

Posted on: Monday, October 12, 2009

Shell Va'a paddlers gas and go

By [Dayton Morinaga](#)
Advertiser Staff Writer

The Shell game continues to stump the rest of the paddling world.

The Shell Va'a team from Tahiti won the Moloka'i Hoe championship race for the fourth consecutive year yesterday. All four victories have come in convincing fashion.

"It's about being together," Shell Va'a coach Gerard Teiva said. "We work really hard together, and then we race really hard together."

Shell Va'a completed the course from Hale O Lono Harbor, Moloka'i, to Duke Kahanamoku Beach, Waikiki, in 4 hours, 40 minutes, 17 seconds. It was 1 minute, 42 seconds shy of the course record it set last year, but still the second-fastest time in the 58-year history of the Moloka'i Hoe.

The 41-mile race across the Kaiwi Channel is considered the world championship of long-distance outrigger canoe racing. A record 112 crews participated in yesterday's race.

Shell Va'a may not have set a record time, but it continued to crush the rest of the field.

Team Primo placed second in 4:52:24 — about 1 1/2 miles behind Shell Va'a. Paddling Connection from Tahiti was third in 4:57:51, more than two miles behind Shell Va'a.

"Shell is just on another level; you can't compare times or anything like that to them," Team Primo paddler Kai Bartlett said. "Not even the other Tahitian teams can compare to them."

Shell Va'a president Richel Moux said he was pleasantly surprised that his team was able to challenge the course record and separate from the rest of the field.

"With this kind of weather, it was impossible to beat the record," Moux said. "But for us to make a big difference between us and the second team is good."

The teams had to paddle across a "sloppy" Kaiwi Channel.

"The waves were on the side, so it was hard to catch waves," Moux said. "Not the best conditions for this race. So in this conditions, very surprised we went this fast."

Members of the Shell Va'a were Georges Mataitini Dehors, Yoann Cronsteadt, David Tepava, Taaroa Dubois, Tara Lucien, Ronald Teahui, Tereiarui Hamblin, Roland Tere and Hei-Moana Mairau.

Only five of them returned from last year's record-setting crew.



Shell Va'a came up short of a course record but still finished ahead of runner-up Team Primo by about 1 1/2 miles.

DEBORAH BOOKER | The Honolulu Advertiser



Shell Va'a is welcomed at Duke Kahanamoku Beach after winning the Moloka'i Hoe for the fourth year in a row.

DEBORAH BOOKER | The Honolulu Advertiser

"I was really worried because we have guys who are not used to this kind of rough water," said the coach, Teiva.

In truth, there was never a need to worry. Shell Va'a broke ahead of the pack almost from the start and never looked back.

"We come out fast and keep going, that's all," said Hamblin, one of the new paddlers on the team.

Dubois, also a new paddler for Shell Va'a, said: "It's the training. We train morning and afternoon, very hard. This is the result."

Shell Va'a's four-year reign is the second longest in Moloka'i Hoe history (Waikiki Surf Club won six in a row from 1958-63). It puts the Tahitian club at the lead of the debate for greatest dynasty in Moloka'i Hoe history.

"What they're doing is unbelievable, it really is," said Lanikai Canoe Club's veteran steersman Jim Foti. "We were all shooting for second."

In the shadow of Shell Va'a's dominance, Team Primo had an impressive race.

For starters, it was the best showing by a Hawai'i-based team since 2005. Before yesterday, Tahiti teams had finished first and second in the Moloka'i Hoe in 2006, '07 and '08.

The gap of 12 minutes, 7 seconds, was also the closest any Hawai'i team has come to Shell Va'a in the last four years.

What's more, Team Primo beat two other quality teams from Tahiti — Paddling Connection placed third, and Era'i Va'a was fourth in 5:02:15.

Lanikai was fifth in 5:05:22 — 13 minutes behind Team Primo.

"Our first goal was to be the first Hawai'i team, and then anything on top of that was icing on the cake," Bartlett said.

