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[PADDLING]



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The Waikiki Beachboys Canoe Club's senior women -- Kelsa Teeters, Erin Offenhauser, Dana Gorecki, Kathleen Grubbs, Val Hershey and Sue Brown -- made the 1-mile turn on their way to victory in the 1 1/2-mile race at Keehi Lagoon yesterday .

Winners sticking together

Kaneohe, Koa Kai and the Waikiki Beachboys are dominating Hui Wa'a

By Paul Honda
Special to the Star-Bulletin

Don't hate them just because they're good.

Kaneohe, Koa Kai and Waikiki Beachboys canoe clubs won their respective

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divisions decisively yesterday in the 31st Annual Windward Kai Canoe Regatta at Keehi Lagoon.

For at least two of the clubs, cross-training has provided a competitive edge.

So save the hate, even though all three clubs have dominated their divisions since the Hui Wa'a season began. After five weeks, Kaneohe has won every competition at the AAA level (25-36 crews entered). Yesterday, Kaneohe accumulated 83 points, well ahead of Lokahi and Manu O Ke Kai, which tallied 50 points apiece.

Koa Kai, which practices off Magic Island, has swept through the AA division (13-24 events). Koa Kai's 56 points easily led the way, with North Shore second with 20 points.

The Waikiki Beachboys have not surrendered the top spot in the A division (12 or fewer events) all summer, carried yesterday by a host of women who led the club to wins in five races yesterday. The Beachboys had 31 points to 21 by runner-up Na Keiki O Ka Mo'i.

It might be more accurate to call the club the Beachgirls. Four of the wins came in women's divisions, and the fifth was in the Open 6 Mixed.

Koa Kai's ascension has surprised its coaches as much as anyone else.

"We're very happy. We're still improving. Last year, at this time, we hit a plateau," men's coach Dave Randall said. "We're well-rounded, with the men, the women, and the youth crews. The difference this year is everybody's improved. The times have gotten better."

Instead of a plethora of third- and fourth-place finishes, Koa Kai is reaching new territory. Thanks to seven event wins, Koa Kai amassed the second-highest total of the day, surpassing AAA competitors Lokahi and Manu O Ke Kai.

"A lot more of our paddlers are cross-training. They'll run, swim, paddle one-man (canoes)," he said.

Koa Kai turns one workout each week into a cross-training exercise.

"We do a one-man time trial, and we also do a swimming trial," Randall added.

Dedication is paying off for the Beachboys' women. Their workouts include a 5:30 a.m. swim for 75 minutes with the masters swim club at the University of Hawaii.

"Five to eight of us swim there four times a week," second-year paddler Kelsa Teeters said.



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The senior men of Manu O Ke Kai -- from left, Greg Wright, Bonga Perkins, Charlie Tantog and Bobo Tantog -- paddled to victory in the 1 1/2 mile race at the Hui Wa'a regatta at Keehi Lagoon yesterday.

Twice a week, the paddlers have one-man workouts. Then there are the "regular" paddling workouts in the afternoons.

"I told them that if I had paddlers willing to commit to this in the offseason, I'd commit my time," Beachboys head coach Sean Monahan said of the voluntary cross-training workouts. "I think they're in their best shape ever. It makes it easier on me at practice. I don't have to worry about conditioning."

Teeters, who didn't paddle until arriving at the club, helped them win the freshmen women's 1-mile race in 8:31.60. Lokahi placed second at 9:10.23.

The Beachboys' crew -- Dana Gorecki, Kathleen Grubbs, Julie Shoup, Meredith Takara, Fern Yoon and Teeters -- provided the most lopsided win of the day.

"We have fun doing it," Teeters said of the demanding workouts. "Cross-training keeps it fun, and we're enjoying being together."

The Beachboys' women also won in the Novice B, Senior and Open 4 events before winning the Open 6 mixed races.

With one of the smallest clubs in the association, the Beachboys are proving that work ethic makes a difference, even as it seems to border on obsession.

"That would be true," Teeters said with a grin.

Monahan has ensured a level of sanity for his paddlers.

"We've scheduled in two six-day breaks from paddling so they don't burn out," said Monahan, who has guided the club the past four years, and seven years in all.

"Kelsa did the most work in the offseason, and she helps motivate the other girls," he noted.

Monahan chuckled at the suggestion of a club name change to 'Beachgirls.'

"The 'Boys' used to carry the women. The men's program is starting to pick up this year," he said, referring to the hiring of a men's coach this season.

Meanwhile, Kaneohe head coach Clint Anderson is still waving a flag of caution for his paddlers after five weeks of victories.

"We don't take nothing for granted," said Anderson, whose club won 10 races, including four of the first five.

Kaneohe won the 12-and-under girls, 12 mixed, 13 girls and 13 boys races to start the day. The club went on to win the Novice B mixed, Golden Masters mixed, 15 girls, 16 boys, 18 girls and 18 boys races to amass an enormous lead halfway through the regatta.

Kaneohe tacked on a win in the Senior Masters mixed race near the end of the day.

Three of Kaneohe's clubs are unbeaten: the girls 12, and boys 13 and 18.

Anderson is rooting for all his paddlers, especially the girls 12. The crew is comprised of Kree Espinda, Brandi Kalihiwa, Cathy Sherman, Keani Wong, Keshy Langley and Kui Melemai.

"They didn't get into states last year. They kind of had a late start," Anderson said of the crew, which won its 1/4 -mile sprint with a time of 2 minutes, 30.96 seconds. North Shore followed in 2:38.04.

Kaneohe's boys 13 captured its 1/4 -mile race in 2:04.87. Alapahoe was second at 2:15.28.

"They're working against the clock now. There's plenty of competition," Anderson said. "Our goal is to get all the kids into states."

Koa Kai hosts the next regatta Sunday at Keehi Lagoon. Races begin at 8:30 a.m.

OHCRA

Lanikai rolls: Lanikai Canoe Club won 15 events, including sweeping the three Novice B races and the three 55 races, to claim its first regatta victory of the Oahu Hawaiian Canoe Racing Association season yesterday.

Lanikai, winning eight of the first 10 races, amassed 101 points to easily outdistance Kailua (73) in the regatta held at Kailua Beach Park. Hui Lanakila was third in the AA Division with 55 points.

In the A Division, Keahiakahoe edged host Waimanalo 12-11 for the title.

The next OHCRA regatta is the Walter J. Macfarlane surf race Sunday at Waikiki Beach.

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