

Iditarod Experience Journal

The Iditarod Experience Journal interactive flash maps (linked from <http://www.iditarod.com/teachers/resources.html>) allow you to read descriptions of what racing along the trail might be like. Interactive maps are provided for the Northern and Southern Route. Full of adventure, you can read of some of the challenges and obstacles that a team may face during the long trek to Nome. Feel free to just enjoy reading the descriptions or you can be creative and invent your own stories!

Learning Objectives

- To follow "The Last Great Race on Earth", with the opportunity to acquire race information through an interactive map and other Internet resources.
- To use the Internet resource data and information to create a journal of your race experiences to Nome using selections from the trail checkpoint to checkpoint
- To use charts, biographies, and other race links, with the interactive map to collect your data and write your daily journal entries.
- To exercise your writing abilities with information used to complete a unique personal journal.

The Assignment

Learn the dynamics of what happens out on the Iditarod Trail by using the interactive map to access the trail and select experiences found in the sections between the checkpoints. Select experiences for each section of the trail or create your own and construct your race scenarios from Willow to Nome as you mush to the finish line. You will use the Eye on the Trail Blog and related links. Use the race updates, and musher information located on the www.iditarod.com site as well as press releases and related links you may discover on the World Wide Web. Keep all your findings as a journal and take the creative risk to add other details that have occurred during the race in the correct sequence and sections of trail. Your race adventure is what you make it, through the selection process and Internet research. It's your Iditarod race to Nome! It is not about the destination, it is about the journey.

Lesson samples from 2 4th grade students who completed this assignment as enrichment assignments completed during two lunch periods twice a week.

Written by Shane
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"The Iditarod racers will arrive in Anchorage any minute now," An Alaskan reporter explained on the television toward the front of the bus. I, a rookie Iditarod musher, will run my first Iditarod sled dog race today.

"We are finally here," the bus driver announced as the bus came to a slow stop. Out the window, I saw millions of screaming fans, chanting the names of famous veteran mushers. I've never seen so much snow falling all over a huge city like Anchorage. Back in New Jersey, we never got snow like they do here.

"It is time for the fun run!" I screamed, filled with joy. I felt so confident and great... that is until I stepped foot outside. It wasn't the cold that intimidated me as much as the other mushers that had been here before.

"Now that you have arrived, it is time to meet your dogs," a dog trainer told the large group of us mushers. As the first couple of mushers were called up to get their dogs, I felt the intensity rising inside of me.

I thought to myself, "After all the training I've done, it finally pays off here."
"Number 15, it is time for you to pick up your dogs," the dog trainer said.

"Number 15... that's me!" I saw the Alaskan dogs and wondered how prepared they were for the race. Most were as black as the night sky, but some were as white as the snow falling around us. As soon as I saw the dogs jumping around, I stopped thinking about them, and started thinking about the race ahead of me. Then I had to hook them up to my sled. As I began to hook them up, my confidence began to shrink because of all the crazy fans screaming. Since I had many young dogs, it began to effect them also. They looked to me like they were scared stiff.

My brother walked up to me and started to get prepared for the fun run. I chose my brother because of the support he had for me and the dream of being a musher in a race like this.

They called my number for me to start the run as I pushed my sled to the starting line. It was time for me to leave Anchorage and begin my journey to Campbell Airstrip. Finally, after months of waiting, it was time. The dogs began running, and I started to feel the excitement. As I was dodging obstacles on the track, my brother whispered something to me that made me feel confident.

He said, "I know you can finish this race, Shane, I just know it." I was thinking about what my brother had said for a moment, then I knew I had to concentrate on the race. Before I knew it, I was half way through the fun run. I knew it was almost time to leave all of my friends and family and begin the race I've been dreaming of. I could see the end of the run and I knew this would be the last time I would see anyone I cared about until I reached the finish line. When we got to the end, I felt great to be running in a race like this, but at the same time, I felt sad that I wouldn't see anyone I knew besides mushers.

One minute I felt like I was in Campbell, the next minute I seemed to be at the restart of the race in Willow. Once again, the crowd was wildly cheering the names of mushers. It quickly went from the crowd cheering, to me starting in 15th place. The time from Willow to Yentna, the first checkpoint, was extremely short because of the few obstacles that were on the trail.

As I signed in on the signing sheet, I quickly said, "I'm going," as the man wrote down my name. I noticed that I had many mushers ahead of me. It was definitely becoming a competition. When I pulled away, I felt determined to make it to Skwentna.

