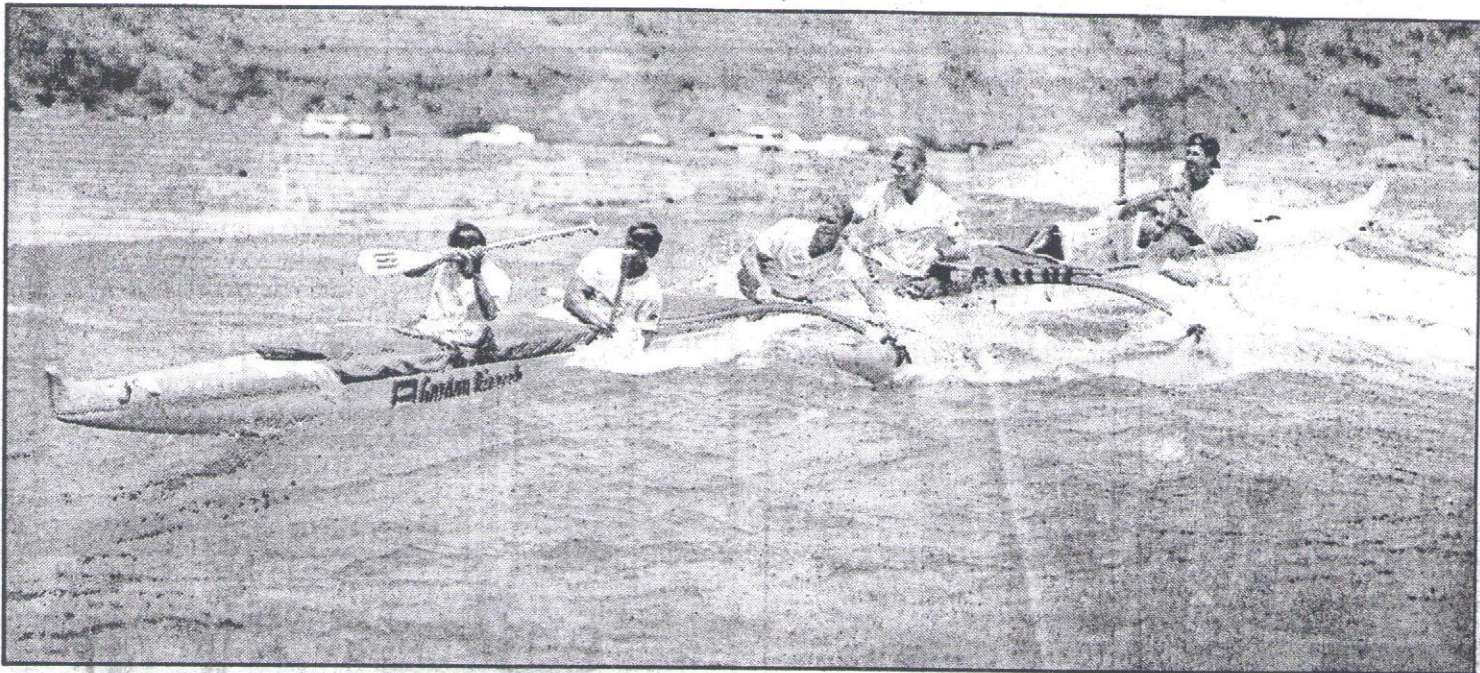


Molokai race hard on some canoes

HA 10/14/96



Cory Lum/The Honolulu Advertiser

Above: Lanikai's winning crew teeters on a wave in front of the Diamond Head Lighthouse, only a mile or two from the finish line.

Right: Steersman Kurtis Yamauchi, background, mourns the kindling that was his club's prized koa canoe, crushed by a wave during the crossing.

One boat splintered, though most finish

By Linda Aragon
Advertiser Staff Writer

Tears welled in Kurtis Yamauchi's eyes as he looked at the splintered remains of Keoua Canoe Club's prized koa canoe and told how "one of those freak waves" snapped it in two yesterday.

