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Tahiti triumphs in Moloka'i Hoe



Rai's (from left) Lewis Laughlin, Jean-Pierre Barff, Gille Tching and Jimmy Tupea celebrate after becoming the first Tahiti team to win the Hinano Moloka'i Hoe since 1994.

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By [Dayton Morinaga](#)
Advertiser Staff Writer

In a testimony to commitment, Rai won the Hinano Moloka'i Hoe yesterday.

The team from Tahiti completed the 41-mile race from Hale O Lono Harbor, Moloka'i, to Duke Kahanamoku Beach, Waikiki, in 5 hours, 11 minutes, 35 seconds.

Team New Zealand/Hawai'i, which won last year's race by two seconds, placed second yesterday by 20 seconds (5:11:55).

More than 100 crews participated in the race, which is considered the world championship of long-distance outrigger canoe paddling.

Rai chose to enter yesterday's Moloka'i Hoe instead of the Hawaiki Nui Va'a — Tahiti's most prestigious canoe race that begins Wednesday.

"This is a very, very big victory for us, for Tahiti," said Lewis Laughlin, who founded the club three years ago. "Yes, the biggest race in Tahiti is the Hawaiki Nui. But to me, the biggest international race is the Moloka'i Hoe. It was a major choice between the two, but we never doubted which one we wanted to enter."

Top finishers

1. Rai (Lewis Laughlin, Milton Laughlin, Jean-Pierre Barff, Tautu Temanu, Jimmy Tupea, Ridrige Hikutini, Gille Tching, Armand Tautotaha, Joakim Marere), 5:11:35.
2. Team New Zealand/Hawai'i, 5:11:55.



Team Tahiti, in background, overtakes Team New Zealand/Hawai'i off Waikiki to win

In a year when Hinano — the Tahiti-based beer company — became the title sponsor of the Moloka'i Hoe, Rai was the only entry from Tahiti. Because of limited flights, teams that entered yesterday's Moloka'i Hoe will not be able to enter the Hawaiki Nui Va'a.

the Moloka'i Hoe canoe race by 20 seconds. More than 100 crews took part in the 41-mile contest, considered the world championship of long-distance outrigger paddling.

"Everybody else stayed home to race in the Hawaiki Nui," Laughlin said. "But we committed to this race at the beginning of the year and we wanted to stick to it."

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Rai also won by committing to an all-Tahitian crew that charted its own course.

Members of the winning crew: Laughlin, his brother Milton Laughlin, Jean-Pierre Barff, Tautu Temanu, Jimmy Tupea, Rodrige Hikutini, Gille Tching, Armand Tauotaha and Joakim Marere. Each team was allowed to rotate nine paddlers into the six seats of the canoe throughout the race.

Five of those Rai paddlers (the Laughlin brothers, Barff, Tupea and Tauotaha) were on the Faaa teams that won the Moloka'i Hoe in 1993 and '94. Rai, Faaa and Te Oropaa (1976) are now the only teams from Tahiti to emerge victorious in the 51-year history of the Moloka'i Hoe.

But unlike the Tahitian teams of the past, Rai did not rely on any local help. Faaa, for example, had veteran Hawai'i steersman Tommy Conner guide it to victory in '93 and '94.

Yesterday, Lewis Laughlin steered Rai.

"We had a bunch of guys who knew what it would take to win because we've won here before," he said. "But what's bigger this time is that we won this one by ourselves. That's why I say this is big for us and Tahiti.

"We have to thank all the Hawaiian steersmen who helped us in the past; they taught us so much. But this time, we felt like we were ready to do it ourselves."

Indeed, Rai translates to "sky" in Tahitian, and the team reached for it yesterday.

"We were confident from the start," Milton Laughlin said. "It didn't matter if (the waves) were 10 feet or not. We trained hard for this."

It probably helped Rai that the Kaiwi Channel was relatively calm yesterday. What's more, paddlers had to battle a gentle head-wind and an outgoing tide.

"I would say the conditions worked to their advantage," said Team NZ/H paddler Rob Kaiwai. "They're so fit, and they're used to working in the flat waters."

Still, Rai clinched the victory by catching one-foot waves off Waikiki. In the stretch run from Diamond Head to Duke Kahanamoku Beach, Rai and Team NZ/H paddled side by side.

"I was thinking that it was going to be a replay of last year (when Team NZ/H out-sprinted Lanikai to the finish line)," said Team NZ/H steersman Karel Tresnak Jr. "We'd catch a (wave) bump and get ahead, then they'd catch a bump and get ahead. They just got the last one."

That last wave gave Rai a 50-yard lead that it kept the rest of the way.

The race across the channel was close throughout, even though the leaders chose different paths: Rai stayed on a north course, while Team NZ/H stayed south.