About half way to Skwentna, my lead dog, Warrior, didn't look so good. He began limping along the trail. So, I decided to take out the sleeping bag and put him in it. We were passing lots of frozen water, which I'm not used to seeing because I come from a small town in New Jersey. I had to be careful because I didn't want to slide into it.

When we pulled in to Skwentna, I quickly told the man about my dog. He said, "I'll do everything to help you." I believed that the man would do just what he said. I pulled away without my lead dog on my team. I was confident that we could make it to Finger Lake.

We made it to Finger Lake, and much further. We got to McGrath and that was when I took my 24 hour stop. Twenty-four hours was a long time to be away from the race. The last few days seemed like a blur to me because of the stop I took and the dog I lost. After my 24 hour stop, I disappeared into the snowy tracks.

We had only been on the trail for 6 days, but it felt like months to me. As we approached a river on the trail, I noticed it was frozen solid and strong enough to hold a dog sled with 15 dogs. We sped across the ice until it began to crack behind me. Before I knew it, the back of my sled was in the cold water. My dogs just kept trying and trying until we finally got out of the watery ditch.

But as we began flying across the trail, another dog of mine, Smoky, seemed to be feeling sick and tired of running. I had to make yet another stop to take my dog off the harness, put him into the sleeping bag, and get myself and the rest of my dogs ready to get to Kaltag to take my 8 hour stop.

Kaltag, much like Yentna, didn't have many obstacles to dodge, such as trees and bushes. The weather seemed to change quickly from a light snow, to raging hail. No musher would want to be stuck in weather like this! It was getting closer to being a whiteout condition. I didn't want to, but I had to pull over. I just couldn't go any further because the risk of losing any more dogs could hurt my chances of even making it to the finish line. For about 30 minutes, we just sat there, watching the snow pass by my face and land on my dogs. My dogs, which were once black as night, were now completely white. The only thing that showed color was all their shining blue eyes. We finally got back on the trail, and made it to our destination where I took my 8 hour stop.

“Hey, buddy! Wake up!”

“What?” I said, confused. But that was before I knew that I had overslept my 8 hour time period. I got on my sled and rode away with the wind. But before leaving, I saw the musher checklist and noticed I was in 25th!

“MUSH!!!” I screamed at my dogs. “Come on mush!!!”

We were going really fast passing 9 or 10 people! Sixteenth was a good place to be in. I'm at least in the top 20!

We kept our place, until we were halfway through the trail from Elim to Golovin. I was about to pass another musher and when I looked beside me I noticed him dialing a phone. “Stop! You could get disqualified for getting outside assistance,” I shouted. But right after I said that, I noticed he only had 7 dogs left, and one seemed to be injured.

“I must get an ambulance! My dog is extremely hurt!” After saying those very words, the young musher hit the call button. I never knew anyone who would sacrifice their dreams just to save one little dog. Once I got to the next checkpoint, I told the workers that a musher had used outside assistance, and must be immediately disqualified. I only stayed at Golovin for a few minutes after I had mentioned the disqualification. I had to drop three dogs off a Golovin. I was down to only 12 dogs! But that was still pretty good. I had to make sure that I took good care of my dogs so I wouldn't have to drop out or get disqualified.

Riding along the trail from Golovin to White Mountain was like riding a skateboard down a hill. Easy. The journey took a few hours, but it didn't do any harm to us. We moved all the way up to 3rd! But that was when I had to take the dreaded 8 hour stop at White Mountain. Once again, I used my power of sleeping to get me through my 8 hour quickly. I never knew that sleeping was a key trait in the Iditarod, or any race for that matter.

After 8 hours of rest, I was back on the trail, riding along at a fast pace, passing another musher, moving my place up to 2nd. There was only one more person to pass, a former champion, Bill Poland. He wanted to seal his fourth win of his career. But he had a challenge coming up behind him. Me. I was fired up and prepared for anything... accept what was about to happen to me later in the race.

Arriving at Safety, I noticed him laying down on the couch, sleeping the rest of the race away. I was about to take advantage of the situation, but the doctor said I had to drop 3 dogs!!! I was down to 9 dogs. Six males, and three females. I could still win but I would have to depart as soon as possible.

I left about five minutes after I dropped 3 dogs. 2 of them were my fastest. But slow and steady wins the race. So I followed that saying.

