

Stan Dickson plans for the future

How are we going to take paddling to the next level? These thoughts have been on many paddlers and coaches minds. Stan Dickson has some ideas he shared with us. His plan is to expose our youth to the international arena of canoe racing.

Even in good times, raising money to take Hawaii's youth overseas to compete with international crews is tough. In these lean years, it's even tougher. What the paddling community needs is financial support so that our youth can take it to the next level, inspiring them to continue with the sport. Stan Dickson wants to build a large base of upcoming paddlers, and then one day, Hawaii will be ready to take on the Tahitian crews.

"We don't have any kids crews going to the IVF (International Va'a Federation) World Sprints in New Calidonia," said Stan who is Hawaii's representative to the IVF. "I don't think we focus enough on getting our kids the experience needed."

One problem he sees is a lack of consistency here. "In Hawaii we are restricted by our rules, with each association having their own." Stan said if we want to do well internationally we have to all be on the same page, meaning it's a disadvantage when we go overseas to compete and have to learn a new set of rules.

"The kids 6-man program here is doing ok, we just need money to get them to the World Sprints. It's kind of sad we won't have representation from Hawaii."

Support is hard to come by, he said. "I wish we had more from the state government so we can build a better base to work with."

OC1s are high on Stan's wish list. Kids can't afford a \$3,000-plus canoe. Only kids with parents that can afford to buy one have an opportunity to paddle in the open ocean and

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learn how to read the currents and swells. "The economy now really restricts a lot of kids from participating," he said.

Tessoro came through in the past to provide OC6s for the high schools so everyone could be on equal footing; and Stan hopes that may happen also for the OC1 programs needed to give Hawaii a foundation to take the sport here to the next level.

The impact of the OIA and ILH paddling programs is exposing more kids to paddling, "but I think we have to expand it further, so when we do take on teams like Shell Va'a, we can compete." He

added that when Hawaii develops a broader foundation of paddlers, we'll have the crews to challenge them.

"In a perfect world, I would like to see us get at least a five-year commitment to provide us with at least 10 canoes and a trailer that we could trailer to different parts of the island and expose the kids to OC1 paddling." In 'that world', associations would be able to provide matching grants to kids who want to buy an OC1.

"We would like canoe builders to give us a break with their canoes and be in partnership with us. We could split it 50/50 with a grant."

Right now Tahiti has brought their youth here for the past 10 years to participate in the Toots Minville and now for the Hei Hei Va'a International Invitational.

"If you look at Shell Va'a and Paddling Connection and the teams coming over from Tahiti, a lot of these young paddlers came here to race at the kids level of competition."

Hei Hei Va'a started last year as a way to expose Hawaii's kids to sprint racing and introduce them to the international format, like the World Sprints.

"I hope after the Hei Hei Va'a we get enough participation where we can send our kids to New Calidonia." He said the kids are going to get out as much out of the sport as we can put it.

"So if we give them half, they're going to get half. If we can expose them to the full potential, then you'll be surprised at how much they'll develop," adding that then we will finally have the world champions here in Hawaii.

Paddling is a great educator; and Stan said the kids learn values in paddling and lessons which they carry with them through life. "One of the positive aspects of joining a club and paddling with others is that what's taught at home is reinforced by paddling."

Outrigger canoe paddling is a legitimate sport. It is recognized internationally and is exploding in a lot of countries, especially Europe.

"I'd hate for us to be left behind in a sport that is our state sport, designated by the state legislators. We need to treat it with the international integrity it deserves," he said.

Even though he is busy with his two boys, taking care of his family, head coach for Keahiakahoe, race director for the Molokai Hoe, is Hawaii's representative to the IVF and is race director for OH CRA and OIA, he wouldn't have it any other way.

"I just take a lot of Tylenol," he joked.

Stan started paddling when he was 14. He went from paddling to helping to coach to starting his own club.

"It's fun when you see the kids participating, it's satisfying and gratifying."

Financial help is needed; and if paddlers don't have the money to donate, they may know of someone who does and point Stan in their direction.

If you would like to help, contact him through his club's web site, keahiakahoe.com. As Stan said, the more we can give, the bigger the returns we'll see. The more kids we reach, the bigger the base we will have to choose the champions of tomorrow.

Ropati Hebenstreit



Braddah Mel's Canoe Surfing & SUP Champs

The Steinlager Braddah Mel's Canoe Surfing and Stand-Up Surfing Championships held December 12th was an event to help raise funds for two Olympic kayak hopefuls from Hawai'i, Patrick and Ryan Dolan, in their quest to reach the 2012 Olympics in London.

The event, which attracts some of the best paddlers and surfers from Tahiti, Brazil, France, Hawai'i and the mainland, was held at Makaha Beach.

Braddah Mel Pu'u, an avid waterman and Wai'anae Coast lifeguard, has been holding the surf contest for the past four years as a fundraiser for his friend Leighton Look, who was paralyzed in a diving accident and who later passed away in September 2008. This year's event will be held in Leighton's memory.

The contest kicked off with the Stand-Up Surfing division, then went on to Canoe Surfing. Waves were ideal, not to big and not to small. There was even a new division added, SDS (sky diving surfing). See the following page for the biggest drop-in in the world?



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