

Posted on: Monday, October 11, 2004

Lanikai Canoe Club aces Moloka'i Hoe

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After weeks of patience, the Lanikai Canoe Club went "all in" yesterday and won the biggest pot in canoe paddling — the Hawaii Modular Space Moloka'i Hoe.

Lanikai completed the 41-mile course from Hale O Lono Harbor, Moloka'i, to Duke Kahanamoku Beach, Waikiki, in 4 hours, 54 minutes, 5 seconds. Ninety crews participated in yesterday's Moloka'i Hoe, which is considered the world championship of long-distance team canoe paddling.

"We never played our cards until today, so even we didn't know what to expect," Lanikai steersman Jim Foti said. "We never had a full hand all year. Today we did, so we went all in."

Members of the winning crew were Kai Bartlett, Peter Binney, Ka'ai Bruhn, Kekoa Bruhn, David Daniels, Jim Foti, John Foti, Mike Judd and Mike Pedersen.

International crews took the next four spots: Shell Va'a from Tahiti was a distant second in 4:58:07, Ra'i from Tahiti was third in 5:02:50, Xylo Australia was fourth in 5:03:52, and Fareara from Tahiti fifth in (5:05:39).

Team New Zealand/Hawai'i, which won the race last year, was sixth in 5:06:24, followed by the Outrigger Canoe Club in 5:07:34.

It was Lanikai's fourth Moloka'i Hoe victory since 1995, and its fifth overall. The Foti brothers and Pedersen were on the championship crews in 1995, 1996, 2000 and yesterday.

There were some 5-foot swells across the Kaiwi Channel, but conditions were generally choppy, making it difficult to maintain long rides.

On a day when many of the other Hawai'i crews struggled, Lanikai recorded the third fastest time in the 53-year history of the race. Lanikai now owns the three fastest times in Moloka'i Hoe history, including the record of 4:50:31 in 2000.

"We were efficient," Judd said. "We feel like we can paddle with the best of them in the flat (water), but we know we're at our best in the surf. It wasn't a great surfing day, but we found our (waves)."



Shell Va'a from Tahiti finished second in the Hawaii Modular Space Moloka'i Hoe. Tahiti teams took three of the top five places.

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Lanikai was first across the finish line off the Hilton Hawaiian Village yesterday in the Moloka'i Hoe men's Moloka'i-to-O'ahu canoe paddling championship race.

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They also found their first crew. Judd and Bartlett — two world-class paddlers — missed most of the paddling season for separate reasons.

Judd underwent back surgery six weeks ago, but came back specifically for the Moloka'i Hoe. Bartlett was traveling for much of the summer, but returned in time to train for "the big one."

"Other teams were beating us earlier in the year, and that's fine," Judd said. "We'll take this one over all the other races combined."

As Bill Pratt of Team New Zealand/Hawai'i put it: "Lanikai had a couple of aces they were hiding and it probably made a difference today."

The waters off Moloka'i were calm, allowing the Tahitian crews to jump to an early lead. Ra'i, which won the 2002 Moloka'i Hoe, led for the first hour.

But once the choppy surf appeared in the channel, Lanikai took over.

"When Lanikai passed us, we kind of panicked," Ra'i steersman Lewis Laughlin said. "We were worried about catching them and we stopped focusing on our own race."

Because of the tricky conditions, the Foti brothers alternated in the steering position for Lanikai. Younger brother Jim Foti is the first team steersman, but he said the extra rest did wonders for him late in the race.

"This was one of my hardest races," he said. "But because I knew I didn't have to steer the whole race, I was going all out for every little bump I could find."

By the time Lanikai reached East O'ahu, the rest of the canoes were well behind.

Shell Va'a passed Ra'i for second place early in the race, but never got close enough to challenge Lanikai down the stretch.

"It was probably an advantage for Lanikai because we're not used to seeing conditions like this in Tahiti," Shell Va'a's Allain Maker said. "The waves were coming from different directions. It was hard. We're happy with our second place and first among the Tahiti teams."

Seven of the nine Lanikai paddlers were also on the 2000 championship crew. The new members were Ka'ai Bruhn and Daniels.

"It's like seeing your first-born child or falling in love for the first time," Ka'ai Bruhn said. "There's so many emotions. You want to laugh, you want to cry. It's just ... priceless."



Peter Binney hugs his mother, Ann Kai, after paddling with the victorious Lanikai Canoe Club during yesterday's Hawaii Modular Space Moloka'i Hoe. At right is teammate John Foti.

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His older brother Kekoa Bruhn added: "It's unbelievable to win it with my brother. But we're all brothers on this team. This is something we worked on together for years and years."

In the masters divisions:

- Mooloolaba of Australia placed 14th overall and first in 40-and-older division with a time of 5:29:47.

It was the second consecutive year that Mooloolaba won the masters division, although last year the minimum age was 35. Members of the winning crew: Rob Gowland, Ron Grabbe, Russell Johnson, Jeff Lamarseny, Mick Mills-Thom, Danny Sheard, Mick Smith, Phil Thistlewood and Guy Wilding.

"We take a lot of pride in winning the masters," Wilding said. "And we beat a lot of good open crews as well, so we're happy."

- Namolokama O Hanalei won the 50-and-older division for the third consecutive year with a time of 5:57:41.

Members of the winning crew: Steve Baker, Mick Callahan, Mark Daniells, Beanie Heen, Kawika Goodale, Lance Laney, Gene Lopez, Earl Simpson and Dan Sullivan.