I was off to a slow start, but I couldn't see anyone near me, so I figured it was pretty good. The trail was about the hardest in the whole race! Every two seconds you would have to be yelling gee and haw, commands for right and left turns, because of all the trees and bushes in the way. I thought I could see the finish line, and for a split second I stared in astonishment, thinking that I was about to win the race. Unfortunately, I was hallucinating.

About twenty minutes after that, I really was staring at the finish line. With no one behind me, I knew I'd win! While riding slowly, enjoying my definite win, most of the crowd was booing me, except my family of course. The crowd didn't seem to like rookies winning. But it didn't make me feel bad at all, because I knew I had won, and I didn't care what anyone thought about it. When I crossed the finish line, my family ran up to me and they all hugged me. I was so proud of myself for winning something as big as the Iditarod! More people have climbed Mount Everest than finished the Iditarod. I was proud to be one of the ones who finished, with a good time of 9 days, 15 hours, 22 minutes, and 16 seconds. That was good for a rookie, especially for one who never competed in any type of sled dog race. Since I had accomplished this goal, I had to set another one. Maybe I would become a pro athlete, or a rock star, or something else. Or maybe I should continue with a great mushing career. And that is exactly what I did.

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Excitement. Madness . Glory. Those are only three words to describe the Iditarod. This was my first year running the amazing Iditarod. I had spent months training for this very moment, to be on the starting line in Anchorage. The dogs were restless and full of energy. The crowd, yelling at the top of their lungs, bundled up like snowmen, seemed as if it was as big as the population of New York City. Anchorage was rustling with race officials trying to get the mushers to the starting point, and the crowd from going wild.

The Start

I was picked to be the thirty-seventh musher to leave the starting gate. I groaned when I thought of having to wait one hour and fourteen minutes. When the first musher left for Nome my dogs thought that it was their turn to start running. Twenty-two mushers had left on their journey to Nome when news got to me that the second musher to leave had been attacked by a moose. The moose had scared the team off the track and the musher was stranded. By then a race official had come up to me and was trying to get my attention.

“Hello!” he yelled at me , “ It’s time for you to get ready to leave!”

I was still deep in thought when he called me. “Oh”, I said, full of embarrassment. So I checked my sled quickly and got my team to the starting line.

The Race

My dogs were going strong and we were breezing through the first couple of checkpoints. Although when I reached Rainy Pass I struck trouble. While I was signing in the veterinarian at that checkpoint came up to me.

She said, “Excuse me sir, but it seems to me that one of your dogs is suffering from frostbite in her front left paw.”

Quickly I ran out of the little cabin and out to my sled where my dogs were resting. Oh man, I thought; I can’t lose a dog this early into the race. I asked the vet, “Which dog has the frostbite?”

“The lead dog,” she replied.

“But that is my best dog!” I whined like a child who didn’t get the toy he wanted on Christmas Day.

“I’m very sorry to hear that sir but your dog cannot run this race anymore. If he keeps on going his paw could have to be amputated,” she said, getting impatient. I told her to have my sponsor, Nike, ship my dog to the finish line where I could meet up with him after I finished. I packed up my dogs and said goodbye to Mackey and got out of that checkpoint.

As I was breezing through the next few checkpoints I kept thinking the same thing over and over again. I started out with sixteen great dogs: Maple, Crush, Slip, Pine, Tyler, Ruby, Devil, Nikoli, Vicki, Rip, Swap, Howard, Block, Bear, Leaf, and Mackey, the one I had lost. If my dogs had to keep dropping out like Mackey I wouldn’t be able to finish the race.

It seemed as if all of the sudden I was in McGrath. I decided that it was wise to take my 24 hour stop there and my dogs needed it so I took it. While I was signing in I noticed that the sign-in sheet was totally empty. I practically jumped out of my pants I was so excited. After that I walked outside to see that my 15 wonderful dogs were snuggled up into balls on the freshly fallen snow.

McGrath was a tiny town hidden by a beautiful hill covered in evergreens. I strolled down the gravel streets of McGrath looking into the windows filled with toys and warm clothing. Soon I walked back to my dogs, fed them a little treats and I got them ready to leave. Just to make sure everything was running smoothly I walked back in to the sign-in cabin and got great news. There was a huge snowstorm a few checkpoints behind me and I was the only one who hadn’t been hit by it. I rolled out of McGrath feeling as if I already had the Iditarod.

