

Record Crossing for Nalu

By Catherine Enomoto
Star-Bulletin Writer

Past mid-channel, there was no question that Hui Nalu would win the fourth crossing of the Na Wahine o ke Kai Molokai-to-Oahu women's canoe race. The only suspense that remained was: Would Nalu break the record?

Three and a half hours into the race, the defending champions had opened up a one-mile lead over Outrigger and Off Shore, which were jockeying for second place. And in the end, the Hawaii Kai club stroked to a record-shattering six-hour, 33-minute, seven-second victory over the 40.8-mile course.

In near-ideal channel conditions of 2-5 foot seas with trades of 10-15 miles per hour, Nalu sliced more than two minutes off Outrigger's mark of 6:35:14 set in the 1979 Na Wahine. Off Shore of Newport Beach, Calif., overtook Outrigger in messy swells about two-thirds of the way across the channel and finished second in 6:45:31. Former two-time champ OCC settled for third in 6:50:46.

OUTRIGGER JUMPED into the lead from the 7:15 a.m. green flag at Hale o Lono Harbor. Thirty minutes later the crews made their first change of paddlers at La'au Point. "We put in a whole new fresh crew and walked right by 'em (OCC)," said Heidi Hemmings Hall of Hui Nalu. "We stayed ahead of 'em the rest of the way."

Nalu Coach Tommy Conner explained that, "Our depth was too much for them. We really

didn't have any substitutes. Everybody was a first stringer; we really had two first strings. I think our 12 were just too strong.

"Actually our second team was the team that got the lead for us," Conner added. "That's kind of what I expected. If our starting team could stay even (with Outrigger), I didn't think anyone could catch our second team. I think that made the difference."

Besides physical prowess, Hall felt Nalu had an edge in "conditioning . . . we've got a wonderful coach and he just worked us to death. We did a lot of one-mile and two-mile sprints, back and forth. We'd do eight of 'em a day, just going all out."

Nalu's senior steersperson, Denise Darval, said the sprint workouts allowed her teammates to keep up a fierce pace. "We started at 72 (strokes per minute) and we maintained at 66-68," she said.

THE WIN WAS great and the record was better for Conner, who remains undefeated in coaching Na Wahine o ke Kai crews. He also coached OCC's '79 and '81 champion squads. "We didn't have a good current or a good tide," Conner said of Nalu's record-setting effort. "They got it from paddling hard."

Nalu crew member Sue Erickson, a first-year paddler who also plays on the University of Hawaii Wahines basketball team offered another reason for her crew's success. "This is the most together, most moving team I've ever been with," she said.