



Lote Sanderson of Ben Lomond paddles an outrigger canoe in the Santa Cruz Yacht Harbor in training for an international competition.

RICK E. MARTIN — MERCURY NEWS

Canoe club training for sprint races

BY TERRI MORGAN
Special to the Mercury News

Members of the Santa Cruz outrigger canoe club will pit their paddling prowess against athletes from 17 nations this month at the 1992 World Sprint Races in Sacramento.

For most of the Santa Cruzans, participating in the races will be a once-in-a-lifetime experience. But for a Ben Lomond woman, the event will mark her second consecutive appearance in the outrigger canoeing

The event will be Lote Sanderson's second appearance in the outrigger canoeing world's version of the Olympic Games.

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The races are held at various locations around the Pacific Rim every other year.

Lote Sanderson, 40, raced with the Ameri-

can Samoa women's outrigger canoe team during the 1990 World Sprints in New Zealand. Now a member of the Akau Hana Outrigger Club based at the Santa Cruz Yacht Harbor, she is looking forward to brushing paddles against her old teammates and friends from around the world.

About 3,000 canoeists, including about 36 from Santa Cruz, are expected to compete in 6- and 12-person races at Lake Natoma on the American River from Aug. 16 through

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Outrigger canoe club trains for World Sprint Races

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22. The event is co-sponsored by the International Polynesian Canoe Federation and the 17 clubs in the Northern California Outrigger Canoe Association.

Sanderson grew up in American Samoa, where outrigger canoes are used for transportation, fishing and recreation, and canoe racing is a national pastime. Like their counterparts in the United States who dream of playing in the World Series while shagging flies in sandlots, children growing up on islands in the South Pacific dream about competing in the world sprint races while paddling

their homemade tin canoes with coconut fronds.

After marrying an American and moving to Santa Cruz County, Sanderson never thought she'd paddle again, let alone compete.

She got her chance to do both when she and her husband, George, returned to American Samoa in 1988 with their two children for a two-year stay.

"I wanted to canoe because I love being out on the water," she said. "I mentioned it to a friend, and the next thing I knew, I was out there with a team from the American Samoa Outrigger Club. It was really fun because the paddlers there are strong and fast."

The club qualified to compete in New Zealand shortly before the Sandersons returned to California.

"We didn't do so well, but it was really a neat experience," she said.

She hung up her paddle after moving to the San Lorenzo Valley, but came out of retirement about four months ago when her 13-year-old son, Emerson, volunteered her services to the Akau Hana, or North Bay, club.

As a "steersperson," she paddles from the rear while keeping the canoe on course.

In June the Santa Cruz club won the right to enter seven men's, women's and coed crews into the world sprint races.

"We're a small and relatively new club," said Sharon Saul, who founded Akau Hana in 1987 with her husband, Stewart. "For us to be going to the world sprints is amazing."

"Lote will be an asset because of her experience in New Zealand. She's also a good paddler and an excellent steersman."

Stewart Saul, who competed in the 1984 world sprints in Long Beach, is the only other member of the club with international racing experience.

Sharon Saul said the club is realistic about its chances against powerhouse teams from Tahiti, Hawaii and Southern California. Just to qualify for the races is an honor, she said.