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CINDY ELLEN RUSSELL / CRUSSELL@STARBULLETIN.COM

Jamie Mitchell paddled through 4- to 6-foot swells as he approached the finishing point in Hawaii Kai yesterday.

Mitchell smashes record

The paddleboarder from Australia wins the Molokai to Oahu race in just 4:56.03

By Brandon Lee
Special to the Star-Bulletin

There wasn't much left in paddleboarding that Jamie Mitchell hadn't matched or improved.

As of yesterday, there is now nothing.

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With a record-breaking win at the eighth annual Quiksilveredition Molokai to Oahu Paddleboard Race, the 27-year-old Australian sensation elevated his status from the best over the last three years to the best ever.

Considered the world championship of the sport, Mitchell crossed the 32-mile Quiksilveredition course across the Kaiwi Channel in 4 hours, 56 minutes and 3 seconds, crushing the previous race record (5:22:48) by almost a half-hour.

"It's amazing -- I didn't think I'd break the record," said Mitchell, who hails from Queensland and is \$1,500 richer with the victory. "I felt the pressure the last few weeks -- more than I have, ever. People expect me to win sometimes. ... I'm just relieved it's over, and that I gave it 110 percent."

Completing an undefeated run in all competitions he's entered over the last three seasons, yesterday's result also marked Mitchell's third straight Quiksilveredition overall title. He is the first to win the overall title more than twice.

"No one has ever done three, and I wanted that real bad," he said.



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Cory Hutchings from New Zealand spared a moment to wave a shaka sign during his approach to the Hawaii Kai finishing point during the 8th Annual Quiksilveredition yesterday.

Paddleboards are basically streamlined surfboards designed to ride open-ocean swells, which competitors arm-paddle either prone or on their knees. The athletes choose between open-division boards averaging 16 feet long or 12-foot stockboards.

An international field of 33 solo competitors and 26 two-person teams started yesterday's race at 7:30 a.m. in the water off Kalua Koi Hotel on

Molokai. The finish was at Maunalua Bay Beach Park in Hawaii Kai.

There were 15- to 20-mph tradewinds and 6-foot swells in the channel that helped Mitchell cross in record time, but pushing him even further was a strong challenge the entire race from New Zealand's Cory Hutchings, who ended up in second place at 4:58:19.

"Cory set a cracking pace, and I think that had a lot to do with it," Mitchell said. "Sort of like last year, I tried to piggyback and piggyback (the pacesetter), and then I took an inside line (to the finish) ... and kind of got to Portlock just in front of him. (The difference was) I had a better line, and that was kind of it."

Participating in his first Quiksilveredition, Hutchings, a 32-year-old professional Ironman competitor, said he never was more than 300 yards from Mitchell the whole way. He finished a little more than two minutes behind him, and also well ahead of the previous record.

"The furthest I've ever paddled (before) is like 2 1/2 hours, so I thought I would go as fast as I could and see if I could hold on as long as I could," Hutchings said. "It probably wasn't the smartest thing to do, but it's the only way I know how to race. ... It almost worked. Jamie's a sensational paddler, and I'm stoked to get second. ... This was really enjoyably terrible."

In fact, the first nine finishers (seven solo, two teams) to cross logged times faster than the previous record Australia's Mick Dibetta set in winning the Quiksilveredition in 1997 -- and Dibetta was among them, finishing in 5:11:19, fifth-best among the solo competitors.

Also a previous Quiksilveredition (2001) champ and the last man to win a major race before Mitchell's current run, Aaron Bitmead of Australia finished third overall at 5:02:23. Brian Rocheleau, last year's Quiksilveredition runner-up, was the first Hawaii competitor to cross, at 5:04:16, and fourth overall.

Other significant division winners yesterday included Australia's Tim Foran (5:39:01) in the stockboard, University of Hawaii graduate student Kanesa Duncan (5:53:49) in the women's and Hawaii's Dolan Eversole and Jimmy Austin (5:04:48) in the team.

After never paddling in a real race longer than five minutes before his July 24 win in the 6.5-mile Hennessey's International Championships on Oahu's North Shore, Foran, 26, proved he's the real deal. He bested by more than 10 minutes Kaaawa's Matt Sack (5:50:19), who finished as the Quiksilveredition stockboard runner-up for a third time.

One of only two women competing, Duncan, 28, also picked up her third Quiksilveredition win (also 2001-02; no other woman has won more than once). And she did it in record-breaking fashion too, cutting almost an hour off the previous mark (6:47:30) Australia's Hayley Bateup established last year.

California champion Jane Cairns finished an hour behind, at 6:53:24.

"To be under six hours, I don't think I ever thought I could go that fast," Duncan said. "The mental and physical aspect of it -- you need both sides - they really came together for me and made for an awesome race."

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