



Advertiser photo by Ron Jeff

Like the legendary Lone Ranger who came out of nowhere, a California team called Blazing Paddles swept by local favorites in the 27th annual Molokai-to-Oahu canoe race yesterday. A Blazing Paddler lets his joy be known at the finish line.

West Coast paddlers blaze to glory in Aloha canoe race

By CURTIS MURAYAMA
Advertiser Staff Writer

The Blazing Paddles, a makeshift squad from California, stunned the canoe paddling world and Hawaiian competitors yesterday by winning the 27th annual Molokai-to-Oahu Aloha Week race.

The Mainland crew — which looked incongruous on the awards stage next to the Hawaiian delegation garbed in Hawaiian feathered crowns, cloaks and kahilis — upset the locally favored Outrigger and Tahiti's Maire Nui to capture the granddaddy of long-distance canoe races with a time of 5:43:52.

A strong Lanikai club, which won overall honors in 1974 and has established a reputation for its strength with a fiberglass canoe, placed second at 5:47.

Although their name sounds more like a Mel Brooks comedy film, the Blazing Paddles were no joke to the rest of the entrants, who started at 7:30 yesterday morning at Hale O Lono on Molokai and ended at the Fort

DeRussy beach before an appreciative crowd.

Never before has a Mainland team conquered the entire field — 35 strong yesterday after two no-shows. A California canoe, Imua, took second in the fiberglass class in 1971.

Yesterday's race, part of the Aloha Week festivities, provided tasty revenge for Paddles coach Pete Carolan.

Earlier this year, Carolan couldn't make the Imua crew, so he formed his own: the Blazing Paddles. The Newport Beach paddler said all he was out to do was to beat Imua. Instead, he won the race . . . and Imua finished sixth.

But the race at sea was far different from the outcome at shore.

It was a follow-the-non-leader and a hide-and-seek game for most of the race.

For three hours of the race, all eyes, including those aboard the official escort boat Viking, were on the favor-

See **BLAZING** on Page A-3