

Lanikai's Tresnak hoping his crews have right stuff

By Cindy Luis

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For a man who has spent half his life running from the Communist Party, tomorrow's Bankoh Molokai Hoe is a race of freedom, regardless of where Karel Tresnak's crews finish.

The 44-year-old coach of Lanikai Canoe Club wants to win the 42nd annual paddling event across the Kaiwi Channel from Molokai to Oahu. But it will be done on his own terms, something he was never able to do while competing internationally for the former Soviet satellite of Czechoslovakia.

"I only ask for the paddlers to do their best individually," said Tresnak, who placed seventh in the C-1 slalom event at the 1972 Munich Olympics. "We have rarely trained in six-man canoes. Our training was mostly done in one-man canoes. It's easier on the mind.

"We got away from the politics, something I know how to run from. We timed paddlers individually and the best times got in the canoe. We are putting the strongest paddlers in there and then we'll worry about the blend."

Tresnak points to the success that international crews have had during previous Molokai Hoe races. Crews sometimes don't meet for the first time until on the beach at the Hale O Lono start.

"How important can the timing be when there are people getting into outriggers for the first time a week before the race and they are able to do well," said Tresnak, who moved to Hawaii in 1986. "I don't have all the best guys in Hawaii and yet we are going against select crews from Australia, Switzerland, New Zealand. What I do have are guys who paddle hard and are

AT A GLANCE

- **What:** 42nd Bankoh Molokai Hoe, men's outrigger canoe race from Molokai to Oahu.
- **When:** Tomorrow, 7:30 a.m. start, Hale O Lono, Molokai. First crew expected at 1 p.m., Duke Kahanamoku Beach.
- **Record:** OffShore Canoe Club (Calif.), 5 hours 6 minutes, 29 seconds.

going to do their best."

Lanikai finished fifth overall last year, 14 minutes behind winner Panamuna of Australia. The Windward Oahu club dominated the upper men's division races during regatta season as well as the abbreviated long-distance season the past two months.

"Maybe if we had paddled a good race last year, we could have been somewhat satisfied," said Tresnak. "But we never got the canoe running. The guys felt that if they were fifth when nothing was working then they had to find out how well they could do when things were working."

A record 76 canoes are entered this year, including first-time entrants from Tonga, New Zealand, Switzerland and Pennsylvania. Australia has sent a select crew and there are four crews from Canada, nine from California, and one from Tahiti.

Lanikai, which has won this event just once (1974), has four crews entered.

Its top crew is using a new Bradley-mold fiberglass canoe with the encouraging name of *Kaolelopa'a* (Promise).