

The Honolulu Advertiser's GAMEPLAN



Advertiser photo by Charles Okamura

Practicing in Hawaii Kai for Sunday's Na Wahine O Ke Kai Molokai-to-Oahu women's canoe race are members of the Hui Nalu team. In boat at left are (from left) Anne Malama, Becky Hara, Susan Erickson, Diane Darval-Almadova, Katie Johnson and Denise Darval. In the canoe at right are (from left) Sandy Combis, Michelle Kapana-Baird, Lorey Bode, Lindsay Styan, Ellen Kamatsu and B.J. Moffett.

Hui Nalu's a long-distance favorite

It has been four years since a Hawaiian crew won the Steinlager Na Wahine O Ke Kai Molokai-to-Oahu canoe race. The women of Hui Nalu will be out to change that Sunday.

It will take more than just a good crew to win the 11th edition of the 40.8-mile race. Wind, course selection, tides and luck will play a big part in the eventual winner.

The Hui Nalu crew won't be able to control the wind, tides or luck, but they have proven they may be the best Hawaii has to offer in the race that has been won by Offshore Club of California for three straight years.

The last Hawaii crew to win the prestigious race was Outrigger in 1985, but for the last three years the title has traveled offshore to the Mainland.

Denise Darval, who is scheduled to steer Hui Nalu's boat all the way, has been in seven Na Wahine races and she knows what is at stake Sunday.

"This is the Super Bowl of canoe paddling," Darval says. "We want to win for ourselves, but we also want to bring the title back to Hawaii."

Hui Nalu last took the title with consecutive victories in 1982-83, but this year the crew is undefeated in all four long-course races it has entered.

"We are as good as we have been in the last few years," Hui Nalu coach Kala Kukea says. "We'll have to wait and see what Offshore brings over and you can't count out Healani, but we are in top shape."

To break the course record



Robert Collias

Advertiser staff writer

of six hours, 12 minutes, 11 seconds set by Outrigger in 1984, the wind and tides will have to be cooperative.

"There are a lot of factors that go into winning," Kukea says. "It is going to take a lot of luck because there is a lot of course and a lot of little details that can go wrong. All of that will go into determining a winner."

Kukea says it is the job of the coach to select the course. "All the coaches have their own favorite way of crossing the (Kaiwi) Channel," he says. "I'm going to check the trade winds, the tides and the competition and then go from there."

While Offshore is expected to be paced by a couple of U.S. Olympians from the 1988 Seoul Games, Hui Nalu has only five paddlers back from the crew that finished seventh last year. Approximately 20 crews are scheduled to line up at Hale O Lono Harbor near Laau Point on Molokai for the start of the race at 7 a.m. The winner should arrive at Duke Kahanamoku Beach near the Hilton Hawaiian Village in Waikiki around 1 p.m.

Hui Nalu has found new success this year with three former Healani paddlers — Lorey Bode, Jenny Seafe and Anne Malama. Lindsay Styan, a longtime Hui Nalu paddler who competed with Healani in

last year's Na Wahine race, is back with Hui Nalu.

Susan Erickson, Diane Darval-Almadova, Becky Hara, Katie Johnson, Sandy Combis, B.J. Moffett and Michelle Kapana-Baird round out Hui Nalu's crew.

Bode, who won five medals including three golds at the national kayak championships earlier this summer, leads the list of newcomers.

"Our girls are pretty strong and ready to go," Bode says. "I really think we have a good chance, but in every race across the channel I would say 70 percent of the outcome depends on the choice of course."

Despite the loss of three paddlers, Healani has been right on Hui Nalu's stern in all four long-course races this year and could be right there at the finish line.

"We are definitely up for it," Healani coach Marshall Rosa says. "I think we are the underdogs, but we have been within a minute of them in all four races this year."

Healani finished about 100 yards behind Hui Nalu in a long-distance race two weeks ago but had only 10 paddlers. Healani will have the full complement of 12 Sunday and that could make a difference.

Crews will be allowed to use 12 paddlers in the race, but only six at one time. The Hui Nalu crew will use a system of 30-minute shifts with the relief paddlers jumping into the water from the support boat and into the canoe. Darval will tentatively go the whole way in the steering position.

While many of the crews in the race will use streamlined fiberglass canoes sculpted from

molds, Hui Nalu will stay with the more traditional Koa, or wood canoe.

"For us it is a matter of prestige," Darval says. "They say using a fiberglass boat is faster, but our Koa is as close to perfectly streamlined as you can get."

After coaching Hui Nalu's entry last year, Darval can't wait to enter the water in Molokai Sunday morning. Darval, 28, has been paddling since she was 12 and she loves her leadership position with Hui Nalu.

"You could call the steerer the quarterback of the canoe," Darval says. "I call the shots. It is real intense being both the rudder and calling the commands. It takes a lot of concentration."

"This is the culmination of our season," Darval says. "It takes 12 girls to win this thing and I think we've got them this year. We'll see Sunday."

OCEAN CALENDAR

Sept. 29-30, Oct. 1 — Steinlager Hawaiian Canoe and Kayak championships, Ala Wai Canal, 8 a.m. daily, 682-5233.

Oct. 1 — Bullship yacht race, Junior racing at 9 a.m., Seniors at noon, racing in Kaneohe Bay, Kaneohe Yacht Club, 247-4121.

Oct. 7-8 — Hawaii Kai Invitational Regatta, Hawaii Kai and Waikiki Yacht Clubs, racing off Waikiki at 11 a.m., 941-4880 or 395-4733.

Oct. 8 — Bankoh Molokai Hoe, Molokai-to-Oahu canoe race for men, 833-4970 or 842-5500.

Oct. 14 — Bud Light Ironman Triathlon Championships, Kailua-Kona, Big Island, 326-1011.

Oct. 14-15 — Duke Kahanamoku Invitational Regatta, racing off Waikiki at 11 a.m. daily, 941-4880.

Oct. 21 — Xcel Pro winter surf season opener, Sunset Beach, \$10,000 purse, 8:30 a.m., 637-6293.

Nov. 19 — Central Pacific Bank/Hula Bowl Regatta paddleboard, kayak, canoe, sailing and swimming regatta, Hawaii Maritime Center/Pier 7, 8 a.m., 682-5233.