"We never thought about following them," Lewis Laughlin said. "We were moving fast on the line we had, so we stayed with it."

Ultimately, the choice of courses proved to be a non-factor as the teams converged virtually even off East O'ahu.

"It was a pure, brutal paddling race," Tresnak said. "And (Rai) just out-paddled us. It was a tough race — the toughest I've ever been in. You just have to give them credit for pulling it off at the end."

Ikaika from Sydney, Australia, sneaked past Lanikai down the stretch to take third place at 5:16:58. It was the first time that Ikaika entered the Moloka'i Hoe.

"We have five guys who have done it before, but this club is only two years old," said Ikaika captain Guy Wilding. "So we're definitely pleased with this."

Ikaika took an extreme north course, and went virtually undetected throughout the race (official updates never listed Ikaika among the leaders).

"We felt like that was the right line to take," Wilding said. "But we didn't have the speed to stay with Rai or Team New Zealand/Hawai'i."

Lanikai placed fourth at 5:18:48, followed by Outrigger (5:21:44), Kai 'Opua (5:22:35), Hui Nalu (5:29:06), Wailea (5:31:43), Kawaihae (5:32:01) and the Outrigger masters (5:34:50). Each of those top 10 finishers paddled a "Mirage" canoe from Outrigger Connection.

In addition to a top 10 finish, Outrigger won the masters division for paddlers ages 35 and older. Mooloolabah of Australia was second in the masters division at 5:38:10.

"It was a great battle between the two of us," Outrigger's Todd Bradley said. "But we accomplished our goals. We got top 10 (overall) and won the masters."

Another Outrigger crew placed 21st overall and was the first team to finish in koa canoe at 5:51:29.

Hanalei from Kaua'i was 34th overall at 6:07:44 and won the 45-and-older division.

Kailua was an impressive 38th overall at 6:11:22 and first in the 55-and-older division for the second consecutive year. The second place 55-and-older crew, Kawaihae, came in more than 40 minutes later.

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Final results

Overall

1, Rai (Lewis Laughlin, Milton Laughlin, Jean-Pierre Barff, Tautu Temanu, Jimmy Tupea, Ridrige Hikutini, Gille Tching, Armand Tauotaha, Joakim Marere), 5:11:35. 2, Team New Zealand/Hawai'i, 5:11:55. 3, Ikaika, 5:16:58. 4,



Rai, the lone entry from Tahiti, surges past Diamond Head. Rai battled Team New Zealand/Hawai'i to the finish.

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Lanikai-I, 5:18:48. 5, Outrigger-I, 5:21:44. 6, Kai 'Opua, 5:22:35. 7, Hui Nalu-I, 5:29:06. 8, Wailea-I, 5:31:43. 9, Kawaihae, 5:32:01. 10, Outrigger-Masters, 5:34:50. 11, Lanakila, 5:35:48. 12, Cronulla, 5:37:25. 13, Mooloolabah, 5:38:10. 14, Marina Del Rey, 5:40:19. 15, 'Anuenue-III, 5:40:56. 16, Kailua-I, 5:43:18. 17, Hawaiian, 5:47:06. 18, Jericho Canada, 5:47:41. 19, Hui Lanakila-Masters, 5:48:51. 20, Hui Lanakila-I, 5:48:53. 21, Outrigger-Koa, 5:51:29. 22, Outrigger Team California, 5:52:58. 23, Puna, 5:55:34. 24, Wailea-II, 5:57:29. 25, Leeward Kai-Green, 5:57:45.

26, Niunalu-35s, 5:57:55. 27, Lanikai-II, 5:59:53. 28, Wailea-Mattoch, 6:01:14. 29, Hui Nalu-II, 6:01:54. 30, Hui Lanakila-II, 6:05:13. 31, Keoua O Honaunau, 6:05:27. 32, Healani-II, 6:05:38. 33, Manu O Ke Kai-I, 6:07:02. 34, Hanalei-45s, 6:07:44. 35, Kailua-II, 6:08:43. 36, Healani-I, 6:08:58. 37, Outrigger-Japan, 6:09:50. 38, Kailua-55s, 6:11:22. 39, Kihei-I, 6:12:56. 40, Lokahi-I, 6:14:02. 41, Waikiki Beach Boys, 6:15:50. 42, Kanu Connection-I, 6:16:52. 43, Waikiki Surf, 6:17:27. 44, Santa Barbara, 6:17:44. 45, Niunalu, 6:19:31. 46, Keahiakahoe, 6:22:45. 47, Newport Aquatic Center, 6:24:43. 48, Cairns Beach, 6:25:39. 49, Kailua-AM, 6:27:23. 50, Hanalei, 6:28:27.

