sight.

As always, the tempo of the race began to pick up as the canoes closed in on Koko Head, then come on to converging courses. Outrigger and Hui Nalu made it to a point off Koko Head just about the same time as Hui Nalu, or perhaps a canoe length ahead. Then the duel started between the two clubs.

The Healani Canoe had by then built up a safe lead, so it was left for Outrigger and Hui Nalu to fight out the second and third place positions, and fight they did.

It's a long way from Koko Head to the Hawaiian Village . . . a very long way. Courses and positions changed often, Hui Nalu seemed able to keep ahead of us, and while the distance varied from time to time, the pressure to overtake never did.

The escort fleet was now large and very enthusiastic and yelled encouragement from all sides. One boat, the Kono, chartered from member skipper Larry Clapp, had gone to Molokai the day before with a full complement of Outrigger members and fans. The Kono provided the backbone of the cheering section, as she was loaded with wives and girl friends.

Tommy Arnott, President Thad Ekstrand and Larry Doheny also had gone up the day before and they too provided needed support while also helping the officials with the race. As the two canoes approached Diamond Head it was still close, with Hui Nalu still in the lead. The report came in that the surf from Diamond Head all the way through to the finish was very light. Knowing this, both crews cut it very close. Hui Nalu took a couple of real close ones that slowed them down but they built the pace up again. Outrigger fared better in the surf and began to close the gap. Midway through Waikiki, Outrigger had narrowed the distance to less than a boat length and was coming on strong. Coach Downing called a three man change in the middle of this wild sprint, forcing Hui Nalu to do the same. Both boats headed inshore in front of the Halekulani neck and neck, but here Outrigger's big break came. Both boats caught a small wave and Outrigger, with Brant Ackerman steering, kept the wave for its full value while Hui Nalu lost it, giving Outrigger a full boat length lead.

Id Hawaii shall always have a home."

Quote from plaque at Clubhouse entrance



In one of the closest and most exciting finishes in the entire history of the Molokai/Oahu canoe racing classic, the Outrigger crew nosed out their old rivals, Hui Nalu by a scant canoe-length. Photo by Frank Sallee.

which they kept to the finish.

The thrills were not yet over, in fact they were only beginning. Coming in from the shore side and in close, it is difficult if not impossible for the steersman to see where the finish is or what it looks like. Brant came around the corner with Hui Nalu on the outside, with a better view of the finish, and had to make some split second decisions. In the process of changing course, however, the lead went down to about 4 feet, and that is where it ended, with the Kakina completely tangled in the mess of people and ti leaves that marked the finish. Second place by 4 feet after more than 41 miles of paddling! A great finish for a great crew.

This year's club crew comprised Brant Ackerman, Henry Ayau, Mark Buck, Tim Guard, Fred Hemmings, Jr., Paul MacLaughlin, Billy Mowatt, Johnny Mounts, and Jon Sutherland. As usual, more good men turned out for the event than there are seats available. The rules allow for 9 men in the crew, 6 men in the boat at any given time and 3 alternates. This year we had 14 men out for this race, an outstanding turnout and an outstanding collection of paddlers. Coach Downing faced the difficult task of selecting nine men from 14 qualified paddlers. The eventual choice

left as helpers aboard the Hula Kai escort boat, Tom Conner, Johnny Marshall, Bill Burso, John Haig and Bruce Ames. Cline Mann provided his usual expertise on managing the course and determining the exact position of the boat throughout the race. He was ably assisted by Tom Conner who provided all the data needed by the race officials as well as the coach and crew. Sherry Dowsett once again provided the Hula Kai for our escort boat, piloted by Darrel Heine who was assisted by his son Bob and Drew Flanders. Kimo Austen provided his Boston Whaler as the auxiliary boat running crew members between the Hula Kai and the Kakina. Dr. Scaff was always there ready to give medical aid when and if needed. However, there were no physical problems during the race other than fatigue.

The party that followed the race at the Club testified to the condition these fellows were in. Their capacity for good fun was as good as their ability at paddling. The post race party was like old home week in another way; it welcomed the return of Age Ellis who has a very cool way of overseeing beer parties.

In retrospect, our crew didn't win, but they put up a darn good fight, and the Club can be justly proud of them.

Club Sailing Championship Results

Winners in the Hobie Cat 14 division were:

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| 1st place | B. Anderson |
| 2nd place | M. Holmes |
| 3rd place | K. Heyer |
| 4th place | T. Crane |

Winners in the Scorpion division:

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| 1st place | C. Mann |
| 2nd place | J. Anderson |
| 3rd place | W. Phelan |
| 4th place | D. Chapman |

Softball Roundup

The Outrigger Canoe Club team finished as a runner-up in the Consolation Bracket in the recent Hawaii State Senior Slow Pitch Softball League.

This concludes the team's season. Earlier, the men placed first in the Surveyor Mountain Ball League.

Outrigger Players Win State Doubles

Outrigger Members Paul MacLaughlin and Tom Haine placed first in the 1971 Men's State "A" Indoor Doubles Tournament, no surprise to the many who've watched them win so many Outrigger Club Tournaments. Fourth place was captured by Buster Chapman and Jon Haneberg.