

Team Oahu Brings Home Gold

By Tiare Finney

(Editor's Note: Outrigger's Ann Cundall, Tiare Finney, Mary Fern and Laurie Lawson, and two other master paddlers participated as Team Hawaii in the World Sprints in Bora Bora. An additional OCC member, Susan Heitzman, was unable to participate due to health problems.)

"We got what we came for and we did it for Susan!!"

Advancing several times in the younger women's divisions, Team Oahu, was hopeful that they could pull off some magic. We had a tough start in the 35s 1000-meter in that there was confusion and "boat traffic" exiting the turn. Lanes are half the width that we are accustomed to in Hawaii, and the super light fiberglass boats were challenging.

"Turning these canoes is like driving a 60s VW with the hand brake on" says Laola Lake, steers person for Team Oahu.

In both women's 35s events, the 1000-meter and 500-meter, we lost to Waikiki Surf Club by less than one second, and were eliminated, but we were just glad to be in the lineup with the "big girls."

Then came the masters women 1000. It was like a movie. We just turned in and clicked. The boat flew. It was calm, easy paddling, and we were there. It was dream like. We turned a time of 5.29. The day before, winning times were in the 5.40s.

We looked at each other and laughed. What a wonderful gift to give to Susan. She must have been talking to the man upstairs. He just lifted us up.

Later in the day, Team Oahu won a silver medal in the 500-meter women's 45 event.

So many people cheered for us and wished us well. It was amazing. Everyone on the beach was just thrilled for us and champagne was sent to our hotel room. What a great memory.

Our last day of racing brought yet another challenge being a dark horse team we were not able to get any other Oahu or Hawaii team to join with us in advance for the women's 12. So we just looked around for a team on the beach from Hawaii that morning.

Team Lanikai joined us and I was proud to have them as my teammates. Molly Foti steered us to a photo finish and Team Lanikai/Oahu brought more medals home for Hawaii.

Ms. Foti has been participating in the World Sprints for years and Team Oahu helped her win her first medal. What a wonderful feeling. We all are so proud.

It was everything a trip to Bora Bora should be - blue lagoons, flowers, drums, smiling locals and victory.

Holding up three medals, I asked, "would you call this a royal flush?"

Hut ho.



Team Oahu - Ann Cundall, Tiare Finney, Mary Fern, Deb Kasnetz (Hui Nalu), Laola Lake (Kauai) and Laurie Lawson.

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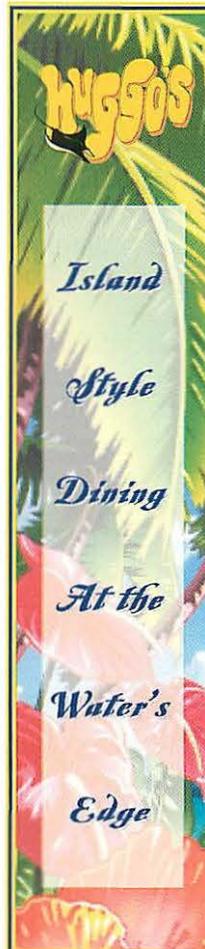
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