

PADDLING

Faaa breaks 5-hour mark

By Jack Wyatt

Special to the Star-Bulletin

Tahiti's Faaa Canoe Club, with a big spark from Honolulu fire captain Tom Conner, became the surprise winner of yesterday's 42nd Bankoh Molokai Hoe — the 41-mile men's outrigger canoe race from Molokai to Oahu.

With veteran steersman Conner at the helm, the dark horse Tahitians led the record 74-canoe field to Waikiki's Fort DeRussy Beach, finishing in a course-record four hours, 55 minutes and 27 seconds.

Faaa bettered the previous mark (5:06:29), set by California's Off-Shore Canoe Club in 1989, by 11:02.

Tahiti also became the first sub-five-hour race finisher since the series began in 1952. The Te Oropaa Canoe Club, in 1976, was the last race winner from Tahiti.

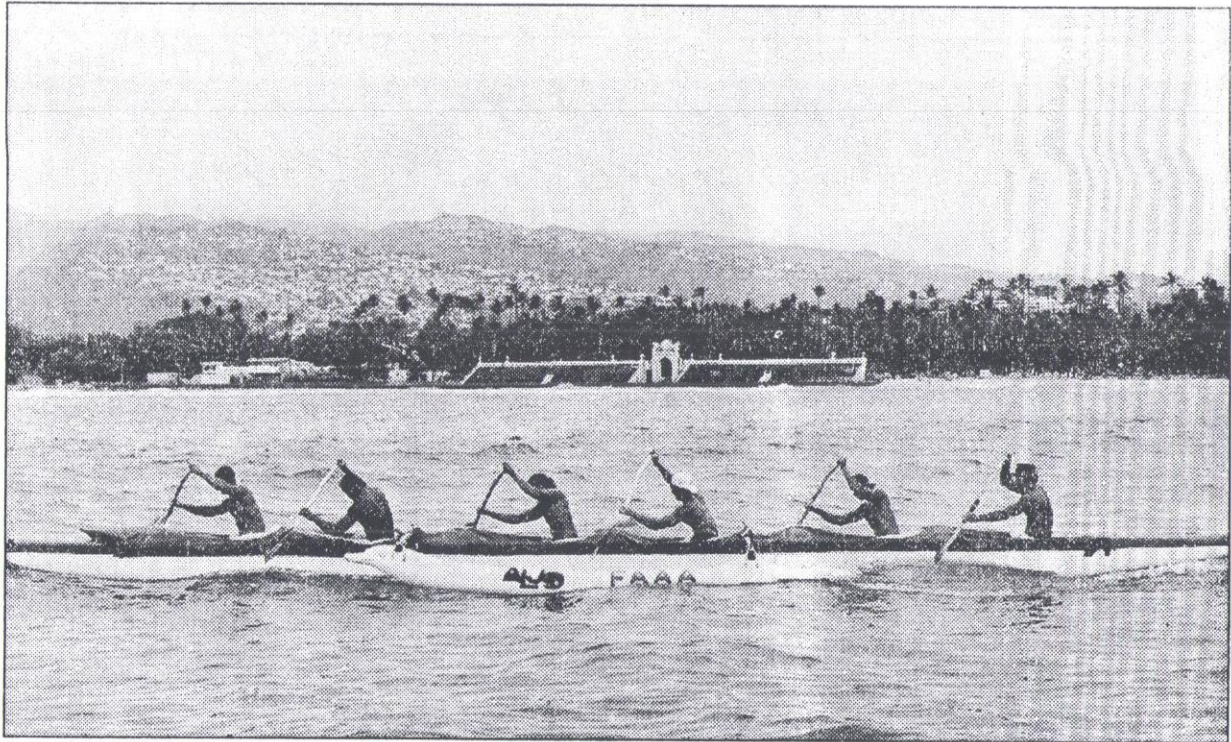
"It took us 17 years of blood, sweat and a lot of money for travel and expenses, but we finally won again — this time with a course record," said Tahiti coach John Gabilou. "This win made up for all past frustrations."

