Sports Notebook

By Monte Ito

OUTRIGGER CANOE RACING

Outrigger canoe racing has been called Hawaii's sport of kings. It is a sport for the masses, too.

Today interest in canoe racing is such that thousands throng to Honolulu Harbor, Waikiki Beach, Kailua and other race sites to witness sun-bronzed kanes and wahines send their sleek crafts cutting through the water lanes.

As a competitive sport of modern times, canoe paddling regattas began to gain in popularity with the organization of the Waikiki Surf Club to challenge the Outrigger Canoe Club's dominance of the surf sport.

But it wasn't until the Hawaiian Canoe Racing and Surfing Association was organized in 1950 that a centralized program of racing was held. Today there are eight clubs in the association. In addition to Outrigger and Waikiki Surf, member clubs include Healani, Koolaupoko, Hui Kalia, Hui Nalu, Kai Opua and Honaunau. The last two are on the Big Island.

Driving force behind the association is its president, John Lind, whose description and comments during the progress of a race add color and interest to each regatta. Pat Silva is vice president, Juanita Kealoha, recording secretary, Gilbert Minn, secretary, and Bill Prange, treasurer.

After a couple of seasons of "trial and error," the association took a major step toward making canoe racing a seasonal sport like football, baseball, etc. In recent years the regattas were stretched out far apart from Maritime Day in May to Labor Day in September. Getting in shape was a problem as the paddlers had to break training in between regattas.

So coaches and paddlers hailed the move when the association shortened the season to two months. This year the first regatta was held on Maritime Day on May 24. Paddlers didn't have to break training too long as races were spaced out evenly to build up to the Julian Yates Hawaiian championships July 23-25 at Kailua, Kona, on the Big Island.

Already the paddlers have tested their skill and condition in the Kamehameha Day races, the windward Oahu championships June 28 and the Walter Macfarlane Memorial event on July 4th. The big event of the year for most of the paddlers will come off Sunday, July 12, when the Oahu championships are held.

Originally scheduled for Keehi lagoon, the July 12 regatta has been moved to Honolulu harbor, which has proven popular not only with the spectators but with the paddlers as well. Except for the windward Oahu races which were staged at Kailua and the Macfarlane regatta at Waikiki, the other events were held in the harbor.

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Holding the races in the harbor demands the utmost in cooperation from various organizations, including the U. S. Coast Guard, the Harbor Board, the territory and the city and county. Lind reports that the cooperation and help the association has received from all organizations have been wonderful.

Harbors traffic being such, races had to be delayed several times. But all in all, things have worked out pretty well and the interest hasn't lagged.

From four to five hours are usually required to run off an 11-event program featured by a three-mile senior men's six race.

The Waikiki Surf Club, coached by Wally Froiseth, has dominated the regattas and looms as the big favorite for the Oahu and Julian Yates championships. With George Downing, Roy Folk, Baldwin Makua, Jimmy Lanna and Rudy Choy assisting him, Froiseth has done a wonderful job building up the WSC crews.

Incidentally, the club's canoe, the "Malia," was first loaned to Waikiki Surf when it was organized in 1948 by "Dad" Center. Today the "Malia" is the proud possession of the club and has figured in most of its major victories.

Outrigger and Healani are the oldest oragnizations in Oahu's water sports. Outrigger was organized in 1908 and annually sponsors the Walter Macfarlane Memorial races on July Fourth to honor their past president who died during the erection of the present clubhouse.

Outrigger dominated canoe paddling and surfing for many years and even last year won the championship of the association.

Healani Yacht and Boat Club has been active in water sports for over half a century but it wasn't until 1950 that it entered canoe paddling races. Rowing was Healani's major goal but when this sport died out, the club stowed away its collection of racing barges and ordered its first canoe in 1950. Healani has yet to make its mark in canoe racing but within a few years the club should be among the foremost exponents of this ancient sport.

Organization of the Koolaupoko Canoe Club by the Koolaupoko Lions Club in 1949 was another step in making canoe racing popular. The club held its first regatta in Kailua Bay in September of 1949 and since has held it annually. Harold Castle, Harold Yap and Joseph Pang offered the club use of their canoes and today Koolaupoko is one of the most active clubs in the association.

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One of the newest clubs in the fold is the Hui Kalia, formed in 1950 by veterans of canoe paddling. Among them were Joe Pang, George Young, Joseph Daniels and Baldwin Makua. The Hui Kalia has one of the longest canoes in the territory. The "Kai Opua" which is 44 ft. 10 in. long. The crews are made up of young paddlers who should take their places with the best of 'em in a few years.

Hui Nalu has been competing in races as far back as 1911. John D. Kaupiko Sr., has been coaching its crews since 1934. Rabbit Kekai and Herman Apo are assisting the Hui Nalu veteran.

These are the clubs on this island who are building up canoe paddling races into a major seasonal sport. On the Big Island the Kai Opua, reorganized in 1952, and the Honaunau Canoe Club, are the driving forces in creating new interest in the big races to be held in Kona.