

Two Sides of a Champion

By Genie Kincaid

As the regatta season moves into distance, they individually heave a heavy sigh. For now, the training sessions become more intense--and longer.

Four days a week practices will extend to five days, sometimes six. Two hours per practice will stretch to four hours, maybe five.

They all know that the regatta season is the warm up for the year's Molokai race, but they also know that training heats up to a full boil immediately after the State Championship regatta has been won.

And surely, somehow, some way, they can expect Outrigger to rise to the occasion and make yet another winning bid for the Molokai.

But they will never set foot in the canoe and undergo the exhaustive physical training for the big race. Nor will they submit their minds to the mental gymnastics through which the coach might put them.

Instead, they will be training for a different aspect of the big race. It will be another year's exercise in moral support, positive thinking, single parenting and infinite patience.

For they have been and always will be collectively known as "the wives." No capital letters, no exclamation point and certainly, no fanfare. They are just quietly, unobtrusively but resolutely . . . there.

There for their husbands, the coach and crew. There to massage the sore muscles and aching backs. There to replenish the bodies with this brand or that brand of sporting food or drink.



Watching their husbands race at a recent regatta were Laura Van Lier Ribbink, Genie Kincaid, Lesline Conner, Jackie Scott and Leayne Downing.

There to chauffeur the burned out bodies back home or to the Club for a revitalizing shower. There to take care of the kids a little longer for the daddies.

But who or what is there for the wives? Very little, or so it seems.

The one thing the wives do during distance season is endure it. Time is never on their side, especially for those who are also mothers.

Try running your life, your kids' lives and your home--all at once, all alone, for a summer--and something is bound to give, starting with your nerves.

They will guarantee you in no uncertain terms that single parenting is a strain on everyone in the family and very simply the pits.

And when the wives lament over lost time for themselves, they do so with a measure of regret, resentment and surrender.

But the wives are a curious lot who in the end yield their support to their husbands' endeavor and fiercely expect the same loyalty from everyone else.

They instinctively realize that paddling husbands need to train for Molokai and need to win it. They know, that win, or lose, the time commitment is tremendous.

Perhaps their faith is blind. Perhaps they discovered a new level of lunacy. But each wife has learned that her husband is going to do what he's going to do. And perhaps it's her role as the other side of the champion to just make it easier for him to do what he truly wants to do.

As the distance season begins all over again, the wives will be there as they have always been and no championship Molokai crew from Outrigger could have ever done it without them. ☺