Faaa was followed by Australia's Panamuna Outrigger, the defending champion and pre-race favorite, in 5:08:12. California's Dana Outrigger placed third in 5:10:56.

Oahu's Lanikai Canoe Club led the local teams, finishing fourth overall in 5:11:36. New Zealand's Taniwha arrived fifth in 5:15:08.

Oahu teams — Hawaii Canoe/Kayak Club, Waikiki Surf Club and Outrigger Canoe Club — finished in sixth through eighth, respectively.

Faaa got off to a slow start from Molokai's Hale O Lono Harbor. "The starting line wasn't straight," said Conner, the only non-Tahitian among Faaa's nine-member crew.



By Kathryn Bender, Star-Bulletin

The Faaa Canoe Club of Tahiti paddles toward a record time and the Fort DeRussy Beach finish line yesterday.

"That gave some boats an advantage."

But by Laau Point, Faaa, with steady stroking by its strong young paddlers, outmuscled the early leaders to take command.

"The Australians, among others, kept pressing," Conner said. "But they never could pass. This Tahiti crew was fit — the right paddlers for the right conditions."

A veteran of 22 channel crossings, Conner played each wave and ripple. "No one knows how to get more from the ocean," said Faaa's Milton Laughlin.

With victory in sight and a course record a possibility, the Tahitians picked up the pace as they neared Oahu.

"I told them that a record might be made," said Conner, who celebrated his 10th race win — the

first nine were with Outrigger Canoe Club. "They worked even harder."

First Hawaii finisher wasn't enough for Lanikai Canoe Club paddlers. They wanted it all. "What does it take to win this race anyway?" said Jim Foti of his club's fourth place finish. "I'm disappointed we didn't pull it off."

Lanikai, based on last season's success, was given an outside chance to win. "Granted, Tahiti and Australia were strong and kept their lead, but still, we should have beaten Dana Outrigger," Foti said.

Hawaii Canoe/Kayak Team paddlers were another local team with a chance at winning.

"We could stay with the second pack (Lanikai, New Zealand and Waikiki Surf Club) but Tahiti and

Australia were simply too strong," said HC/KT's Kala Kukea.

Switzerland's Zurcher Unterland finished 28th overall — a good performance considering most of its crew had never paddled an outrigger canoe before last week.

"A learning experience," Heinz Roethenmund said. "We promise to do better the next time."

Hawaii's Heath Hemmings gave the Swiss a hand by steering.

The 10th place overall finish of Outrigger Canoe Club's winning masters (35-years and over) crew had younger competitors talking.

"Our crew consisted mainly of former Molokai race winners who still have what it takes," said Outrigger's Brant Ackerman. "We wanted to send the youngsters a message — to keep practicing if they expect to stay with us."

PADDLING

Molokai Hoe

Molokai to Fort DeRussy Beach
40.8 miles

■ Yesterday's results

1. Faa'a (Tahiti), 4 hours, 55 minutes,

27 seconds (record; old record: 5:06:29, OffShore, Calif., 1989) (Crew: Tuura Mairao, Armand Tavaotaha, Lewis Lauhin, Yannick Aaama, Karyl Maonni, Milton Laughlin, Jean-Pierre Barff, Ralph Teariki, Tom Conner). 2. Panamuna (Australia), 5:08:12. 3. Dana Outrigger (Calif.), 5:10:56. 4. Lanikai I (Oahu), 5:11:36. 5. Taniwha (New Zealand), 5:15:08. 6. Hawaii Canoe/Kayak (Oahu), 5:19:20. 7. Waikiki Surf Club I (Oahu), 5:21:17. 8. Outrigger II (Oahu), 5:23:53. 9. Marina Del Rey I (Calif.), 5:31:14. 10. Outrigger III (Oahu), 5:32:10.

11. Kai Opua I (Big Island), 5:33:05. 12. Hanalei (Kauai), 5:33:28. 13. Lanakila Outrigger II (Calif.), 5:33:55. 14. Anuenue I (Oahu), 5:34:30. 15. Imua (Calif.), 5:37:23. 16. False Creek I (Canada), 5:38:34. 17. Molokai Ranch (Oahu), 5:39:23. 18. Puna (Big Island), 5:44:49. 19. Hawaiian I (Maui), 5:47:09. 20. Lokahi I (Oahu), 5:48:48.