The next checkpoint, Takotna, was as simple as one, two, three. After that, I pulled into Ophir. Since I knew that the next checkpoint was ninety-one miles away, I took my mandatory eight hour stop. Again the sign-in sheet was completely blank. Knowing that I hadn’t had enough sleep, I set my watch to go off at two o’clock a.m. I took a nice little six hour nap and when I woke up I felt like I had taken a full night’s rest.

Riding through the ice and snow between Ophir and Iditarod wasn’t fun. It took me thirteen hours to get to the ghost town of Iditarod. Again when I signed in I was in first place and found out that I was three long checkpoints in front of the second place musher. I pumped two fists in the air and I guess the man behind the front desk noticed because he said, “So you’re happy about your big lead?”

“Oh yes very much!” I replied although a little bit embarrassed.

“Well be even happier because you just got two-thousand five hundred dollars in gold nuggets!”

“Thank you so much sir! Well I better get going because I didn’t finish the race yet.” I ran outside to my team and I hugged every one of my dogs. Then I yelled, “Mush, Hike, Alright let’s go!” We blazed out of Iditarod to finish ‘The Last Great Race on Earth’. As I was running smoothly along the trail I thought “Man this is turning out to be a Cinderella story”.

I wasn’t doing too well into the next checkpoint, Shageluk; my back dog, Vicki, would have to drop out of the race, and I had a broken sled as I entered the checkpoint. I noticed that Vicki was having trouble around the forty-fifth mile out of Iditarod—she was just not keeping up with the rest of the team. I had to stop and check her paws but there wasn’t anything wrong. It looked like she was just too tired to keep on going so I put her on my sled and we started out again.

When I entered the checkpoint of Anvik I received great news. After I had taken care of Vicki I signed-in. The man behind the counter said, “Congratulations! You are the first into Anvik you will receive a nine-course meal in around three hours!” The meal was great. I had an appetizer of dried fruits. Then I enjoyed smoked salmon with cooked vegetables. After that I ate baked cockroaches (surprisingly they taste great). Then they gave me fresh jellyfish that they caught that very morning. I had grilled turtle with a side of Japanese seaweed. Before the entrée I was given some eagle eyeballs. Those eyeballs were delicious. For my entrée I had fried iguana with ranch dressing. For dessert the chef gave me his famous hot chocolate cake. Last I munched on chocolate-dipped butterflies. During just that one meal I probably gained around six pounds!

The next few checkpoints were along the great Yukon River. In this stretch the wind is ALWAYS very bad. To makes matters worse the wind was so bad I couldn’t move five inches without my lead dog Crush’s feet, starting to rise slowly into the air. Believe me the wind was that bad. In my two years prior to the Iditarod I was told that if I ran it to watch out for the winds along the mighty Yukon River. I should have listened better. By the time I was halfway to the next checkpoint we had to stop. As I was trying to get my team to sit and get comfortable a whiteout hit my team. At first I thought it would only last for an hour. After three hours of not being able to see a thing I tried to feel my way around my team. I decided to start with my lead dog; after a while I got used to having to go through every dog. When I was finished checking my dogs I could see around me by about one hundred yards. My choice was risky but I chose to set out to Grayling.

After arriving at Grayling it was a wise choice to check where each musher was. I logged on to the computer inside the sign-in cabin and I found out that Melvin Littleburn was in second. I was ahead of him by two long checkpoints! The musher in last place was named Henrianta Theodore. She was only at Ophir. To my surprise Melvin Littleburn was in front of the third musher (Clinton William) by two checkpoints! When you are running a race that is deadly it feels GREAT to be winning. That is exactly the way that I felt for half of a minute before I snapped out of my glorious fantasy. Then I realized like a child would that the Iditarod wasn’t over, so I set out to the next checkpoint, Eagle Island.

Before the race, I read that Unalakleet was the start of running along the Alaskan shore. The coast line was full of treacherous winds and blinding whiteouts. I knew that running along the shore wouldn't be fun, but with all good things come some sacrifices. Soon I made it through Eagle Island and then Kaltag. The bright side of making it to Unalakleet was that I got the first to the Gold Coast Award! That consisted of \$2,500 worth of gold nuggets! Getting that much gold made me feel slightly better, but I still was worried about what to come. After receiving my gold nuggets I checked where each musher was. Melvin Littleburn was now running in a close third just behind Clinton William who was now in second. To my delight he was only out of Grayling.

