

OCC brings home Molokai Hoe title

10/13/86 Adv.

By Andy Yamaguchi
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It was Outrigger against the world.

Outrigger Canoe Club, stung by remarks that Hawaii paddlers could no longer win in their waters, beat a strong international field yesterday to win the Bankoh Molokai Hoe, the 35th Molokai-to-Oahu canoe race.

OCC made the 40.8-mile crossing in 5 hours, 27 minutes and 45 seconds, three-quarters of a mile ahead of a hand-picked crew of Tahiti's finest.

Last year's winner, the Illinois Brigade, was sixth.

No records were set.

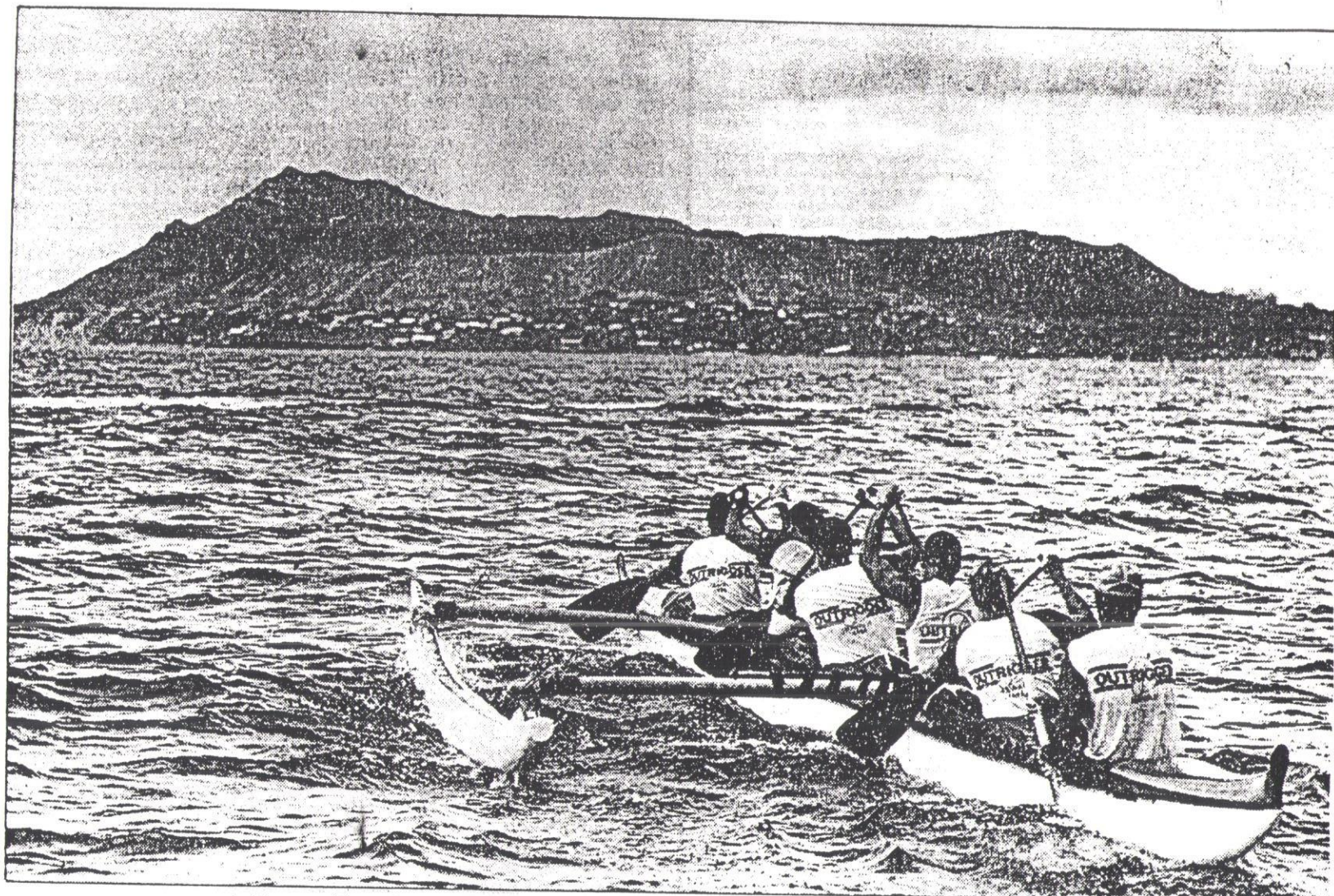
As OCC's sleek fiberglass canoe, the *Onipa'a*, glided past the finish-line buoys off Fort DeRussy Beach, stroke paddler Walter Guild threw his paddle 15 feet into the air, touching off an uncharacteristically raucous OCC celebration.

"Everybody kind of wrote off any Hawaii crew to win," Outrigger's Chris Kincaid said. "Everyone tells you, 'You don't have the personnel.' It got us motivated."

Said Guild, "There's people representing their countries here, and for us to bring it back to Hawaii means a tremendous amount."

Only Outrigger stood between local pride and total domination by outsiders. After OCC, the next five finishers were from Tahiti, California or the Great Lakes region.

But Outrigger is used to being Hawaii's flag-bearer. OCC, headquartered in a sumptuous clubhouse on the beach



The end's in sight for Outrigger's paddlers as they approach Diamond Head, leading a pack of 52 canoes.

Photo by Warren Bolster

near Diamond Head, is the only Hawaii club to have won the Molokai race in the last 12 years, doing so seven times.

Yesterday's victory was OCC's 11th Molokai title.

Non-Hawaii crews had won

three of the previous five races, including last year's stunner by the Illinois Brigade, a group of world-class canoeists from the Great Lakes region.

And word this time was that the favorite should be Tahiti

No. 1, an all-star crew that won the prestigious 30-mile Catalina Race off California in August.

Fifty-two koa and fiberglass canoes, the largest field ever, lined up at Hale O Lono Harbor on Molokai's southern shore for

the 7:30 a.m. start. Somebody jumped the gun and the flee lurched forward with the yellow "wait" flag still up.

Kaiwi Channel was relatively

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One paddle, few paddle

At right, an Outrigger Canoe Club paddler throws his paddle skyward off Fort DeRussy Beach after OCC, a Honolulu crew (above), won yesterday's 35th Molokai-to-Oahu canoe race to bring the title back to Hawaii. Crews from outside Hawaii had won three of the previous five races, including last year's victory by the Illinois Brigade, a group of world-class canoeists from the Great Lakes region. Outrigger made the 40.8-mile crossing of Kaiwi Channel in 5 hours, 27 minutes and 45 seconds. Story on Page C-1.