Team Primo is a crew of elite paddlers that was put together two months ago. The team featured six paddlers from Maui (Bartlett, Mael Carey, Kekoa Cramer, Felipe Gomes, Peter Konohia, Tyson Kubo), two from O'ahu (Mike Judd, Mike Pedersen), and one from California (Danny Ching).

Team Primo was within sight of Shell Va'a midway across the Kaiwi Channel, but the Tahitians pulled away down the stretch.

Paddling Connection's third-place finish was impressive when considering that it was entering the Moloka'i Hoe for the first time.

"Conditions were a little bit rough for us, and we're not used to it," paddler Teva Richmond said. "This is our first participation to this event and we arrived third, so we are happy."

Lanikai's fifth-place showing was also a surprise. Lanikai had been placing behind several other Hawai'i clubs in the prelude races in recent months.

"Nobody expected anything out of us, so that was fun," steersman Foti said.

Outrigger placed sixth in 5:07:24, followed by Team Livestrong (5:08:33), Hui Lanakila-1 (5:09:00), Kailua (5:12:08) and Hui Lanakila-2 (5:16:04).

A record-tying 111 crews from around the world participated in the race.

Other crews of note:

- Mooloolaba of Australia placed 25th overall and first in the masters 50 division with a time of 5:35:34.

Making it more impressive, Mooloolaba beat all the masters 40 teams.

- Outrigger placed 28th overall and first in the masters 40 division with a time of 5:39:45. Kukui'ula from Kaua'i was a close second in 5:42:59.
- Team Bradley/Keahiakahoe placed 45th overall and first in the masters 55 division with a time of 5:56:53.
- A combination team of Kihei/Keauhou placed 77th overall and first in the masters 60 division with a time of 6:32:55. It was the first year that a masters 60 division was added to the race.
- Outrigger's second crew placed 27th overall and first with a koa canoe in 5:38:40. There were three koa canoes in yesterday's race. All the other crews used fiberglass canoes.
- 'Anuenue placed 80th overall and third in the masters 60 division in 6:34:23. The crew was steered by Joseph "Nappy" Napoleon, who completed the Moloka'i Hoe for the 52nd consecutive year.
- Pure Light Racing finished 110th with a time of 7:38:44. The crew featured 11 adaptive paddlers who are physically challenged. The crew was steered and coached by Aka Hemmings, an able-bodied paddler.
- More than 20 crews received a 10-minute penalty for various rules violations.

FINAL RESULTS

OVERALL

1, Shell Va'a, 4:40:17. 2, Team Primo, 4:52:24. 3, Paddling Connection, 4:57:51. 4, Era'i Va'a, 5:02:15. 5, Lanikai, 5:05:22. 6, Outrigger-Red, 5:07:24. 7, Team Livestrong, 5:08:33. 8, Hui Lanakila-1, 5:09:00. 9, Kailua-1, 5:12:08. 10, Hui Lanakila-2, 5:16:04. 11, Hawaiian, 5:18:48. 12, Northcliffe A, 5:21:07. 13, Keahiakahoe-Black, 5:21:49. 14, Hui Nalu-Gold, 5:25:23. 15, Healani-1, 5:27:26. 16, Kailua-2, 5:28:31. 17, Na Molokama, 5:30:00. 18, Lanakila Calif., 5:30:41. 19, Newport Aquatic Center, 5:31:18. 20, Kai 'Opua, 5:32:42. 21, Kaiola, 5:33:30. 22, Waikiki Beachboys-1, 5:34:02. 23, Leeward Kai, 5:35:08. 24, Paddle Sport Performance, 5:35:18. 25, Mooloolaba Senior Masters, 5:35:34.

