

# Offshore sweeps Molokai-to-Oahu paddling races

□ The San Diego club adds the men's title to the women's crown it won two weeks ago

By Jack Wyatt

Special to the Star-Bulletin

Billy Whitford of California's Offshore Canoe Club has taken Hawaii's gracious Aloha hospitality beyond its intended limit, say some Molokai Hoe paddlers good-naturedly.

Two weeks ago the Whitford-coached Offshore Wahines won their fourth consecutive Molokai-to-Oahu women's race in record time.

Yesterday, over the same 40.8-mile course, the Whitford-steered Offshore men won the Molokai Hoe — Hawaii's most important canoe race of the year — also with a record.

"Don't blame me. My crew won it. All I did was steer," the happy but somewhat embarrassed Whitford said after Offshore's festive Ft. DeRussy Beach welcome.

"I'd rather we won," Outrigger Canoe Club's Bill Bright remarked, "but Offshore taught us a real lesson in flat water paddling and in crew conditioning. Their winning is good for the sport. It gives us a goal to shoot at."

Added a less gracious Mike Takahara of the Big Island, "Offshore, with their Olympians and all-stars, belongs in a different league. They're the elite and should be placed in a division separate from fun-paddling club teams such as ours."

With their fast five-hour, six-minute and 29-second finish, Offshore not only bettered Outrigger's 5:08:11 record set last year but they relegated the three-time defending champ to a seventh place 5:22:16 finish.

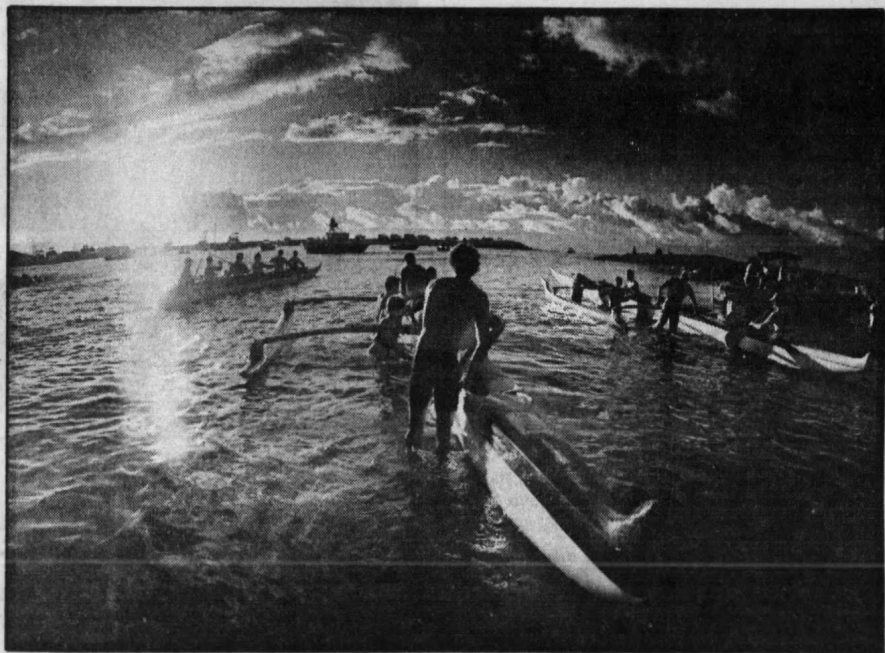
Fifty-three teams, each with nine-paddler crews, took part.

Second place Hui Nalu (5:11:38) of Hawaii Kai saved the Molokai Ho'e from becoming a visitor romp. Tahiti clubs — Ihilani (5:13:39) and Punaruu (5:17:57) — placed third and fourth respectively, followed by Outrigger of Australia in 5:19:22.

And if that wasn't enough, Offshore won the race in a borrowed Hui Nalu fiberglass canoe. "I took the fastest boat I thought we had. It was our koa. Now I wonder if I made the right choice," Hui Nalu's Kala Kukea said.

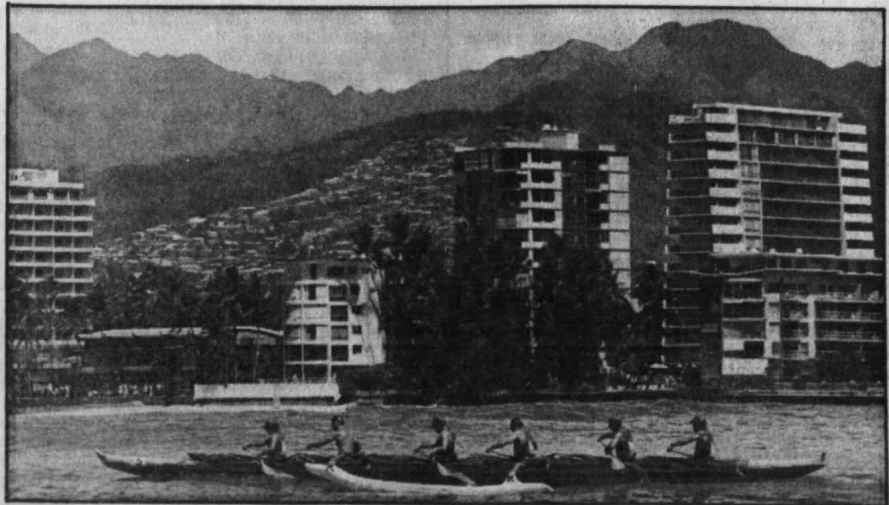
Offshore swept into the lead in mid channel,

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By Mike Tsukamoto, Star-Bulletin

Canoes launch at dawn after a Hawaiian blessing at Molokai's Hale O Lono Harbor.



By Mike Tsukamoto, Star-Bulletin

Offshore paddles past Waikiki as it heads to a record finish in the Molokai-to-Oahu canoe race.