Eight of the nine paddlers are from Kaua'i, and Heen is from the Big Island.

- Team Big Island won the 55-and-older division with a time of 5:53:53.

The winning crew was a combination of paddlers from Keauhou and Kawaihae canoe clubs: Paul Aguirre, Bob Bruce, Jim Budde, Lorrin Ching, Bruce Clifford, Kalani Delovio, Willie Dunhour, Ron Hochuli, Gary Medina, Bob Munson, Mel Pauole and Rafael Ramirez.

"We competed against each other all year, but decided to come together for this race," Aguirre said.

Final results

Overall

1, Lanikai-1, 4:54:05. 2, Shell Va'a, 4:58:07. 3, Ra'i, 5:02:50. 4, Xylo Australia, 5:03:52. 5, Fareara, 5:05:39. 6, Team New Zealand/Hawai'i, 5:06:24. 7, Outrigger-1, 5:07:34. 8, Outrigger-Australia, 5:11:54. 9, Wailea-1, 5:15:19. 10, Kailua-1, 5:18:12. 11, Hui Lanakila Blue, 5:20:02. 12, Hui Nalu-1, 5:24:52. 13, Hawaiian, 5:29:47. 14, Mooloolaba, 5:29:47. 15, Outrigger-2, 5:30:32. 16, Hawai'i Lifeguards, 5:33:13. 17, Puna, 5:33:50. 18, Lanikai-2, 5:35:07. 19, Hui Nalu-2, 5:35:30. 20, Hui Lanakila Red, 5:36:21. 21, Hui Lanakila Masters, 5:37:36. 22, Lanakila Red, 5:38:10. 23, Team West Hawai'i, 5:41:05. 24, Wailea-2, 5:42:32. 25, Dana Outrigger, 5:44:17.

26, Kukui O Moloka'i, 5:45:18. 27, Jericho Canada, 5:45:53. 28, 'Anuenue, 5:46:48. 29, False Creek, 5:47:26. 30, Leeward Kai, 5:48:54. 31, Manuiwa, 5:49:15. 32, Healani Blue, 5:50:09. 33, Lae'ula O Kai, 5:51:09. 34, Kahana, 5:51:44. 35, Lanakila White, 5:52:18. 36, Keahiakahoe, 5:52:58. 37, Hawaiian, 5:53:20. 38, Team Big Island, 5:53:53. 39, Pu'uwai, 5:54:09. 40, Niumalu, 5:55:40. 41, Team Malina, 5:56:43. 42, Kai 'Opua, 5:57:30. 43, Namolokama O Hanalei, 5:57:41. 44, Koa Kai-3, 5:59:58. 45, Waikiki Yacht-1, 6:00:37. 46, San Francisco, 6:01:06. 47, Lokahi-1, 6:01:16. 48, Waikiki Beach Boys, 6:03:41. 49, Kalifornia Kahanamokus, 6:05:49. 50, Kailua-2, 6:06:16.

51, 'Anuenue-1, 6:07:49. 52, Kanu Connection, 6:08:42. 53, Outrigger-Japan, 6:09:08. 54, Keaukaha, 6:09:23. 55, Lanikai-3, 6:10:16. 56, Hui Nalu, 6:13:01. 57, False Creek, 6:13:47. 58, Waikiki Surf, 6:15:27. 59, Kai Elua, 6:16:11. 60, Hui Lanakila Yellow, 6:17:18. 61, Kahana, 6:17:47. 62, Kamehameha-Hilo, 6:18:13. 63, Kaiola, 6:20:13. 64, Waikiki Beach Boys, 6:21:43. 65, New Hope, 6:21:50. 66, Lokahi-2, 6:21:57. 67, New Hope, 6:23:33. 68, Hawaiian, 6:24:52. 69, San Francisco, 6:25:12. 70, Healani White, 6:25:26. 71, Koa Kai-2, 6:26:05. 72, Na Kai Ewalu, 6:27:14. 73, Waikiki Yacht-2, 6:28:39. 74, Kelowna Outrigger, 6:28:58. 75, Alapa Hoe, 6:33:23.

76, New Hope-2, 6:35:05. 77, Koa Kai, 6:36:42. 78, Tri Cities, 6:38:08. 79, California Golden Masters, 6:38:29. 80, Kahakai, 6:40:03. 81, Keauhou, 6:41:05. 82, Keahiakahoe, 6:41:20. 83, Pu'uwai, 6:41:46. 84, North Shore, 6:53:41. 85, Kamamala Hoe, 6:54:21. 86, New Hope 40, 7:03:05. 87, Keaukaha, 7:04:28. 88, Honolulu Pearl, 7:09:29. 89, Keaukaha, 7:26:46.

Masters 40-older

1, Mooloolaba, 5:29:47. 2, Hui Lanakila, 5:37:36. 3, Manuiwa, 5:49:15. 4, Hawaiian, 6:24:52. 5, Kelowna, 6:28:58. 6, Keauhou, 6:41:05. 7, Kamamala Hoe, 6:54:21. 8, New Hope, 7:03:05. 9, Honolulu Pearl, 7:09:29.

Masters 50-older

1, Namolokama O Hanalei, 5:57:41. 2, Kalifornia Kahanamokus, 6:05:49. 3, Keaukaha, 7:04:28.

Masters 55-older

1, Team Big Island, 5:53:53. 2, 'Anuenue, 6:07:49. 3, Kaiola, 6:20:13. 4, California Golden Masters, 6:38:29. 5, Keahiakahoe, 6:41:20.

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