26, Northcliffe B, 5:37:04. 27, Outrigger-koa, 5:38:40. 28, Outrigger 40s, 5:39:45. 29, Kukui'ula, 5:42:59. 30, Kailua 50s, 5:43:27. 31, Kihei, 5:44:11. 32, Hui Nalu 40s, 5:45:28. 33, Kaiola, 5:45:57. 34, Lanikai-koa, 5:47:11. 35, Oceanside, 5:47:20. 36, Kamehameha-Hilo, 5:48:29. 37, Lae'ula O Kai, 5:48:33. 38, Hui Lanakila-4, 5:48:57. 39, Hawaiian-2, 5:49:11. 40, 'Anuenue-1, 5:51:03. 41, Te Awa Haku/Air New Zealand, 5:51:35. 42, Puna, 5:51:45. 43, Niunalu, 5:51:59. 44, Puuwai East Masters, 5:52:10. 45, Team Bradley/Keahiakahoe 55s, 5:56:53. 46, Kai 'Opua, 5:58:08. 47, OP Advantage, 5:58:24. 48, Waikiki Surf Club, 6:00:22. 49, Kailua 40s, 6:00:35. 50, Hui Nalu-1, 6:04:08.

51, Easy Living, 6:04:44. 52, Pacific Northwest, 6:05:09. 53, Kai 'Opua, 6:05:19. 54, Keaukaha, 6:05:25. 55, Na Kai Ewalu, 6:05:36. 56, Lanikai, 6:06:30. 57, California Gold, 6:07:08. 58, Mission Bay Beach Boys, 6:07:16. 59, Lokahi/Keauhou, 6:10:05. 60, Kahanamoku, 6:10:31. 61, Healani-2, 6:11:24. 62, 'Anuenue-2, 6:12:07. 63, Waikiki Beachboys-2, 6:12:59. 64, Kukui O Moloka'i, 6:14:28. 65, Waimanalo 55s, 6:14:54. 66, Marina Del Rey, 6:15:56. 67, Lae'ula O Kai-Green, 6:17:31. 68, Hui Lanakila-3, 6:18:35. 69, Marina Del Rey-2, 6:19:53. 70, Akau Hana, 6:20:58. 71, Healani-3, 6:21:35. 72, Kaiola/Kihei, 6:22:28. 73, Honolulu Fire, 6:22:52. 74, Outrigger-Blue, 6:23:44. 75, North Shore, 6:26:03.

76, Ka Mamalahoe, 6:31:03. 77, Kihei/Keauhou, 6:32:55. 78, Na Keiki O Ka Mo'i, 6:33:22. 79, Kamehameha-O'ahu, 6:33:35. 80, 'Anuenue 60s, 6:34:23. 81, Sail Sand Point, 6:34:43. 82, Oceanside 40s, 6:36:40. 83,

Keahiakahoe 60s, 6:37:49. 84, Part Time Paddlers, 6:38:01. 85, Keola O Ke Kai, 6:38:43. 86, Kailua Novice, 6:38:45. 87, Hawaiian Fire Fighters, 6:39:09. 88, Waikiki Beachboys-3, 6:39:54. 89, Kaiola, 6:40:07. 90, New Hope, 6:41:26. 91, Outrigger 60s, 6:45:58. 92, Waimanalo 40s, 6:46:15. 93, Hui Nalu 55s, 6:46:28. 94, Kihei, 6:47:14. 95, Honolulu Pearl, 6:47:55. 96, Hui Nalu-2, 6:49:30. 97, Puuwai, 6:50:46. 98, New Hope 40s, 6:51:07. 99, Alapa Hoe, 6:51:34. 100, Kai Oni, 6:53:38.

101, Keahiakahoe 40s, 6:53:45. 102, Waikiki Yacht Club, 6:53:56. 103, Keahiakahoe-Red, 6:55:56. 104, Vladivostok, 6:59:42. 105, Keoua, 7:07:28. 106, Lokahi, 7:11:14. 107, Keaukaha 55s, 7:16:56. 108, New Hope 55s, 7:28:46. 109, New Hope 60s, 7:36:18. 110, Pure Light, 7:38:44. 111, New Hope 40s, 7:51:44.