



Zuma's
Paw Prints

2006 JR. IDITAROD CHAMPION

February 26, 2006

Oh boy, oh boy!

The first musher to leave Yentna for the return trip to Willow Lake was Rohn Buser at 3:18 a.m. followed at 3:21 by Micah Degerlund with Ellen King at 3:22 and Melissa Owens, the defending champion, at 3:29. This looked like the group to watch. I wondered if Melissa could make it two in a row. Ellen King and Rohn Buser both have fathers who are professional mushers and Iditarod multi-champions. They were ones to watch in this run back to Willow Lake. Micah Degerlund has run the Jr. Iditarod twice before and has a lot of trail savvy so he might just surprise everyone. It looked like the race for first place would be among these four mushers.

Sure enough, as the teams checked through the Eagle Song checkpoint, Micah had taken the lead and Rohn Buser was one minute behind him. At Scary Tree checkpoint, Micah was still ahead of Rohn while the other teams had dropped back a bit. At Deshka Landing, Buser and Degerlund were just seconds apart.



I was so excited I could hardly stand it. I bugged Lois until she finally took me to see the finish. I saw a team coming down the trail toward the finish line and I just



knew that we were about to greet a new champion. As I looked at the team coming in, I realized that those dogs were trotting along as though they were out for an afternoon hike! They looked great! I hadn't quite identified the team at that point, but as the team came under the finish banner, I saw that it was Micah.

Micah T. Degerlund crossed the finish line at 9:01 a.m. Sunday morning to become the 2006 Jr. Iditarod Champion. Micah, a 17 year old junior musher, has been a dog handler for Ray Redington, Jr. of Fairbanks for the past six years. This was his third and last time to compete in the Jr. Iditarod. He finished 6th in 2004 and 4th in 2005. Micah is an



11th grade student at UAF and enjoys shooting, hunting and mushing. He plans to continue mushing no matter what else he might do after graduation.

Rohn Buser finished the race in second place at 9:06 and Ellen King was third at 9:22 a.m. To see the rest of the finishing times, go to <http://www.jriditarod.com/race.php> and click on "checkpoint summary" In the drop down menu, choose "Willow Finish". There you will see the finishing times for all of the mushers.



← Here is Rohn Buser finishing the race in third place while his brother Nikolai finishes in fifth. →



Notice the bright orange dog coats

they have for their dogs. You can sure see them from a distance.

Note: Iditarod Insiders can see the start and the finish of the Jr. Iditarod on video on line now. They are fantastic.



I just had to show you these two awesome photos by Jeff Schultz.

The dogs in the right hand picture don't know quite what to make out of this. →



I'll be telling you more about race week in Anchorage as we lead up to the start next Saturday.

More next time,



Lots of Tail Wags,
Zuma

Don't forget to visit the rest of the Iditarod website at www.iditarod.com where you will be able to find the latest updates plus terrific stories by my friend June Price as the teams travel the Iditarod Trail to Nome.