

Junior 'Riggers Crew Wins Dad Center

By Mark Sandvold



Showing off the new Dad Center Junior Trophy are, front, Kailee Graff and Kealoha Scullion. Back, CC Konickson, Kiana Sandvold, Kaya Lee, Makena Somerset, GG Thomas, Malia Gacutan (holding trophy), Emma Humphries, Micaela Kauhane, Yael Van Delden. Not pictured: Makana Shipman.



Celebrating their victory are, left to right, Malia Gacutan (steering), Kiana Sandvold (standing), Yael Van Delden, Kailee Graf, Micaela Kauhane, Makana Shipman.

Since being asked by OCC to coach the Girls 12 paddling crew seven years ago I have always had the dream of seeing my young daughter Kiana (who was 10 at the time) and her friends move up one day to race long distance and see a whole new side of canoe racing.

Two weeks before this year's Dad Center Race, Paula Crabb asked me to step up and get a crew together. She said we needed 12 girls to enter. I put the word out and little by little we were able to put together a great crew of mostly 16 and 17 year olds who were going to race against other crews with 18 year olds.

Paula mentioned that Jay Dowsett had donated a beautiful new koa perpetual trophy for the Junior Division and how great it would be for our girls to be first to have their names on it.

We trained with the open women for two weeks where we learned to do open ocean changes and worked on being stable in the open ocean.

On August 28, in what has to be one of the roughest races in years, our girls from OCC beat the field and won the Dad Center Junior Trophy with a finishing time of 4:05!

I am so proud of them as they faced challenge after challenge with one huli and some seasickness but they didn't give up and held on to beat last year's winner Lanikai by ten boat lengths.

The girls and their parents gathered together at the start of the race in Kailua to say a prayer for a safe day. Conditions were some of the roughest we've seen in years. Trades were blowing at 15-25 knots with 8-10-foot seas. Going around Makapuu was probably the hardest part of the entire race.

Coach Andrew Glatzel was in charge of the course and guided the girls perfectly around Makapuu and Diamond Head as they passed several crews. I had back surgery recently so I was unable to join them on the escort boat and followed the race by land. Geoff Graf was our escort boat driver and Meleana Carr Wolf assisted the girls with water and snacks on the changes.

Yes it was a crazy day and a huge accomplishment for our girls to not only finish but to win! It was the first Junior crew from OCC to have entered this race!

My daughter Kiana said she's hooked and asked, "Dad, why didn't we do this sooner". Micaela Kauhane said it was the biggest accomplishment in her life so far. All the girls really appreciated all the support from the open and masters women as they cheered them on at the finish.

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