



Canoe crew paddlers as seen from the working level in yesterday's race.

Advertiser photos by Ben Jett

# Blazing Paddlers amazing; Lanikai 2nd, Tahiti trails

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ties and apparent leaders — Outrigger and Maire Nui. Both aimed a course straight at Diamond Head.

They waged a one-on-one battle, thinking the winner would take the event and unaware of the competition skimming along far ahead — and out of sight.

Maire Nui, winner in 1976 and runner-up to the winning Outrigger in 1975 and last year, opened a 125-yard lead but ran into trouble when one of its canoe seats broke.

As Outrigger closed the gap each minute, it looked like the latest encounter in the Outrigger-Maire Nui rivalry for first-to-finish honors.

But at the three-hour point, another spotter boat roared up and signaled that two canoes — Blazing Saddles and Lanikai — were far ahead of the pack some five miles north.

The two canoes and their coaches had taken a more northerly route, aiming straight at Rabbit Island on the windward side of Oahu to avoid the turbulence caused by race escort boats.

Cruising far ahead and unnoticed (as it was in the pre-race predictions) was the Blazing Paddles canoe, followed by Lanikai.

The Paddles' progress was slowed when all of the trail, escort, official and Coast Guard boats approached for a look at the upstarts. But all that commotion didn't hurt as the fiberglass canoe — borrowed from Hui Wa'a's Kai Ko'o club — glided atop the water under the Tahitian for Indian-style, on the Mainland stroke.

In addition to their stroke, the Blazing Paddles used oars with T-shaped handles for better grip in the 41-mile race. Lanikai was the only competitor as the Paddles approached cloud-protected Oahu — an unmistakable sight, especial-



They're off: 35 canoes leave Molokai at 7:30 a.m.

ly with all the hotels poking up from the water lines.

Lanikai made an effort, trying to catch the shoreline current from Koko Head to Diamond Head, but could not overcome the California team's lead. Outrigger and Maire Nui — much farther back — did the same, cutting across and heading straight for shore.

The Outrigger canoe did catch Maire Nui but was surpassed, ironically, again by the Tahitians just offshore from the Outrigger Canoe Club in Waikiki. Maire Nui, with that last effort of gusto, finished third overall and first in the koa division. Outrigger took fourth overall and second in the koa division.

"We're supposed to have won but we didn't," said a depondent Tom Conner, the Outrigger coach. "We went to challenge the best (Maire Nui) so we went south. They (Blazing Paddles) were so far north, we couldn't even see them."

"The whole time we were worried about Maire Nui. The way it ended up, we just didn't have enough to beat them either."

The Blazing Paddles crew of Gordon Reed (Newport Beach), John Van Cleave (Laguna Beach), Chuck Lyda (Squaw Valley), Carl Toepfner (Trabek), Bill Wedford (Newport Beach), Hugh Fisher (Weed), Bill Stanley (Berkeley), Colin

Shaw (Irvine) and Carolan fooled all experts in the canoe business. And they have everybody else challenging each other while they waltzed past the field.

"We got a low profile and no one knew we were there," said Carolan. "We just got out in front and stayed away."

Maire Nui coach Teiki Tamarii said he also didn't see the Blazing Paddles and Lanikai. "But if they win, then they're the best."

"It's terrific because they won in a 'normal' fiberglass canoe," he added, referring to the fact that the winning — and borrowed — canoe met the conservative, and generally slower, Hawaiian Design specifications.

The night before looked as if the channel would favor the Tahitians, although Outrigger disagreed — which later turned out to be a misjudgment — and left its fiberglass canoe back in favor of a koa canoe more suited to the rough channel conditions.

Unfortunately, the channel was unusually calm and the skies clear.

As the light from the full moon shimmered off the ocean around Molokai in the predawn hours yesterday, exposing the serenity of the sea, many spectators mumbled under their breath that the conditions were made to order for the Tahitians.

And it started out that way.

After the Rev. Abraham Akaka blessed the participants, the canoes made their way through Hale O Lono to the ocean where they would start.

The Tahitian crew named Tera Matai cruised into the opening lead with an easy, relentless stroke. They were followed by the Blazing Paddles, who would disappear from sight and interest until three hours later — with an insurmountable lead.

In the first 15 or 20 minutes, the field had spread out like broken glass on a waxed kitchen floor. The others were far behind and out of sight, lost in the glare of the rising sun behind Molokai.

