



Three Outrigger masters men joined an all-star Hawaii masters team in the Hamilton Cup races. They were seat two Gaylord Wilcox and seat one Bill Mowat. Tay Perry was also on the crew. They were steered by Nappy Napoleon. They won the 500 and 1,000-meter sprints and the 32K race, and were second in the 16K.

Outrigger Well Represented at HAMILTON CUP

By Jimmy Austin

The Hamilton Cup is one of the best canoe racing events in the world; four days of competitive racing: one man, six man, and nine man races, ranging from 500 meter sprints to 42 km long distance. It is by far the most professionally put together outrigger race in the world.

The history of the Hamilton Cup began approximately 20 years ago when OCC members Walter Guild and Kamoia Kalama went to Australia to introduce the sport of outrigger canoe paddling. By the following year the Aussies had instituted the Hamilton Cup and every year since the event has taken another step forward.

From the perspective of the paddler the races are fair every time, the officiating is professional and the rules are simple; "If you're over the line you're disqualified."

In 2005 and 2006, five OCC members, along with some other top paddlers in the state, went down to Australia to compete in the Cup. In 2005 Team Hawaii won a great deal of races, but in 2006 they won every event.

After putting the crews together in 2005 and 2006, we decided that racing as Team Hawaii didn't help our OCC Canoe Racing program. It had been a long time since OCC was able to field a competitive, all member crew and travel to Australia. Early on in the year we thought that maybe we should try going down as a club once again.

With the support of Jen Bossert, our Canoe Racing chairman, and the OCC Board of Directors (which granted partial funding) the long process of recruiting and arrangements were underway.

Of course going to the Hamilton Cup seemed like a great idea; who wouldn't want a vacation on the islands off the Great Barrier Reef and an opportunity to represent OCC in this legendary competition?

While the lure of a pseudo-vacation was a drawing point for paddlers to join our crew, the major objective for our team was to prepare for the upcoming 2007 Canoe Racing season—and what better way than to put our skills to the test in this highly competitive event. Competing against some of Australia's top teams and other professional athletes from around the world proves every year to be an opportunity to see and participate in canoe racing at its most challenging and best!

If you think getting nine top paddlers to go to Australia is a breeze you're in for a surprise! The cost for such a trip was a staggering \$16,000 not including expenses. In addition, the commitment to leave busy schedules, work and families for prep time, racing and travel days is asking a lot of our guys.

When we began putting the crew together, nearly every guy from our team was in, but as we got closer to the date the commitment proved to be great. In the end our OCC team was comprised of nine of our top athletes: Kaponio Brown, Tapa Worthington, Jed Gushman, Mark Sandvold, Mike Kane, Evan Rhodes, Byron Ho, Karel Tresnak Jr. and Jimmy Austin.

We were fortunate to have the leadership of our coach, John Puakea and a small group of team supporters that assisted in all of our

Representing OCC at the Hamilton Cup races in Australia were, front, Karel Tresnak Jr., Byron Ho, Kaponio Brown, Mike Kane, Mark Sandvold. Back: Tapa Worthington, Jed Gushman, Coach John Puakea, Jimmy Austin, Evan Rhodes.



organizing, fundraising and made up a mighty proud side line cheering squad.

After arriving in Hamilton, we were surprised to see that many of the top teams present were made up of "all star" teams. It was an ironic twist and role reversal; as Team Hawaii had now come to race as a club returning under the OCC banner. Their teams consisted of top paddlers from a variety of clubs put together into a couple of really great teams. With all the competitive teams that showed up, we knew we had our work cut out for us.

Day One began with one man and two man canoe races. They started with the 8K, then 250 meter sprint, and finished with the 16K race. The highlight of the first day was our own, Mike Kane and Jimmy Austin winning the 16K two man race—making for an impressive three year winning streak in this event.

The second day was made up of races in the six man 500 meter sprint and 16K around the island. OCC placed fifth in the sprint and 11th in the around the island. Day three allowed most of the teams to rest and regroup with smaller races throughout the day including the six-man 1000 meter sprints, of which we placed an exciting fourth.

Day Four was the big 42K race—three hours long including two hours of grueling upwind paddling and one hour paddling in a side-ways downwind with choppy conditions that would make even the most experienced paddlers work for every stroke. OCC kept pace with the top crews and finished sixth in the open division and seventh overall, while an Australian team took the first place cup.

Overall we were very happy to have had the opportunity to represent the "Red and White" in the land Down Under. As a team we had an inspiring start to our season, a core group of guys on our team returned home united and eager to continue our training and preparation for this years Molokai Challenge where we will again have the opportunity to compete with these top crews.

As a crew representing one Club we had the best overall finishes across the board! It is our hope that the efforts of our team were inspiring to other club participants and that they too would choose to represent their own roots and come back next year to race as Club teams.

Regardless of the competition, we were proud of our accomplishments and thankful for everyone's support to make this trip possible.