51, Hui Lanakila-45s, 6:28:57. 52, Hui Lanakila-III, 6:29:36. 53, Kamehameha-Hilo, 6:29:59. 54, Hui Nalu-35s, 6:30:52. 55, Kahana, 6:30:59. 56, Kukui O Molokai, 6:31:45. 57, Hawaiian, 6:31:52. 58, Koa Kai, 6:32:18. 59, Waikiki Yacht-35s, 6:34:49. 60, Healani-III, 6:35:12. 61, Leeward Kai-Yellow, 6:35:42. 62, He'e Nalu, 6:37:46. 63, Waikiki Yacht, 6:38:09. 64, Hawaiian, 6:39:06. 65, Lanikai-III, 6:41:24. 66, Kihei-II, 6:42:57. 67, New Hope-SM1, 6:43:22. 68, Kai 'Opua, 6:43:51. 69, Marina Del Rey, 6:44:04. 70, Canoa Republic, 6:46:01. 71, Hui O Mana Ka Puuwai, 6:51:54. 72, Na Keiki O Ka Mo'i, 6:47:02. 73, Lokahi, 6:48:29. 74, Kanu Connection-II, 6:49:51. 75, Keaukaha-II, 6:50:19.

76, Hui O Mana Ka Puuwai, 6:51:54. 77, Kawaihae-55s, 6:52:05. 78, Keaukaha-I, 6:52:40. 79, Lokahi-II, 6:53:50. 80, Napili, 6:54:09. 81, 'Anuenue-II, 6:54:53. 82, 'Anuenue-55s, 6:55:38. 83, Hookahi Puuwai, 6:59:15. 84, North Shore, 6:59:30. 85, New Hope, 7:00:44. 86, New Hope-35s, 7:00:45. 87, Outrigger-45s, 7:01:49. 88, Kai Poha, 7:02:22. 89, Matahi Ngakau Toa, 7:05:40. 90, Kihei-III, 7:05:51. 91, Manu O Ke Kai-II, 7:08:40. 92, Koa Kai White, 7:09:48. 93, Kihei-IV, 7:11:45. 94, Keala, 7:11:49. 95, Makaha, 7:11:50. 96, Na Kai Ewalu, 7:15:50. 97, Keahiakahoe-55s, 7:16:57. 98, Koa Kai Red, 7:18:11. 99, Kamehameha-O'ahu, 7:21:51. 100, New Hope-SM2, 7:34:24. 101, Keaukaha-55s, 7:37:53. 102, Keaukaha-45s, 7:44:36. 103, Alapa Hoe-I, 7:49:41. 104, Alapa Hoe-II, 8:32:52.

Koa canoe

1, Outrigger (Will Estes, Luke Estes, Jeff Brow, Jimmy Austin, John Wacker, David Stackhouse, Mark Eliashof, Sean Keenan, Matt Guard), 5:51:29. 2, Kihei-I, 6:12:56.

Masters 35-older

1, Outrigger (Courtney Seto, Marc Haine, Mark Sandvold, Walter Guild, Bruce Black, Todd Bradley, Tommy Damon, Geoff Graf, Karl Heyer), 5:34:50. 2, Mooloolabah, 5:38:10. 3, Hui Lanakila, 5:48:51. 4, Outrigger Team California, 5:52:58. 5, Niunalu, 5:57:55. 6, Cairns Beach, 6:25:39. 7, Hui Nalu, 6:30:52. 8, Kahana, 6:30:59. 9, Waikiki Yacht, 6:34:49. 10, Na Keiki O Ka Mo'i, 6:47:02. 11, Hui O Mana Ka Puuwai, 6:51:54. 12, New Hope, 7:00:45.

Masters 45-older

1, Hanalei (Kawika Goodale, Togo Hermosura, Mick Callahan, Lance Laney, Gene Lopez, Steve Cole, Christian Marstan, Steve Baker, Leggs Yokotake), 6:07:44. 2, Newport Aquatic Center, 6:24:43. 3, Hui Lanakila, 6:28:57. 4, New Hope-SM1, 6:43:22. 5, Outrigger, 7:01:49. 6, Kihei-III, 7:05:51. 7, New Hope-SM2, 7:34:24. 8, Keaukaha, 7:44:36.

Masters 55-older

1, Kailua (Hank Leandro, Mike Watson, Bob Bruce, Sean Murphy, Paul Shaner, Paul Gay, Bruce Clifford, Kalani Delovio, Mel Pauole, Bob Thurston, Jeff Metzger, Willy Dunhour), 6:11:22. 2, Kawaihae, 6:52:05. 3, 'Anuenue, 6:55:38. 4, Kihei-IV, 7:05:51. 5, Keahiakahoe, 7:16:57. 6, Keaukaha, 7:37:53.