At the one-hour mark, the leaders seemed to be Maire Nui, Tera Matai I and Outrigger. Where Lanikai and Blazing Paddles went, no one knew until the end.

#### OVERALL FINISHERS

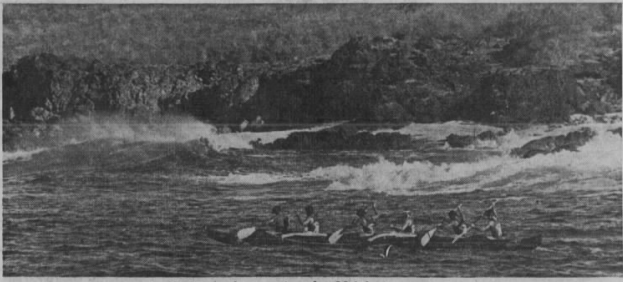
1. Blazing Paddles 5:43:52; 2. Lanikai 5:47:39; 3. Outrigger 5:53:15; 4. Imua 5:58:32; 5. Loo'a 6:10:20; 6. Hui Nalu 6:11:30; 7. Kamehameha 6:13:25; 8. Hui O Kai Koo 6:16:30; 9. Tiare Tahiti 6:18:00; 10. Waikiki Beachboys 6:18:02; 11. Waikiki Surf 6:18:09; 12. Hemaia (Kauai) 6:19:12; 13. Leward Kai 6:16:39; 14. Koolau 6:19:56; 15. Tere Hiale O Lono 6:23:53; 16. Kamehameha (Oahu) 6:22; 17. Kamehameha (Hilo) 6:26:52; 18. Hynek Festival 6:29:43; 19. Meana Kai 6:30:02; 20. Mahua 6:30:58; 21. Hewai Kai 6:52:39; 22. Hawaiian Warriors 6:57:13; 23. Hui Wa'a O Hawaii 7:04:00.

#### KOA DIVISION

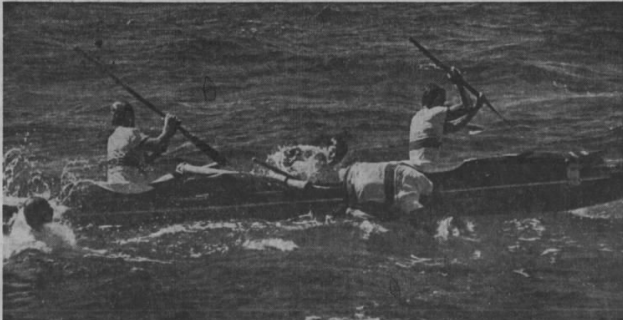
1. Maire Nui 6:18:20; 2. Outrigger 6:49:42; 3. Hui Nalu 6:51:30; 4. Hemaia 6:58:40; 5. Koolau 6:59:47; 6. Kai Opua 6:11:34; 7. Hui Lanikai 6:12:02; 8. Waikiki Surf 6:12:16; 9. Tere Matai 6:14:06; 10. Lanikai 6:15:13; 11. Tiare Tahiti 6:23:39; 12. Bora Bora 6:24:36.

#### NON-KOA DIVISION

1. Blazing Paddles 5:43:52; 2. Lanikai 5:47:39; 3. Outrigger 5:53:15; 4. Imua 5:58:32; 5. Loo'a 6:10:20; 6. Hui Nalu 6:11:30; 7. Kamehameha 6:13:25; 8. Hui O Kai Koo 6:16:30; 9. Tiare Tahiti 6:18:00; 10. Waikiki Beachboys 6:18:02; 11. Waikiki Surf 6:18:09; 12. Hemaia (Kauai) 6:19:12; 13. Leward Kai 6:16:39; 14. Koolau 6:19:56; 15. Tere Hiale O Lono 6:23:53; 16. Kamehameha (Oahu) 6:22; 17. Kamehameha (Hilo) 6:26:52; 18. Hynek Festival 6:29:43; 19. Meana Kai 6:30:02; 20. Mahua 6:30:58; 21. Hewai Kai 6:52:39; 22. Hawaiian Warriors 6:57:13; 23. Hui Wa'a O Hawaii 7:04:00.



Lanikai crew has no time for Molokai coast scenery.



Outrigger paddlers in the water during crew change.