

Whale Island Ocean Challenge Race Report

With absolutely brilliant weather and sea conditions prevailing all week, the scene was set for what everyone hoped would prove to be a great Whale Island Ocean Challenge Race. We certainly weren't disappointed as only 6 seconds separated the first and second placed W6 crews.

On Friday the day before the race, a number of crews, from Auckland, Wellington and places in between, quietly slipped in to Whakatane for the 29km race.

While a couple of crews chose to stay at the beautiful Ohope Beach Resort, others elected to stay in the quieter and more tranquil setting of the Awakeri Hot Springs. Of course, a number of paddlers found accommodation in the middle of the town centre more suited to their needs. This location proved to be only a couple of minutes from the race venue.

Saturday 6am at the race venue, crews began arriving and the task of rigging the waka got underway. Throughout the morning, free tea and coffee was made available to the paddlers and their supporters.

Karakia was given by our Kaumatua Lum Tahuri which helped to signal things were about to get serious.

At 9am, the fourteen W6 crews along with a flotilla of escort safety support boats headed out to the startline which was located just beyond the Whakatane River mouth.

The start of the 29km race was quite a spectacular view as the sun's rays reflected off the ocean and the hull of each waka as all the crews raced towards the Western tip of Whale Island.

The public address system which was linked to one of the Escort Safety Support boats out on the course, kept the large gathering of spectators well informed as the race progressed. It was also great to have the Maori Television crew out on the water as well, to document this wonderful occasion.

As the 4 leading crews rounded Whale Island and headed towards home, any one of them was in contention for first place honors. However, with only minutes away from the finishline, the winning of the Whale Island Ocean Challenge Race was left to Team Phoenix and Team Goodyear – Wairere to battle it out.

Team Phoenix was the victor on the day crossing the finishline first, a mere 6 seconds ahead of Team Goodyear – Wairere.

After the race, all crews were invited to partake of a most fabulous meal (hakari) prepared by our Tuatara Club Whanau.

The last race of the day was the W1 & W2 6km out and back race. Although this race did not produce the close finish experienced earlier in the day, it was never the less exciting as there were a number of personal achievements.

The Tuatara Waka Ama Club takes this opportunity to thank all paddlers and their families for supporting the 2006 Whale Island Ocean Challenge Race. We look forward to inviting your participation again next year.

W6 OFFICIAL RACE RESULTS

Order of finishing	Waka Number	Team Name	Category	Times
1 st	2	Team Phoenix (Auck)	OM	1:49:46
2 nd	1	Team Goodyear – Wairere (Roto)	OM	1:49:52
3 rd	3	Tui Tonga (Auck)	OM	1:50:44
4 th	15	Team Goodyear - Te Kuiti (Roto)	OM	1:54:12
5 th	4	Gringos Black (Auck)	MM	1:54:24
6 th	7	Maketu Masters (Maketu)	MM	2:03:36
7 th	14	Kia Kaha Te Aurere (Roto)	MM	2:04:13
8 th DQ	9	Six Pack Ruamata (Roto)	MM	2:06:27
9 th	16	Roc Waitakere (Auck)	OW	2:06:36
10 th	13	The Crayfish Cowboys (Omaio)	OM	2:08:53
11 th	11	All Mixed Up (Wgtn)	Mixed	2:10:50
12 th	10	Tama Tane Ruamata (Roto)	Mixed	2:17:27
13 th	8	Wahine Huatau Ruamata (Roto)	MW	2:32:15
DNF	12	Te Wai Amohia (Auck)	MW	

W1 & W2 OFFICIAL RACE RESULTS

Order of finishing	Waka Number	Paddler Name/s	Category	Time
1 st	1	Ray Lambert & Mohi Pakinga	MM	40:49
2 nd	7	Mate Hata & Ash Coates	MM	43:24
3 rd	11	Hemi Wahapango	OM	44: 56
4 th	10	Allen Wharewera	MM	47:15
5 th	4	Lianne Raeburn	MW	50:47
6 th	3	Maria Te Tohu	MW	50:49
7 th	2	Miria Harris	MW	51:46
8 th	8	Tom O'Brien	SMM	52:38
9 th	9	Melanie Rei	MW	52:51
10 th	6	Rueben Grace	OM	1:00:58

