

Bad weather stymies trio

Early channel crossing attempt fails

The three Honolulu men who had planned to swim from Molokai to Oahu Sunday got to see the Super Bowl after all.

Ian Emberson, Archie Hapai and Blake Marr decided to attempt the swim Saturday, instead.

Weather forced them to go a day early. And weather forced them to give up after spending 13 hours in the water.

"We didn't make it," Emberson, a 28-year-old food and beverage analyst at the Ilikai, said yesterday. "Strong southwest winds kept blowing us back to Molokai. We actually swam the time that crossing in normal weather would require." But

Hapai and Emberson called it quits eight or 10 miles off Oahu.

Marr was forced out of the water a half hour after the trio set off at 2 a.m. Saturday morning from Papohaku on Molokai. The Honolulu City and County paramedic had wrenched his back the day before carrying gasoline for the escort boats.

"We knew the weather was changing and we thought we could catch it before it got worse," Emberson said of the decision to try Saturday. The trio had announced they would attempt to make the 27-mile crossing Sunday. They had hoped to bet-

ter Jonathan Ezer's record time of 13 hours and 4 minutes in 1974.

Had they made it to Sandy Beach, they would have been only the fourth, fifth and sixth persons to make the Molokai-Oahu transit.

"But we probably shouldn't have attempted it at all. There were small craft warnings up Saturday," said Emberson. "Next time, we'll need more backup help in following the weather.

"There was one stage where we thought we could make it. The wind died and everything was calm, but it just suddenly picked up again."

"About the only thing that happened to us was we got stung by men-of-war. We didn't see any sharks out there."

Emberson got out of the water 12½ hours after the start. Hapai, a University of Hawaii student and veteran open-ocean swimmer, stayed in for a half hour more before he too succumbed to Mother Nature.

All three are planning to try again in August.

So Emberson got to see the Super Bowl after all. "Yes, I had my beer and watched it," he said. "It was disappointing."