

# Offshore sweeps Molokai-to-Oahu paddling races

□ The San Diego club adds the men's title to the women's crown it won two weeks ago

By Jack Wyatt

Special to the Star-Bulletin

Billy Whitford of California's Offshore Canoe Club has taken Hawaii's gracious Aloha hospitality beyond its intended limit, say some Molokai Hoe paddlers good-naturedly.

Two weeks ago the Whitford-coached Offshore Wahines won their fourth consecutive Molokai-to-Oahu women's race in record time.

Yesterday, over the same 40.8-mile course, the Whitford-steered Offshore men won the Molokai Hoe — Hawaii's most important canoe race of the year — also with a record.

"Don't blame me. My crew won it. All I did was steer," the happy but somewhat embarrassed Whitford said after Offshore's festive Ft. DeRussy Beach welcome.

"I'd rather we won," Outrigger Canoe Club's Bill Bright remarked, "but Offshore taught us a real lesson in flat water paddling and in crew conditioning. Their winning is good for the sport. It gives us a goal to shoot at."

Added a less gracious Mike Takahara of the Big Island, "Offshore, with their Olympians and all-stars, belongs in a different league. They're the elite and should be placed in a division separate from fun-paddling club teams such as ours."

With their fast five-hour, six-minute and 29-second finish, Offshore not only bettered Outrigger's 5:08:11 record set last year but they relegated the three-time defending champ to a seventh place 5:22:16 finish.

Fifty-three teams, each with nine-paddler crews, took part.

Second place Hui Nalu (5:11:38) of Hawaii Kai saved the Molokai Ho'e from becoming a visitor romp. Tahiti clubs — Ihilani (5:13:39) and Punaruu (5:17:57) — placed third and fourth respectively, followed by Outrigger of Australia in 5:19:22.

And if that wasn't enough, Offshore won the race in a borrowed Hui Nalu fiberglass canoe. "I took the fastest boat I thought we had. It was our koa. Now I wonder if I made the right choice," Hui Nalu's Kala Kukea said.

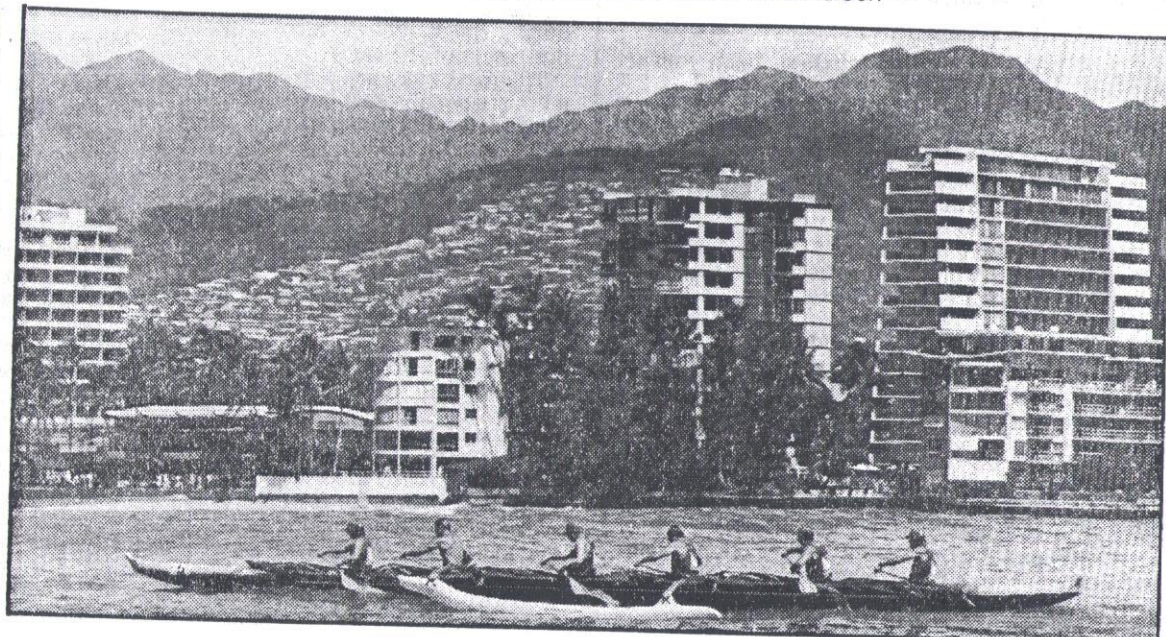
Offshore swept into the lead in mid channel,

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Canoes launch at dawn after a Hawaiian blessing at Molokai's Hale O Lono Harbor.

By Mike Tsukamoto, Star-Bulletin



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Offshore paddles past Waikiki as it heads to a record finish in the Molokai-to-Oahu canoe race.



# PADDLING

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## MOLOKAI: Offshore completes the sweep

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approximately 2½ hours after the Hale O Lono Harbor dawn start. The channel was unusually calm, favoring the flat-water-paddling visitors. "We had a bad race. And having to paddle a calm channel didn't help matters," Outrigger steersman Tom Conner said.

