Team Bradley outduels Beach Boys

By Kyle Galdeira / Special to the Star-Advertiser

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The women of Team Bradley hustled toward a first-place finish Sunday at the Dad Center Race.

Waikiki Beach Boys steerswoman Kaui Pelekane summed up the ongoing rivalry between her crew and outrigger canoe paddling power Team Bradley: "Another year, another battle."

The joust for supremacy in the long-distance ranks continues to sway in Team Bradley's favor, as it claimed the 39th annual Dad Center Race held Sunday along Oahu's east and south shores. The event marked the first full-field event of the women's long-distance paddling season, and featured 49 crews that traversed a 25-mile course spanning from Kailua Beach, around Makapuu and Diamond Head and finishing in the waters fronting the Outrigger Canoe Club in Waikiki.

Team Bradley, which races under the banner of Hawaiian Canoe Club of Maui and last won this event in 2009, finished the race in 3 hours, 13 minutes and 13 seconds. The Waikiki Beach Boys

kept things relatively close in garnering the runner-up spot (3:19:16), while Hui Nalu (3:23:01) and Hui Nalu 40s (3:26:54) finished third and fourth.

"These girls (from Bradley) are so awesome, you just can't make mistakes," Pelekane said. "We're just not on the top of our game yet."

The winning team featured Dane Ward, Mahealani Botelho, Lori Nakamura, Noelani Sawyer-Auger, Alena Goo, Kristin Foster, Nicole Pederson, Andrea Moller, Claire Townsend and Arlene Holzman. Team Bradley features an experienced group of paddlers from across the state that bears the name of outrigger canoe maker Sonny Bradley, and has won seven of the last eight Na Wahine O Ke Kai events, including a streak of six straight titles from 2005 to 2010. Waikiki was the crew that dethroned Bradley in 2011, and came within about three minutes of knocking off Bradley again last year.

Waikiki kept Team Bradley in its sights through the waters fronting Waimanalo. However, as Pelekane explained, "We made a (crew) change just outside of Rabbit Island and they just walked on us. We didn't have a good combination and they just opened the gap. We couldn't catch them."

Team Bradley coach John Puakea explained that while the ocean wasn't particularly rough, a strong tide worked against paddlers and created "tough conditions" that made it difficult to ride swells and bumps.

"The Beach Boys have been solid and have a strong group of girls who train together all the time," Puakea said of the rival paddlers. "They're awesome and they're hungry."

Waikiki's crew also included Kelly Allen, Alanna Bender, Chelsea Bizik, Rachel Bruntsch, Dana Gorecki, Eko Lapp, Alexia Lopez and Jen Polcer.

Sunday's race was named after David "Dad" Center, a premier waterman in the same era as Duke Kahanamoku who headed the Outrigger Canoe Club's water programs. Kawika Grant, a member of Outrigger's paddling committee for more than 20 years, explained that in those times, women were not included in canoe paddling because they were thought to lack the strength or endurance to compete in the same events as men.

In 1943, Outrigger fielded its first women's crew, and in 1974, the first women's long-distance race sanctioned by the Hawaiian Canoe Racing Association was held in memory of Dad Center and his work in advancing women's paddling.

Team Bradley's victory netted the crew the Thomas H. Richert trophy, which is awarded to the race's open division winner each year.

"They have great ocean women, and a bond that is pretty amazing, like family, and they have a lot of fun together," said Puakea, when asked about the qualities that help Team Bradley achieve continued success. "Now, it's all about sticking to the training program and trying to get better. Staying hungry while being confident, and not cocky, is a huge deal."

RESULTS

Overall -- 1. Hawaiian Team Bradley, 3:13:13.58; 2. Waikiki Beach Boys, 3:19:16.04; 3. Hui Nalu, 3:23:00.98.

DIVISION RESULTS

Koa -- 1. Kukui'ula (Tasha Aipa, Tammy Aipa-Napolean, Ajia Gabriel, Debbie Green, Anuhea Herrod, Laola Lake Aea, Dana Miyake, Kristy Nagahisa, Patti Pacanas-Huff), 4:05:32.60; 2. Lanikai, 4:06:49.77; 3. Outrigger-2, 4:10:16.24.

Open -- 1. Hawaiian Team Bradley (Dane Ward, Mahealani Botelho, Lori Nakamura, Noelani Sawyer-Auger, Alana Goo, Kristin Foster, Nicole Pederson, Andrea Moller, Claire Townsend, Arlene Holzman), 3:13:13.58; 2. Waikiki Beach Boys, 3:19:16.04; 3. Hui Nalu, 3:23:00.98.

Master 40 -- 1. Hui Nalu 40s (Michelle Arnold, Jeane Barrett, Michelle Bradley, Denise Darval-Ching, Kelly Fey, Puaahi Ioane, Margie Kawaiaea, Jill Schooler, Katie Stephens, Shien-Lu Stokesbary (3:26:54.69); 2. Kailua 40s, 3:36:53.79; 3. Keahiakahoe, 4:10:51.88.

Master 50 -- 1. Outrigger (Linda Fernandez, Laurie Lawson, Kim Darling, Lisa Livingston, Debbie Deshais, Kisi Haine, Paula Crabb, Katy Bourne, Jane McKee, Lisa Stringer, Brigitta Osterhold, Wendy Wichman), 3:37:05.10; 2. Lanikai 50s, 3:46:39.65; 3. Kailua 50s, 3:54:25.38.