

## PADDLING

# Record-holder Lanikai favored to defend title

*Star-Bulletin staff*

Conditions that favor local paddlers are expected for tomorrow's 45th Annual Bank of Hawaii Molokai-to-Oahu canoe race.

The 41-mile race, considered the world championship of long-distance outrigger canoe racing, will start at the Molokai Ranch's Hale O Lono Harbor at 7:30 a.m.

Crossing the perilous Molokai Channel, the race is expected to finish at Waikiki's Ft. DeRussy beach before 1 p.m.

A record field of 105 crews — up from 90 last year — will fill the horizon off Molokai.

"The ocean is picking up and not smooth and glassy like it was for the women's race," said eighth-year race coordinator Joan Malama. "There will be lots of bumps and the local men will really enjoy that. So it's likely we'll see a local crew win."

Tradewinds are projected at 15 to 25 mph.

Lanikai Canoe Club is the defending open men's champion and course record holder.

Conditions were nearly perfect as Lanikai finished the race in 4 hours, 53 minutes, 3 seconds last year to win for the first time since 1974. The crew wiped out the 1993 record of 4:55:27 set by Faa'a of Tahiti. Faa'a also won in 1994.

"There's no reason not to favor Lanikai because they've won all

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**Joan Malama**  
*Race coordinator*



of the races they've entered in 1996," said Malama. "But I'm sure that Faa'a wants to prove that last year was a fluke."

Local challengers are Outrigger Canoe Club, Waikiki Surf Club, Hui Nalu and the Waikiki Beach Boys. Foreign favorites are Faa'a and Australia. Outrigger has more wins than any other team, having taken the channel title 15 times.

Mooloolaba of Australia, which has won the last two masters (over 35) championships, is favored once again in that division.

But Dana Point of California, which has secured the services of widely renowned steersman Tom Connors, is a force to be considered on the waves.

In the senior masters division, Kailua Canoe Club and Anuenue, steered by Nappy Napoleon, are the favorites.