Tom Zahn Breaks Molokai to Oahu Paddling Record

A "little bit punchy" but otherwise fine, Thomas C. Zahn beached his racing board at Waikiki Beach at 3:50 p.m. Saturday after stroking his way across the Molokai Channel in nine and a half hours.

Zahn, a Pacific Coast paddling champion, lopped off two hours 47 minutes from the previous—and the lone—record set by Eugene Smith for the paddle from Molokai to Makapuu Point on Oahu.

Zahn made the trip from Molokai to Makapuu in six hours.

After having broken Smith's record and without stopping, Tom veered around the Island and headed for Waikiki Beach where he was greeted by a cheering crowd of several hundred persons.

FOLLOWED CANOES

Zahn launched his board from the Miss Hula Girl off Kaukiu Beach near Ilio Point, Molokai, at 6:20 a.m. Saturday, shortly after the five canoes participating in the channel race got under way.

He veered northward to about mid-channel, then rode the currents down to Oahu, cheered by a group of tourists who had paid to ride the Hula Girl to watch the race.

At the last moment, Zahn's escort failed to show, and the Hula Girl obligingly mothered Zahn across the channel.

"If you say anything about my trip at all, say I want to thank the Hula Girl," Zahn, from Santa Monica, California, said after finishing the race.

KOKO HEAD ROUGH

He said he first began "to feel it" off Makapuu Point. Then he ran into the cross-currents off Koko Head, where the outrigger canoes similarly had their roughest time, and which Tommy described as a "crummy, ghastly" three-mile stretch of back wash and swells going in no particular direction.

It was landmarks all the way along, Tommy said, sitting in a chair, shivering. "I thought I'd never get to Koko Head. When it was past, I thought I'd never get to Black Point. Then it seemed I'd never get past Cunha's (surf at Waikiki.) Next it felt like I'd never pass Queen's."

DIDN'T DARE KNEEL

Tommy said "I never broke to my knees (to paddle in a kneeling position) once because I knew once I did, I'd get the cramps."

He added if Tom Blake hadn't "at the 11th hour built a chin rest for me I'd never have made it." Blake, a veteran Waikiki surfer and 1922 national swimming champion, coached the 29-year-old paddler.

An excited group of friends met him, helped him shower and fed him milk, cottage cheese and some hot soup provided by Mrs. Rachel Brown of the Waikiki Surf Club of which Zahn is a member.