Most Island teams, including defending champ Outrigger, are experienced in wave riders and had hoped for big surfing seas to push them along. "Channel conditions are beyond our control. Crews have to take what's there. Our day will come," Conner said.

Hui Nalu paddler Mark Hamilton of Louisville, Ky., paddling his first Molokai Hoe, was disappointed of the calm. "I've heard about Molokai Channel's big surfing waves for years. I was anxious to give them a try," Mike Harbold and Billy Robello, two nationally-ranked kayakers from Hawaii, contributed to Hui Nalu's lofty finish.

Offshore's crew included two Olympic kayak paddlers; two Olympic coaches; a former Olympic volleyball player; at least three nationally-ranked canoeists, and in Serge Corbin, Canada's best marathon canoe paddler. Steersman Whitford is an Olympic kayak development coach based in Hawaii and California.

"Most of our crew have paddled the Molokai before. I think we could have handled it whatever the (sea) conditions," said Offshore's Greg Barton, winner of three Olympic medals in kayaking — two gold last year at Seoul and a bronze in '84 at Los Angeles.

While the race leaders reaped most of the trophies and attention, the veteran paddlers competing in the masters (35-44) and senior masters (45 and over) divisions believe "older" guys are the wave of the future.

"We may not have finished up there with the leaders but we beat a lot of teams with people a lot younger than we were," said John Goody, 46, a paddler on Kailua's winning senior masters team. Kona's Kai O Pua topped the masters division.

40.8 miles, Hale O Lono to Waikiki

(Entries from Oahu unless otherwise noted)

1. Offshore Canoe Club (Cal.), 5:06:29. (Course record; old record Outrigger Canoe Club, 5:08:11, 1988). Crew: Greg Barton, Serge Corbin, Randy Drake, Mike Fries, Terry Kent, Willie Reichenstein, Alan Rudquist, Bob Stafford, steersman Billy Whitford.

2. Hui Nalu I, 5:11:38. 3. Ihilani (Tah), 5:13:39. 4. Punaruu (Tah), 5:17:57. 5. Outrigger (Aust) 5:19:22. 6. Lanikai, 5:20:41. 7. Outrigger I, 5:22:16. 8. FFPP (Tah), 5:23:21. 9. Kailua, 5:27:40. 10. Imua (Cal.), 5:29:08. 11. Healani, 5:30:00. 12. Kamehameha I (Hi), 5:32:37. 13. Waikiki Surf Club, 5:34:30. 14. Outrigger II, 5:36:32. 15. Mana'e (Molokai), 5:38:20. 16. Lokahi, 5:38:52. 17. Surf Sports, 5:39:45. 18. False Creek I (Can), 5:40:29. 19. Kai O Pua II (Hi), 5:41:03. 20. False Creek II (Can), 5:43:25. 21. Kihei I (Maui), 5:43:59. 22. Kai O Pua I (Hi), 5:45:55. 23. Outrigger III, 5:45:56. 24. Great Lakes (U.S. East Coast), 5:46:09. 25. Hui Lanakila, 5:46:24. 26. Nahoa (Cal.), 5:46:27. 27. Hanalei (Kauai), 5:48:30. 28. Royal Canoe Club (Eng), 5:49:37. 29. Keoua-Honaunau (Hi), 5:52:08. 30. Kailua II, 5:58:37.

31. False Creek II (Can), 5:55:33. 32. Waikiki Yacht Club, 5:57:56. 33. Lanikai II, 5:58:10. 34. Kailua III, 5:58:37. 35. Royal Hawaiian, 5:58:54. 36. Kamehameha II (Hi), 5:59:04. 37. Kai E Hitu (Hi), 6:00:67. 38. Hui Nalu II, 6:01:36. 39. Kailua III, 6:03:02. 40. Outrigger IV, 6:04:23. 41. Healani, 6:05:31. 42. Napili (Maui), 6:11:09. 43. Hawaiian I (Maui), 6:12:18. 44. Hawaiian II (Maui), 6:13:13. 45. Leeward Kai, 6:16:14. 46. Lokahi II, 6:17:07. 47. Honolulu, 6:23:06. 48. Kihei II (Maui), 6:23:6:23.51. 49. Kai O Pua III (Hi), 6:27:34. 50. Windward Kai, 6:36:53. 51. Manu O Ke Kai, 6:45:06. 52. Koa Kai, 6:54:35. 53. Haleakala, 7:04:14.

Key—Aust: Australia. Cal: California. Can: Canada. Eng: England. Hi: Big Island. Tah: Tahiti.

### ■ Divisions

Overall/fiberglass: Offshore.

Koa: 1. Hui Nalu I. 2. Kamehameha I. 3. Kai O Pua I. 4. Kailua II.

Masters (35-44): 1. Kai O Pua II. 2. False Creek II. 3. Outrigger III. 4. Great Lakes Brigade. 5. Kailua II.

Senior masters (45-over): 1. Kailua III. 2. Outrigger IV. 3. Lokahi II. 4. Kihei II.



Olympians Terry Kent, left, and Greg Barton.





Outrigger of Australia takes a moment to pray before the start of yesterday's race.





Canoes and their escort craft sort themselves out . . .



. . . then the canoes line up for the start.