I didn't like waiting in Unalakleet, but I had to because there was a category three white-out and being stuck in that out in the middle of nowhere isn't fun, is deadly, and nobody knows where you are. While waiting in Unalakleet my dogs got restless. It was hard not to set out for Shaktoolik because when my dogs don't get what they want they sometimes get dangerous. I at least had to do something. My team was most important and doing what they wanted was my top priority in the 1995 Iditarod. It was a dumb choice but I set out to Shaktoolik.

Throughout the white-out I hallucinated several times. The first time I hallucinated I saw a little girl about five came up to me with a basket of cookies. Then she told me, "Hey weirdo, get a job!!!"

After that little incident I saw three backpacks coming at me chanting, "Going with the flow dude", then I noticed that they were wearing hippie name-tags. Soon the backpacks came back with about two-thousand Snickers Candy-Bars. I was so caught up in my crazy vision that I actually reached off my sled and tried to grab one. Obviously they weren't real so I got a nice big handful of air. For a moment, I was disappointed because when you hallucinate everything seems real. Soon I snapped out of it and I continued on to Nome.

Throughout my race it had seemed that everything was going as well as a musher could hope. I now had a three and a half checkpoint lead over the second place musher; to top that the race officials in Nome expected me to cross the finish line in around thirty hours. Also my team consisted of sixteen dogs when I started the race and now I had fifteen. The scary thing about that was that so far this had been the worst weather that the Iditarod had ever seen! My mind was racing like Tony Stewart at the Daytona 500. Then out of nowhere I heard a crack, then the faintest yelp yet it scared me to death. When you are riding in this part of the Iditarod you travel over the frozen Bering Sea. Instinctively I thought that the ice was cracking. So I shouted a sentence that I wouldn't like to share with fourth graders. It turned out that the ice wasn't cracking, so I stopped crying like a baby and I took my hands away from my head. What had happened was that one of my dogs, Howard had a broken hip which is deadly for a Siberian husky because they have to exercise frequently due to their HUGE diet. Without exercising they can't burn off what they consume. Before the race I had read something about dog therapy if a dog breaks a

hip they have to do extensive surgery and then at least two months of hard rehab. The Iditarod Trail Committee makes sure that a musher brings a first-aid kit. So I reached into my bag on the sled and got out my first-aid kit. In it I found some ace bandages. I walked back to Howard whom was trembling greatly and gently wrapped it around his shattered hip. After I was finished I carried him back to my sled, wrapped him in a blanket, and hugged the poor dog, then I had to give him a pain shot. Next I grabbed a can of spray-paint and marked the spot where he had tripped. Oh man I thought as I pulled into Shaktoolik, this is going to be tough leaving Howard behind, but you got to do what you got to do. After talking to the vet for a half hour we decided to give Howard extensive care which involved giving him anesthesia for a few months but the doctor said it was only for the best so I went with it.

The next few checkpoints were easy for me because I had widened my lead by one checkpoint which stretched my lead to five checkpoints now over Angus Warriors. It felt great to be on top of the pack with a huge lead. Now I was in the checkpoint of White Mountain the penultimate checkpoint in the Iditarod. Here you must take an eight hour stop. So I was just relaxing trying to come up with a strategy for the next two checkpoints, Safety and Nome, when someone strangely familiar came up to me and said, “Congratulations!!!”

“What?” I said in astonishment.

“You have just won \$1,000 in pure gold nuggets!!!” the man said.

“Sorry, but who in the name of tartar sauce are you?” I asked, trying to sound as polite as I could.

“Duh, I’m your best friend!” he said looking at me as if I was crazy, “The Iditarod race must really be tough on you.”

“Sorry man”, I said scared to see what was coming. It was true though; he was my best friend. In my defense I had hurt my corneas back in McGrath which had left me with blurry vision. Also he had cut his blonde hair short. Finally you can barely tell anyone apart when they are wearing heavy-duty snow gear. Anyway I felt bad so I went over to him and gave Brendan Wiseman a high-five. We had met in third grade at Lakeville Elementary. I hadn’t seen him since the start of the Iditarod. We talked about simple things like if the Phillies would win the World Series, or if the Dodgers would run away with it. I was so happy to see him because I didn’t know anybody on the Iditarod trail and out there it gets pretty lonely. It was my seventh hour at White Mountain when I finally checked my watch. I realized that my dogs probably had to be checked, harnessed, and given a snack before I set out to Safety so I had some chores to do. First I checked my dogs. A few of them needed some booties. All of them wanted a snack (it seems like they always do), and one or two of them had to have a shoulder massage. After that I started my trip to Safety.

