



Zuma's  
Paw Prints

## LEADERS ARE HEADING FOR HALFWAY AWARD!

March 8, 2006

Hello Girls and Boys,

Oh, what a day this has been. First of all, I had three pizzas today and, boy, oh boy, were they good. There was a sausage, a pepperoni and a veggie pizza. I had pizza for lunch, pizza for my afternoon snack and pizza for supper. Mrs. Sulick's 3rd graders at Three Bridges School in Three Bridges, New Jersey, sent one of the pizzas. The second pizza arrived about an hour later and was from Mrs. Husli's class at Dunn I.B. School in Ft. Collins, Colorado. The last pizza of the day, sent by Mrs. Rivers' 3<sup>rd</sup> grade class at St. Jane DeChantal School in Bethesda, Maryland, arrived just in time for supper. (I hope the name of the school is correct because the pizza man wasn't too sure of the spelling.) Thank you boys and girls, and teachers, the pizzas were great! I shared them with my volunteers who really appreciated it. There are two pieces of pepperoni pizza left over that I took home for a snack before bed.

Now, here is the Iditarod news for today. Things started happening just a few minutes after midnight when Doug Swingley arrived in McGrath to claim the Penair Spirit of Alaska Award. Representatives of Penair, one of Iditarod's proud sponsors, greeted him. Danny Seybert, Penair's Chief Operating Officer, presented the prestigious PENAIR SPIRIT OF ALASKA AWARD in a brief ceremony at the McGrath Checkpoint.

The award is a really beautiful original "spirit mask" especially created for this event by Bristol Bay artist Orville Lind. In addition, Swingley received \$500 credit toward travel or freight shipment on Penair. This award will be presented to Doug again on March 19<sup>th</sup> at the Nome Musher's Awards Banquet.



← Melanie Gould runs down the embankment onto the Kuskokwim river as she leaves the McGrath checkpoint on Wednesday morning.

Hans Gatt is frosted up after arriving in McGrath on Wednesday →



Doug Swingley is at the front of the pack again tonight. DeeDee Jonrowe and Cim Smyth are hot on his heels out of the Ophir (oh-fur) checkpoint. Nine other teams have arrived in Ophir and there are another three teams on the trail from Takotna to Ophir. There are twenty-one teams in Takotna enjoying the wonderful food that the people of Takotna

provide for the mushers and there are five mushers on the trail to Takotna to join them for dinner. McGrath has thirteen mushers in and eight more expected tonight while seven are still in Nikolai. Finally, five teams are on their way from Rohn and five teams remain in Rohn. The current red lantern is Ben Valks of Holland.



← Replacement sleds await mushers in McGrath on Wednesday.

Wells Fargo Teacher on the Trail, Terrie Hanke takes in the scenes at the Nikolai checkpoint. →



Chad Schouweiler is the only musher that has completed the mandatory 24-hour layover. This puts him ahead of some mushers because they will have to stop at some checkpoint to do their layover while he will be continuing on.

I hate to have to report that two more mushers have scratched from the race. Sandy McKee and Sue Morgan scratched at the Rainy Pass checkpoint. Sue reportedly had a cracked rib or ribs, while Sandy McKee was suffering from frost bitten hands. There are still 79 mushers on the trail tonight in the 34<sup>th</sup> running of the Iditarod Race.



← Jeff King waits in line as DeeDee Jonrowe gets hot water for her dogs at the Nikolai checkpoint.

Aaron Burmeister dogs rest during a snowfall at the Nikolai checkpoint on Tuesday afternoon. →



Once again, my good friend Jeff Schultz has sent me some wonderful pictures to share with all my friends in the schools around the world. I hope that you enjoy them as much as I do. Don't forget to write to me. If you don't write, I won't get paid my dog biscuits and I won't make it a whole year without a good supply of dog biscuits!

Until next time,



Lots of Tail Wags,  
Zuma

Don't forget to visit the rest of the Iditarod website at [www.iditarod.com](http://www.iditarod.com) where you will be able to find the latest updates plus terrific stories by my good friend, June Price, as the teams travel the trail to Nome.