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LOKAHI WINS HUI WA'A CHAMPIONSHIP

Kane`ohe qualifies most crews to States

HONOLULU (August 1, 2002) ¾ Lokahi looking to head into the HCRA state race as the reigning Hui Wa`a Champion, handily beat windward rival Kane`ohe 66-60. Even a disqualification by its 3rd place Open 4 Men did not impact Lokahi's final score. However, Lokahi fell short of qualifying any open men's crews to the state race other than the Open 4, and will thus have to hope another association gives up its lane AND have the luck of the draw go its way. Kane`ohe played a different strategy for the final race of the Hui Wa`a season, choosing to qualify as many crews as possible to the state race. Kane`ohe fulfilled its goal by qualifying the most crews from Hui Wa`a with 15 crews, wisely assuring its position in races that generally have no lanes available. Na Keiki O Ka Mo'i was a distant 3rd with 44 points but goes into the Hui Wa`a seeding meeting with 12 very strong crews. Ka Mo`i crew quality should make up for any perceived lack of depth.

Koa Kai capped off a perfect season with its 8th consecutive regatta win, posting a whopping 41 points and 12 crews qualified to states. Koa Kai will compete in the same division, the AA division, as Lokahi, Kane`ohe and Ka Mo'i in the state championship. Windward Kai finished second with 28 points and 8 crews qualified, and has a bona fide shot at the state single A crown. Waikiki Beach Boys won its first trophy this season finishing 3rd with 19 points.

A friendly carnival atmosphere prevailed at the Championship regatta, as this year marked the first annual Hui Wa`a paddling fair. Multiple food booths, craft and clothing booths, and a jumping castle for the keiki, were all set-up at Ke`ehi Lagoon. Racing on a Saturday, rather than the regular Sunday, gave clubs and crews fits and starts as a record number of paperwork errors were recorded for the day. Conflicting Saturday work schedules and prior commitments gave coaches a challenge as they set their crews. The club representatives were easily identified as the people frantically walking back and forth to the officials' stand throughout the day.

The junior women's qualifier race offered up the biggest controversy for the day, when all but three crews were disqualified for re-entering the racecourse before the end of the race. Crews began returning to their club tents believing the race to be over, not realizing the crew from `Alapa Hoe had huli-ed at the ½ mile flag. Thus 1st place Lokahi, who was initially disqualified but won its protest, 4th place Koa Kai who did not re-enter the race course and did not commit any racing infractions, and last place `Alapa Hoe emerged as the only qualifiers in the event.

Hui Wa`a heads to the HCRA lane draw hoping to pick up a few extra lanes for itself and then on to Hilo to vie for the AA and A crowns.

For Na `Ohana O Na Hui Wa`a, the operative word of the association is `ohana, and the association prides itself on being one large family. Its members compete fiercely against one another throughout the regatta, but when the day is done, they can be found hard at play with each other in post-regatta volleyball matches and dance contests. At states, the association's pride will shine as they support one another from a unified association tent.

As the clubs of Hui Wa`a head toward states, keep an eye on our best hopefuls: the undefeated Men Open 4 of Na Keiki O Ka Mo'i. This crew of Jason Bellefeuille, BJ Bagood, Kahele Anderson, and Greg Pavao, have remained virtually unchanged over the past three years and surprised many in 1999 at the Maui states by coming in third. The undefeated Boys 12 from Kane`ohe, who turned in a solid performance each week, and the Mixed Girls & Boys 12 crew of Lokahi, which did not even enter the event until the 3rd regatta of the season, have times that look as if they will measure up with the rest of the field. With only a 1/4 mile to race, the start will be critical.

The new race at states this year, the Golden Master Mixed 55 years and older, has been won each week by Manu O Ke Kai, captained by head coach Randy Sanborn. With only Windward Kai in Hui Wa`a as its competition, this crew could be a wild card for Hui Wa`a at states. Hui Wa`a's other medal contending hopefuls at states are the Boys 16 and 18 from Ka Mo'i, whose divisions produce some of the stiffest competition in the state.