The journey to Safety was surprising. As I was riding along the trail my dogs suddenly stopped. I had been looking in my sled for some Tylenol because my back was aching. When I looked up I found a moose right in front of my dogs. In the Iditarod you are required to carry a gun in case you encounter a dangerous animal like a moose. So I pulled out my new rifle and aimed at the moose. Then I realized that the moose and my dogs were playing. They were kicking around a snow ball and sniffing each other. I was in total shock. I knew that getting involved with the moose and my dogs could get messy so I tried to let them be. I took out my video camera because I knew that I would have to explain that whole situation to the Iditarod Trail Committee.

After videotaping the scenario for at least fifteen minutes I remembered something useful. Before the Iditarod I had packed some treats for the dogs. They were called Tearin' Treats; my dogs had refused to eat them throughout the race. Quietly I pulled one out of my sled and whipped it into the vast forest right next to the trail. The moose went bounding into the forest and disappeared. Instinctively I screamed "Mush, Hike, Alright, Let's Go!!!" and we set off to Safety.

When I arrived at Safety it was twelve 'o clock am. I went into the tiny house that was there, and grabbed a cup of coffee. I only stayed there for three minutes because I was on the verge of winning the great Iditarod.

Victory

Winning the Iditarod in your rookie year is truly amazing. After all that you have to go through to win it is a huge honor. Going from Safety to Nome takes only about three hours which is very short run. It is a happy and peaceful ride that makes you very excited. As I neared the finish line I started to go crazy. I couldn't believe that I was about to win the Iditarod. I was about a half of a mile away from the finish line when it came into view. I pumped my fist twice. I can't describe how good I felt. I knew that now I would become a part of history. It is a huge honor to be an Iditarod musher.

It seemed like I would never even finish the Iditarod before I went out and tried to accomplish the amazing task. It was so fun to see the screaming crowds waiting for me to cross the finish line. I was happy to see my friends and family. My mom was crying and my dad was clapping wildly. Finally I crossed the finish line. It took me a time of eight days, twenty one hours, fifty three minutes, and fifteen seconds.

Post-Race

As I crossed the finish line I was mobbed by thousands of Iditarod lovers. After about three minutes I had to be escorted out of the crowd by policemen. I still had to check into Nome, it was a checkpoint. I signed in with good handwriting because for the entire race I had been writing in 'chicken scratch' as my mom called it. I wrote in very neat cursive instead.

It felt good that night. I had my family around me on the cozy bed in my room at The Marriot in Nome. We were all watching reruns of me crossing the finish line. I didn't like it because I had never liked to be a show off but my mom made me and since she is my mom I had to do what she told me to do. That night was a time I will never forget. The next morning I had an autograph signing in the Marriot's lobby sponsored by the Iditarod that I had to attend. The kids that I saw in the Marriot's lobby that I saw were so kind, polite, cute, and funny. There were kids from ages three (they were the funniest and cutest) to ages twenty and above! It was cool to meet adoring fans face to face. They all had nice little comments like, "Nice job", or "Way to go". That night I lay in my bed thinking, I want to do that again. I fell asleep thinking of the race; it had its ups and downs but I loved it.

The next day I met up with my dogs. I got to see Howard and Mackey at the vet which was relieving. Finally I got to travel home to Butte, Montana with everybody, my dogs, my great family, and my supportive parents. It was a truly great experience!

The Rest of My Life

In my career I won seven Iditarod races. I won in 1998, 1999, 2000, 2003, 2004, 2005, and finally in 2006.

In 2007 as I was riding along the Iditarod trail just out of Ophir. We hit a rock and the whole team went flying. When we landed three of my dogs had bruises and I was paralyzed from the hip down. The next day I can recall waking up after some kind of serious surgery. The accident didn't affect me too much. I was going to retire sometime soon anyway. Recovering from my accident only took around five months or so. I remember the first time I saw my dogs after getting out of the hospital it made me feel so much better to see all sixteen of my dogs that ran with me in all of my Iditarod races sprint up to me and start fighting to lick me.

Now I'm a dogsled commentator on ESPN. I'm on every Tuesday at 3:00 EST. You can email me at mushrules @optimimonline.

Mushing is a great sport...
You should try it someday.