

# All Paddles Ready for Canoe Openers

By Jack Wyatt

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With novice paddlers and out-of-condition veterans among the crews kicking off Oahu's outrigger canoe racing season on Sunday, be prepared for some pretty wet and ragged competition.

And because it is the first regatta of the year, paddler Joe Souza expects many swampings, *hulis* (capsizings) and collisions at the two Kamehameha Day openers.

The 19-club Oahu Hawaiian Canoe Racing Association will stage its first regatta of the season at Kailua Beach beginning at 8:30 a.m., while 11 clubs have entered Hui Wa'a & Surfing Association's opening-day celebration starting at 8 a.m. at Keehi Lagoon.

"I have twice the beginners that I need and not enough experienced paddlers," said coach Leighton Look of Hui Lanakila Canoe Club. "We'll be using the Kailua opener as our shake-down."

OHCRA's race director Mel Kalahiki and Hui Wa'a's president Peter Apo both expressed enthusiasm over the upcoming season. "Several clubs have a chance to win the OHCRA regattas this year," Kalahiki said. Apo said that he's never seen Hui Wa'a clubs practice so hard. "We'll have more clubs active this season than ever before," he said. The race officials agree it should be an interesting season for both associations.

BECAUSE OF A paddler drought, few if any clubs will field crews for all races on Sunday, which includes 29 events for OHCRA and 25 for Hui Wa'a

## Canoe Racing Schedules

### OHCRA

Regatta—June 12: King Kamehameha, Kailua. June 19: Kia Aina O Hawaii, Nanakuli. June 26: Pop Waialeale, Waimanalo. July 4: Walter Macfarlane, Waikiki. July 17: John Kaupiko, Waikiki. July 24: Kalanimoku, Waimea Bay. July 31: Oahu Championship, Keehi Lagoon. Aug 13: HCRA-Hui Wa'a combined state championship, Keehi Lagoon.

Long Distance—Aug. 20: Dad Center Wahine Race, Lanikai-Waikiki. Aug. 21: Duke Kahanamoku, Magic Island-Lanikai for men; Lanikai-Bird Island and return for women. Sept. 10: Kahikili, Kualoa-Hawaii Kai. Sept. 18: Kaena Challenge, Haleiwa—Pokai Bay for men; Wahine Hoe, Pokai Bay-Makaha for women. Sept. 25: Na Wahine O Ke Kai, Molokai-Oahu for women. Oct. 9: Molokai Hoe, Molokai-Oahu for men.

### Hui Wa'a

Regatta—June 12: Lokahi, Keehi Lagoon. June 19: Kamehameha, Kailua. June 26: Pohai Ke Aloha, Kahana Bay. July 3: Kai Po Ha, Haleiwa. July 10: Ka Mo'i, Kahe Point. July 17: Windward Kai, Waimanalo. July 24: Waikiki Beach Boys, Waikiki Beach. July 30: Hui Wa'a State Championship, Kaneohe Bay. Aug. 13: HCRA-Hui Wa'a combined state championship, Keehi Lagoon.

Long Distance—Aug. 27: Lo'a, Magic Island-Waimanalo for men; Waimanalo-Kaneohe Bay for women.

OHCRA regattas begin at 8:30 a.m.; Hui Wa'a regattas at 8 a.m.



Kalahiki



Apo

clubs. But some clubs are better off than others. "We're shy only three crews," said Hui Nalu's president Myron "Pinky" Thompson.

Hui Nalu, the defending OHCRA champ, plus perennial powers Outrigger and Healani canoe clubs, are again the clubs to beat this season. "We'll be short some crews," said Healani coach Scott May, "but we're still juggling paddlers around." OHCRA's "big three" are expected to fill their respective crew vacancies within the next few weeks.

"Finding paddlers is a problem for smaller clubs like ours," said Kamehameha Canoe Club's coach Sam Ahai. Kamehameha will field only 14 of 25 crews in the Hui Wa'a opener.

According to Hui Wa'a race director John Kapua, Lokahi, Loa'a, Kaneohe and Na Keiki O Ka Mo'i canoe clubs are rated tops in the Hui Wa'a association.

ANUENUE CANOE CLUB, a new and welcomed addition to the OHCRA this season, has enjoyed surprising growth for its initial year. "We'll have 20 crews on the line and many of them are beginners," said coach Nappy Napoleon.

Hawaiian Warriors coach Richard "Babe" Bell, who is still shy eight six-paddler crews for Sunday's regatta at Kailua Beach, won't turn any interested paddler away. "Much of our growth comes from families," Bell said.

Waikiki Surf Club will field only 18 of 29 crews at Kailua Beach. However, they are expecting reinforcements soon when island paddlers attending Mainland schools return home for the summer.

Much of Hui Nalu's success comes from Hawaii Kai's Thompson family, where "Pinky" Thompson paddles on the men's master team; his wife, Laura, competes on the women's master crew, and their two sons, Myron and Nanao, plus son-in-law Bruce Blankenfeld make up half of the senior men's team and Thompson's daughter, Lita Blankenfeld, strokes for the women's senior crew.

"Canoe paddling pulls our family together," Thompson said. And pulling together is what most paddlers say canoe racing is all about.