

CANOE RACING

'Oahu 3' have the numbers in state canoe meet

By Jack Wyatt

Special to the Star-Bulletin

The Hawaiian Canoe Racing Association championships at Maui's Hanakao'o Beach tomorrow shapes up to be a rematch of the Oahu championship at Keehi Lagoon.

Outrigger Canoe Club won its fifth consecutive Oahu title by scoring more points (96) than any island club in any regatta this season.

Outrigger is heavily favored to win its sixth consecutive state title tomorrow, with Kailua and Hui Nalu expected to place second and third respectively.

"The 'Oahu 3' have entered more crews, and stronger crews, than any club in the (state) meet," Healani coach Gary "Sword" Murakami said. "You can't beat strength and numbers."

While Healani qualified 20 crews of a possible 30, Outrigger entered 29. The Boys' 13 was Outrigger's only miss. "As an alternate, the boys are probably approved by now," Outrigger's

Marilyn Kali said.

Healani placed fourth at the Oahu regatta. Murakami expects his club to place no higher on Maui.

Of HCRA's seven AAA Division clubs, five are from Oahu, with Maui's Hawaiian and Kauai's Hanalei representing the other Islands. (AAA clubs include those with 15 to 30 crews; AA clubs have seven to 14 teams, and A clubs have six crews, or less). Thirty races are scheduled.

Said Lokahi Canoe Club coach Michael Cushnie: "We could leave a few crews at home and compete in the less competitive AA division. And we'd stand a good chance of winning there. But who remembers the winner of a small division?"

Honolulu's Lokahi, a AAA entry, went unbeaten in eight Hui Wa'a Association regattas this season. "We won't topple Outrigger, Kailua or Hui Nalu in club-scoring but some of our crews should give them a run on an individual basis," Cushnie said.

More than 2,000 paddlers, repre-

senting 45 clubs from five Islands, are entered. Oahu leads the meet with 19 clubs; followed by the Big Island with 10; Maui, with six; Kauai, two, and Molokai, one.

Lokahi dominated Hui Wa'a, winning each regatta by about 30 points. "That was a conference. This is the Super Bowl and a completely different ball game," Cushnie said.

Said Healani's Murakami: "We'll score points, but not nearly enough to beat the big guys. Our focus will be for our individual crews to place." Healani's Boys' 14 crew is unbeaten this season and expected to win tomorrow.

Kauai's Hanalei club, a perennial Neighbor Island power and a past state winner, is noted for its strong men's crews. "We're no

threat this year," Hanalei president Steve Thatcher said. Kauai racing is down and Hanalei crews lack the competitive edge, he said.

While Oahu's AAA powers are expected to overrun the race site with 150 to 200 paddlers each, Molokai's diminutive Manae Canoe Club expects to arrive quietly with just a few friendly people.

"As Molokai's only active club this regatta season, we sorely lack race experience. But the opportunity to compete is still a thrill," girls' coach Nancy Gove said. Manae hopes to borrow a canoe for its four events.

With the wide 14-lane course set parallel to the beach and located where three channels (Kalohi, Au'au and Pailolo) converge, race officials hope for good weather.



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