

Local Crews Hope to Catch

By Jack Wyatt

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Tomorrow's 35th Moloka'i Hoe—the annual 40.8-mile men's canoe race from Molokai to Oahu—will be a contest of great hopes and great expectations for its crews.

The Hawaiian paddlers hope for big channel seas to test their seamanship, steering and surfing skills. "The bigger the waves the better," Outrigger Canoe Club's Keone Downing said.

Visiting teams, those crews from Tahiti, Canada and the Mainland, hope for a smooth channel so they can call on their

great endurance and paddling strength to muscle their craft through the water. "Not a ripple of a wave would be just fine," said Don Alberda of defending champ Illinois Brigade.

OAHU HAWAIIAN Canoe Racing Association officials simply hope for a safe crossing for all contestants. And with a record 53 attention-demanding entries, OHCRA officials will also be glad when the race is over.

"The Moloka'i Hoe has taken an awful lot of time and work from a lot of volunteers," OHCRA's president Joan Malama noted.

Hawaii's most famous canoe race begins at Molokai's Hale O Lono Harbor near Laau Point at 7:30 a.m. The first canoe is expected to arrive at Waikiki's Fort DeRussy Beach finish about 1 p.m. The public is encouraged to greet the crews as they arrive.

"Big waves will definitely be advantageous to the Hawaiians," race promoter Fred Hemmings said. According to the latest forecast, the Kaiwi Channel is likely to be calm. For the Hawaiians, the Kaiwi has been calm for far too many races in recent years.

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a Wave in Moloka'i Hoe

IN RELATIVELY flat water, the Illinois Brigade won last year in five hours, 33 minutes and five seconds. "I think we have even a stronger crew for this race," Brigades' Alberda admitted.

Outrigger set the course record two years ago with a 5:18.19 crossing. "Good surfing waves for that race," OCC's Walter Guild recalled.

With eight Tahiti entries and three from Canada, the race is truly an international event and, says Hemmings, it's going to become a lot better. "I can see the day when we'll have crews from

Russia, Europe and Japan," he said, noting that each year the field gets bigger and more competitive.

In addition to 11 foreign entries, Illinois Brigade will field two teams and California will have four crews. Visitors have won the race five of the last 10 years.

SINCE THE FIRST race in 1952, Waikiki Surf Club has won 12 times; followed by Outrigger Canoe Club with 10. OCC has won six of the past 11 races. "We've trained long and hard. Perhaps with good waves and

some luck we'll win this one," Guild said.

Based on last year's finishes, OHCRA has ranked Illinois Brigade; Tahiti; Off Shore (Calif.); Kailua and Kai Opua (Kona) as the top seeds. Crews are entered from Hawaii's five major Islands. Koa and fiberglass canoes are used. Eight masters (over 35) crews have entered.

Each team will field nine paddlers, six in the canoe at any given time. "Hawaiians should make up valuable time on crew changes. Visitors aren't that skilled at this procedure," paddler Harry Okada said.