21. Waikiki Surf II (Oahu), 5:50:40. 22. Hui Lanakila I (5:52:16). 23. Kailua I (Oahu), 5:52:20. 24. Lanikai II (Oahu), 5:54:26. 25. Keauhou (Big Island), 5:55:11. 26. Kai Opua II (Big Island), 5:55:46. 27. Waikiki Beach Boys (Oahu), 5:55:54. 28. Zurcher Unterland (Switzerland), 5:57:58. 29. OffShore (Calif.), 5:59:38. 30. Koloa (Kauai), 5:59:46.

31. Anuenue II (Oahu), 6:00:25. 32. Outrigger I (Oahu), 6:01:58. 33. Marina Del Rey II (Calif.), 6:05:05. 34. False Creek II (Canada), 6:07:35. 35. Tui Tonga (Tonga), 6:08:13. 26. Kai E Hitu I (Big Island), 6:08:14. 37. Lahaina (Maui), 6:08:34. 38. Kai E Hitu II (Big Island), 6:09:06. 39. Napili (Maui), 6:09:44. 40. Hui Lanakila II (Oahu), 6:11:36.

41. Koa Kai II (Oahu), 6:11:47. 42. Kailua III (Oahu), 6:12:00. 43. Lanakila Outrigger I (Calif.), 6:14:02. 44. Lanikai III (Oahu), 6:16:03. 45. Pennsylvania Outrigger (Penn.), 6:17:26. 46. Hui Nalu (Oahu), 6:18:45. 47. Hawaiian II (Maui), 6:19:33. 48. Kai Opua III (Big Island), 6:21:28. 49. Kai E Hitu III (Big Island), 6:22:25. 50. Koa Kai I (Oahu), 6:29:30.

51. Anuenue III (Oahu), 6:31:08. 52. Kamehameha II (Oahu), 6:31:09. 53. Kailua II (Oahu), 6:31:09. 53. Kailua II (Oahu), 6:31:09. 54. Healani (Oahu), 6:31:14. 55. Na Kai Ewalu II (Maui), 6:32:45. 56. Pu'uwai (Kauai), 6:34:47. 57. Kona Athletic (Big Island), 6:34:54. 58. Kamehameha I (Oahu), 6:35:05. 59. Lokahi II (Oahu), 6:35:49. 60. Honolulu I

(Oahu), 6:36:52.

61. Kahana (Maui), 6:38:39. 62. Honolulu II (Oahu), 6:39:35. 63. Na Kai Ewalu I (Maui), 6:39:59. 64. Kaiola (Kauai), 6:40:07. 65. Wainui Outrigger (New Zealand), 6:42:23. 66. Lokahi III (Oahu), 6:44:37. 67. Lae 'Ula O Kai (Maui), 6:45:26. 68. Marina Del Rey III (Calif.), 6:45:29. 69. Koolau (Oahu), 6:51:11. 70. Kai E Hitu IV (Big Island), 6:57:57.

71. Lanikai IV (Oahu), 6:59:18. 72. Bladerunners (Canada), 7:07:26. 73. Outrigger IV (Oahu), 7:15:57. 74. SMH Outrigger (Canada), 7:42:38.

■ Division leaders

Koa: 1. Kai Opua I. 2. Lanikai II. 3. Outrigger I. 4. Kai E Hitu I. 5. Lanakila Outrigger I. 6. Lanikai III.

Masters (35-over): 1. Outrigger III. 2. Imua. 3. Keauhou. 4. Koa Kai II. 5. Pennsylvania Outrigger. 6. Kai E Hitu III. 7. Kamehameha II. 8. Honolulu II. 9. Na Kai Ewalu I. 10. Marina Del Rey III.

Senior masters (45-over): 1. Kailua III. 2. Kai Opua III. 3. Anuenue III. 4. Na Kai Ewalu II. 5. Lokahi III. 6. Kai E Hitu IV. 7. Outrigger IV.

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