

# Molokai race wide open

## 76 crews will take up 'The Challenge'

By Brett Siegel

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da, Australia, New Zealand, Tahiti, Tonga, Pennsylvania, California and Hawaii will compete.

Last year's winner, Australia's Panamuna Outrigger Canoe Club, will not return but some former members have joined the Outrigger Canoe Club of Australia that is here.

Paddlers will compete in three divisions: open, masters (age 35-over) and senior masters (age 45-over). Those classes are also divided into koa (wood) and fiberglass divisions.

A crucial aspect will be the paddler exchange. While paddling at 70 to 75 strokes a minute, a predetermined number of crew members bail out as reserves climb aboard.

"You have to eliminate any time loss as the boat maintains movement," said Offshore Canoe Club coach Bud Hohl. "Three to four seconds could cost you two places in the end."

The race is dedicated to A.E. "Toots" Minvielle, founder of the event 42 years ago. Officials also will honor the memory of veteran canoe paddler Tommy Holmes, who died this year.

The seven-month outrigger canoe season ends with tomorrow's Bankoh Molokai Hoe — considered the highlight of the season.

The 40.8-mile men's race starts at 7:30 a.m. at Molokai's Hale O' Lono Harbor, with the winner expected by 1 p.m. at Waikiki's Ft. DeRussy Beach.

With the influx of international competition and weather conditions expected to be on the calm side, this year's race is considered a wide-open affair.

Hawaii crews usually prefer large swells. If a calm sea exists, the advantage shifts to marathon paddlers from Canada and Switzerland.

"This is the Super Bowl of paddling," said Mike Tongg, president of the Hawaiian Canoe Racing Association. "Nothing is greater than to win the Molokai. (A victory) is the greatest honor to bestow on paddlers."

A race that has affectionately become known as "The Challenge" will boast its largest fleet ever of 76 teams. Crews representing Switzerland, Cana-

**WHAT:** The 42nd crossing of the 40.8-mile Molokai-to-Oahu world championship outrigger canoe race.

**WHEN/WHERE:** Starts 7:30 a.m. tomorrow at Molokai Ranch's Hale O Lono Harbor; first team finishes about 1 p.m. at Fort DeRussy Beach, Oahu.

**HOW:** Each team consists of nine paddlers with six in the canoe at one time. Paddlers rotate positions in open-ocean exchanges as the race progresses across the channel. Divisions include koa and non-koa (fiberglass) canoes in open, master's and senior master's competition.

**DEFENDING CHAMPIONS:** Panamuna Outrigger Canoe Club of Australia, 5:30:57.

**RECORD:** Fiberglass division—5:06:29, Offshore Canoe Club (California), 1989; Koa division—5:11:38, Hui Nalu Canoe Club (Hawaii), 1989.

**TV:** KHON (Channel 2) will broadcast the finish live.