

In Molokai-to-Oahu race

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Tahiti pushes Outrigger to a record

By MARK OSMUN

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The trophy for the Molokai-to-Oahu outrigger canoe race was nearly on its way to Tahiti, but the Outrigger Canoe Club managed to fend off a surprizingly strong effort by the Tahitian "Tautira" paddlers, to win and set a record for the annual 38-mile Aloha Week race.

"TAHITI'S TOUGH. They created the record—they pushed us so hard that we had to bust to keep it (the trophy) for Hawaii," said Don Mailer, of the winning Outrigger crew.

Interestingly, the Tahitians were using a fiberglass boat borrowed from the Outrigger Club and, while finishing second overall, they still won the non-koa division in a record time of five hours 47 minutes and 33 seconds, eight minutes behind the winners.

At the 6:36 a.m. start on Molokai, the three Tahitian crews leaped into such a lead that it took Outrigger two hours to make up the distance. It was then neck-and-neck until the canoes reached Portlock where Outrigger began to stretch into the lead.

"I was frankly astonished at the

start to see the Tahitians just vanish away from us," said Tom Connors, the winning coach. "If they trained up here for four or five months they'd be tough to beat," he said.

THE TAHITIAN crews, used to paddling in flat water in differently designed canoes, may indeed have missed winning due to lack of experience in Hawaiian waters.

"When we started, we did not know where to go. Different people were telling us to go here, go there," said Teiki Tamarii, a Tahitian paddler. "So we let them (Outrigger) pass and then followed their course.

But I must say the Outrigger crew is great. We hope we are invited next year," he said.

At this point Mark Buck, a 15-year veteran paddler for the winning crew, joked with Tamarii saying, "If they come back, I ain't paddling."

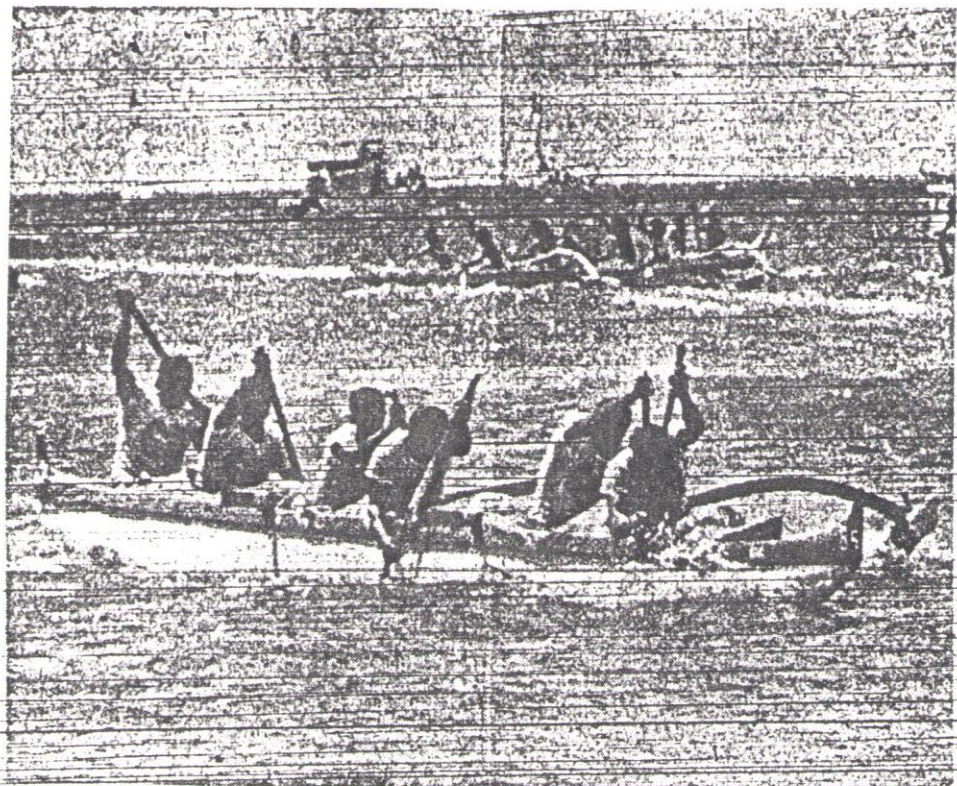
It seems every club was amazed at the Society Islands' entry. Sam Souza and Andy Miller of Waikiki Surf Club, fifth-place finishers, concurred. "It looks like they're not doing nuthin'—paddling straight up and down (as opposed to the bending and twisting Hawaiian method). But they fly," said Souza.

"I never saw anyone move like that. If it had been smooth water, they could have dropped lines and towed us," said Miller.

BUT TOUGH as the Tahitians were, Outrigger was tougher, making the fastest channel crossing in the history of the race, with a 5:39:07 time.

(There are several records for the Molokai race since the starting and finishing sites have been frequently changed over the years. The record for this year's version, finishing at

See Outrigger page D-4



Advertiser Photo by David Yamada

Paddling through a welcoming armada of sailboats, the Tahitian "Tautira" Club paddlers head for a second overall and a first place (fiberglass division) finish in yesterday's Molokai-to-Oahu Outrigger Canoe Race. The visitors set a fiberglass record despite paddling in unfamiliar waters.

Outrigger sets a record

Continued from page D-1
at the Moana Hotel on Waikiki Beach, had been 6:18:55 set last year by Lanikai. The overall fastest time had been 5:55:16 set a mile further down the shore at the Hilton Hawaiian Village beach in 1968 by Outrigger—a record that still stands for that course).

Fortunately for the paddlers, Saturday's storm conditions in the channel vanished yesterday morning, bringing 10-14 foot swells down to a more manageable eight feet. Under sunny skies, in

an ocean jammed with boats of all kinds, the outriggers headed to a beach reception more crowded and festive than usual. And once again, those show-stealing, popular Tahitians had a hand in it.

HAVING brought with them an entourage of singers, musicians and dancers; the Tahitians broke into choruses of traditional Polynesian songs even as they were stepping out of their canoe and continued through the awards ceremonies, eventually getting the whole crowd into the act.

It seemed very much like old Hawaiians coming back. Under the hotel's enormous banyan tree the winners and the Tahitians set up party plans via interpreters, while the throng of onlookers pressed the paddlers together.

Tim Guard, an Outrigger paddler put it this way. "There is a bond be-

tween men of the ocean. That's why I paddle to establish this bond."

Finishers—1. Outrigger Canoe Club, 5:29:07 record (M. Buck, T. Guard, M. Rodrigues, P. MacLaughlin, D. Walter, T. Capota, A. Ross, E. Hammings, B. Ackerman) 2. Tautira, 5:47:33 fiberglass record 3. Ilimu (California) 4. Pasotele (Tahiti) 5. Waikiki Surf & Canikart Beach Boys 6. Tava Nui (Tahiti) 9. Kailua 10. Hanalei 11. Molokai 12. Kaneohe 13. Heaiani 14. Hui Nalu 15. Hawaii Warriors 18. Sons & Daughters of Pacific 17. Makaha 18. Outrigger 219. Kai Opua 20. Kai Opua 21. Kamehameha 22. Waikiki Surf 23. Paumotu 24. Prince David Kawanena