

Kai Opua wins koa division —in a loaner

By Cindy Luis
Star-Bulletin writer

Yesterday's Bankoh Molokai Hoe presented several challenges for Kai Opua of the Big Island.

To finish the 40.8-mile race across the Kaiwi Channel from Hale O Lono to Waikiki was not the main priority. To finish first in a koa canoe was.

"We thought we could be competitive but not in contention for first in fiberglass but we thought we had a good chance to win the koa division," said Bill Rosehill after winning the 7-club division and coming in 11th overall. "Our koa did not pass racing specs so we borrowed the canoe from Kai Ehiu (another Big Island club). The boat ran good."

Borrowing the *Maehaa Piti* from Jacque Wong kept the victory in the family, in a way. *Maehaa Piti*—"Twin II"—is the sister canoe of Kai Opua's *Mahoe*. Both canoes were made from the same koa log in 1976.

■ There were a few casualties in yesterday's race. Wainani paddler Michael Lyman had to be brought in early due to exhaustion.

Ka Mo'i, the Hui Waa power from the Waianae Coast, had equipment problems and had to have their canoe towed in. And Offshore No. 2's Iako and ama came unlash about two hours into the race; the California crew lost about 20 minutes and finished 33rd overall.

■ Arkansas Outrigger, which had bought a canoe from Outrigger last spring, found out that river paddling and ocean paddling are different animals—starting with rigging the canoe.

Molokai Hoe Winners

TOP THREE BY DIVISION

Overall & Fiberglass: 1. Outrigger No. 1, Oahu (Tom Conner, Kainoa Downing, Keene Downing, Marc Hains, Chris Kinahid, Mark Riggs, Scott Rolles, Steve Scott, Steve Van Ribbink), 5:32.44. 2. Tahiti Nui, Tahiti, 5:37.31. 3. FFPF, Tahiti, 5:37.51.
Koa: 1. Kai Opua, Big Island, 6:13.03. 2. Hui Lanakia, Oahu, 6:15.42. 3. Anueue, Oahu, 6:24.30.
Masters: 1. Outrigger Jr. Masters, Oahu, 6:07.40. 2. Kai Opua Masters, Big Island, 6:14.57. 3. Outrigger Sr. Masters, Oahu, 6:17.03.

MISCELLANEOUS AWARDS

Sportsmanship: Puna, Big Island. Na Kane Aukai (farthest away); Royal Canoe Club, England. Master of Masters: 1. Bill MacIntosh, 40-years-old, Team Ontario. 2. Hank Lash, 61-years-old, Outrigger Sr. Masters. Best Finish, First Time Entrant: Atlantic Division.

"This was a learning experience in so many ways," said Bill Sowell, who stroked for half of the race. "We got to Molokai and learned how to correctly rig the canoe. The way we had been doing it, it took about five minutes. The thirty minutes or so it now takes made the canoe much for stable."

Still, Arkansas *hulied* (turned over) twice before finishing 38th. "If this had been flat water, I think we would have done better. In this rougher water really had to adapt our stroke. We're strong on technique but with the waves we had to forget technique and just go for power."

■ Several new awards were created for this year's race. One went to the oldest paddler—Bill MacIntosh of Canada's Team Ontario.

"I don't know what all the fuss was about," said the 62-year-old. "We had another guy who couldn't make it at the last minute. He's 67."

MacIntosh beat out Outrigger Senior Masters paddler Hank Lass by two months.



UP IN THE AIR—Outrigger's final crew celebrates as it touches shore at Fort DeRussy beach.

By Mike Tsukamoto, Star-Bulletin

Na Kane Aukai—award for the club traveling the farthest—went to the Royal Canoe Club of England. Steering the English team was Frenchy Luttgau, member of Waikiki Beach Boys.

"We trusted Frenchy," said Chris Harrod. "Even when he brought us in so close to the cliffs at Koko Head that I thought it was all over. He kept yelling to paddle, paddle because he said he knew

what he was doing. He did; we didn't die."

The sportsmanship award went to Puna of the Big Island. Their paddlers went without being relieved for nearly 1½ hours when their escort boat went over to help another canoe.

■ His seventh Molokai Hoe victory was not the best for Outrigger steersman Tom Conner. In fact, he said it was probably the worst.

"I came close to fainting several times out there," he said. "I even started eating, which I never do. For me, it was one of the most punishing races."

■ Tahiti Nui, with seven of the nine paddlers from last year's team, may not be back next year.

"I am sure a team will be sent but I think most of these paddlers will not be on that team," said spokesman Charlie Villierme.

"Most of the guys will be concentrating on the World Sprints Hawaii next August. We will be here for that."

■ Anueue's Nappy Napolo added to his most-ever chance crossing with his 30th yesterday. His crew, which included his sons Aaron and Darryn, finished 22nd overall after flirting with leaders half-way across. "We just ran out of steam," said.