"The wave buried us. We went under," said Yamauchi, coach and steersman of the Big Island club from Honaunau, which participated in yesterday's Bankoh Moloka'i Hoe men's Molokai-to-Oahu canoe race.

The race, considered the world's premier open-ocean canoe contest, has seen rougher seas, and 96 of yesterday's record 102 entries finished the 41-mile course. Lanikai Canoe Club of Windward Oahu won for the second year in a row. **(For a complete wrap up of the race see Sports, Page D1.)**

But for an unlucky few, the eight-foot seas and 30-knot winds in Kaiwi Channel cut the race disappointingly short and were a reminder of the power of the ocean.

The Coast Guard said it answered eight calls to help canoes and escort

boats. Four canoes and an escort boat were towed into Maunalua Bay, about seven miles from the finish line in Waikiki.

"We had a fabulous start," said Rudy King Jr., member of the Waikiki Beach Boys open division crew. But that ended 10 miles off Koko Head when, "We huli'd (flipped)."

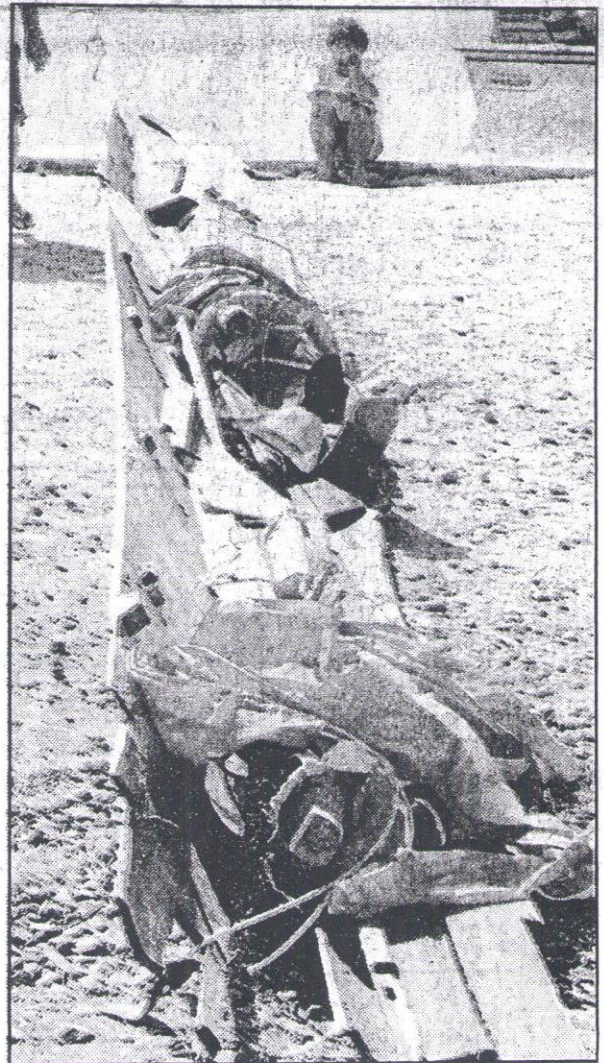
The crew called for help after waves kept dumping water into their canoe faster than they could bail it out.

Hui Nalu's koa canoe entered Maunalua Bay missing a large chunk of its bow. Steersman Don Smitty said that 25 miles into the race, the rails that fasten the canvas covering came off, allowing water to swamp the boat.

"The intake of water was so much," Smitty said. "There was nothing else we could do."

The canoe for Waianae's Na Keiki O Ka Mo'i finished the race, but the escort boat didn't after losing a propeller.

So the crew, without an escort boat to drop off relief paddlers and beverages, went "iron man" for the last two to three hours of the race.



Gregory Yamamoto/The Honolulu Advertiser