

Lanikai CC Is Molokai Race Champ

By Paul Carvalho
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Publicized as the race which would pit "Man Against the Sea," this year's Molokai-to-Oahu canoe race gave a lot of men more than they bargained for.

The sea decided to make things a little more difficult this time, combining criss-cross currents with a misty rain that cut visibility.

There eventually was a winner, of course; as the Lanikai Canoe Club, in a surprisingly good time of six hours, 18 minutes and 55 seconds, was the first to glide its koa canoe onto the shore off the Moana Hotel.

BUT THE VICTORY FOR Lanikai only came after one spectacular swamp and hours of relentless paddling in virtual blindness.

At 9:46 a.m., about two hours out of Hale O'Loa Harbor on Molokai, the Lanikai canoe entered a part of the channel where swells from both the North and South collide, creating a washing-machine effect.

The canoe was caught broadside by a swell from its right, and at the same time a counter chop from the left scooped the ama (buoyant part of the outrigger) under the boat, capsizing it.

The crew, momentarily trapped in its zipped-up canvasses, finally turned the boat over and continued on, unaware of its first-place position, or for that matter, any position at all.

"We couldn't see our competition," said No. 4 paddler Rocky Owens. "We couldn't see anything."

"THE FIRST time I looked up after passing Laau Point, I saw Oahu. Then, an hour later, I couldn't see it," Owens said. "We thought the island had sunk."

"We saw the island of Oahu for a total of a half-hour during that race," said Lanikai Coach Al Lemes. "We lost sight of Oahu two hours after the race started, and from there on it was touch and go."

"All I could do was follow the swell," said Lanikai steersman Paul Gay.

All down the line the weather played havoc with the canoes and their bearings.

Kailua, whose "A" team finished first in the fiberglass division and second over-all with a six-hour, 22-minute and 40-second time, had their "B" entry swamped early in the race, and in the confusion of setting the canoe upright, the disoriented crew started paddling back to Molokai.

OUTRIGGER Canoe Club, the third team to finish with a six-hour, 24-minute time, had its koa canoe crack under the number two seat, and paddled the last leg of the race with one man bailing water.

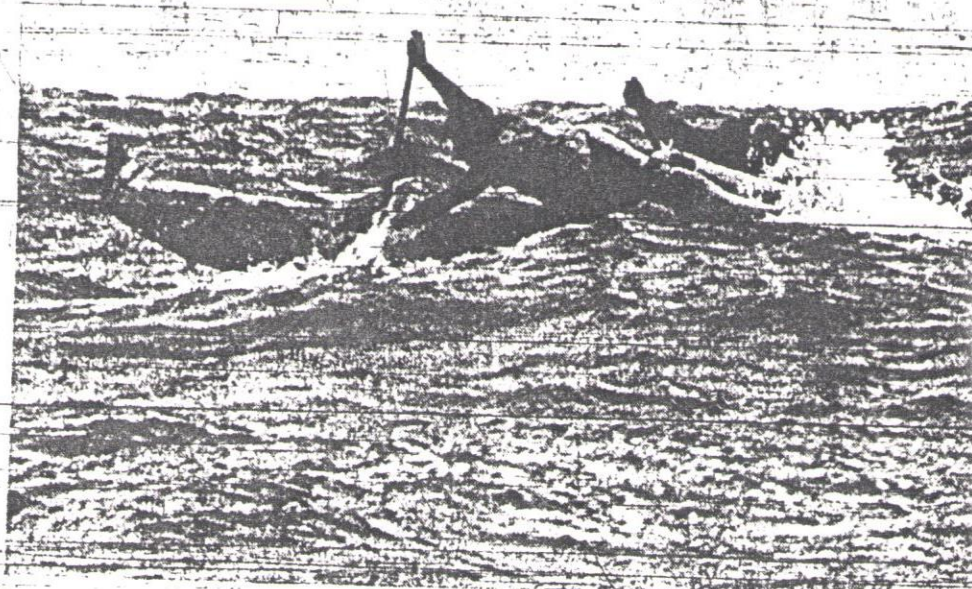
Molokai's entry, 15th to finish, had its auxiliary vessel, a small skiff used to carry relief paddlers to the canoe, swamped, with waves capsizing and dousing the two occupants.

But perhaps the most unfortunate bad-weather mishap occurred to the Army entry, which spent the last two months training for the race.

Holding third place after the first 10 miles, Army's rigging proved to be off-centered, and the boat began to capsize.

The first two times were not really detrimental, but the third time proved to be too much, and the crew had to call their escort boat to drag the canoe aboard — and the team finished the race out of the water.

Finishing Times
Lanikai (David Hazen, Arthur Pacheco, Gale Berengue, Rocky Owens, Fred Berengue, Paul Gay, Doug Hooaka, Bill Deuro, Paul Keeler) 6:18:55 (Koa)
Kailua "A" (Curt Sumida, Arthur Isaacs, Robert Boniomi, Ben Conklin, Tommy Heen, Gaylen Guerrero, Dan Farrell, Gary Yuen, Clarence Gray) 6:22:40 (Non-Koa)
Outrigger CC 6:24:00, Kaneohe CC 6:22:48, Beach Boys Inc. 6:28:20, Hanalei 6:39:17, Kailua "B" 6:52:01, Leeward Kai 6:52:05, Waikiki Surf 6:54:34, Waikiki Beach Boys 7:03:22
Hui Nalu 7:05:12, Imua 7:07:00, Healani 7:08:00, Tani Kai 7:08:45, Moikakai CC 7:17:05, Kai Oni 7:22:35, Paumotu 2 7:22:00, Koolauloa 7:35:54, Kamehameha CC 7:38:00, Sons of Tiki Pacific 7:40:28, Kailua 7:46:01, Helewa 8:06:24



MOLOKAI RACE SCENES — An unidentified crew, battling to keep their canoe from capsizing, typifies the rough waters that challenged paddlers in the annual Molokai-to-Oahu Race while the winning Lanikai Canoe Club crew, bottom, receives congratulations at the finish line. — Top photo by Zep Costa, bottom photo by Ken Sakamoto.