



Zuma's
Paw Prints

DOES WAITING TO TAKE LAYOVERS HELP OR HURT?

March 10, 2006

I was so pleased to hear from many of my young friends today. There is not nearly as many letters as I would like to get because I only get to hear from my little buddies at this time of year so I really look forward to the email. I miss the poems that you sent last year too. They were fun to read.

I have been talking about the mushers taking their mandatory layovers the past couple of days. Some students have written suggesting that when they take these layovers could have a strong effect on where the team finishes in the race. First let me tell you about these mandatory layovers.

Rule two of the Iditarod Official Rules states:

1. A musher must personally sign in and out to start and complete their mandatory stops.
2. There are three mandatory stops during the race.
 - a. Twenty-four Hour Stop: Each musher must take one mandatory 24-hour stop during the race. This 24-hour stop can be taken at any checkpoint that the mushers feel will most benefit his/her dogs.
 - b. A mandatory 8-hour stop must be taken at a checkpoint on the Yukon River. In this year's race that would be Ruby, Galena, Nulato or Kaltag.
 - c. A second mandatory 8-hour stop must be taken at the White Mountain checkpoint.
3. The checker must be notified by the musher of his/her intention to take a mandatory stop. The time starts when the checker is notified.
4. The starting differential will be made up on the 24-hour stop.
5. Each musher will receive a card with their layover information on it before they leave the starting line. It is the musher's responsibility to remain for the entire required time on this layover.

Do these layovers have any affect on the team's placement in the race? Let's look at this year's race. Paul Gebhart is in the lead by 52 miles because he is in Galena (arrived at 3:34 p.m.) and only one musher has checked out of Ruby behind him. Jeff King checked out of Ruby at 4:01 p.m. this afternoon after completing his Yukon River mandatory 8-hour stop. He had completed his 24-hour stop at Takotna. Paul has only completed his Yukon 8-hour stop. He still has that 24-hour stop looming ahead of him. He has not been able to gain enough miles for an advantage and will be passed by the teams' right behind him while he is on the long layover. Will he be able to catch back up with those teams? That is the question. So far, his team has averaged 5.41 mph (miles per hour). Let's look at the top ten mushers average miles per hour so far in the race.

Present Position	Musher	Average Speed MPH	Present Position	Musher	Average Speed MPH
1	Paul Gebhardt	5.41	6	John Baker	4.53
2	Jeff King	4.49	7	Lance Mackey	4.48
3	Doug Swingley	4.63	8	Bjornar Andersen	4.64
4	DeeDee Jonrowe	4.61	9	Mitch Seavey	4.68
5	Aily Zirkle	4.53	10	Sonny Lindner	4.91

Now you will notice that Gebhardt's average speed is higher than the other mushers, but, the other mushers' speed includes the 24 hour layover that Paul still needs to take. So, now we will have to watch to see if waiting so long to take his 24-hour layover is going to help or hurt his team's race finish.

I had yummy pizza again today thanks to Ms. Brown's 2nd grade class at Starer Elementary School in Muncie, Indiana, Ms. Delberge's 3rd graders at University School in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida and Ms. McQuay's 2nd grade class at J. L. Hill Elementary in Arlington, TX. There was sausage and veggies, pepperoni and veggies and sausage and cheese, cheese, cheese on them. Boy, do I ever like cheese! And sausage! And pepperoni! Oh wow, I think I am going to have a tummy ache if I don't stop eating.

I will write more later with some pictures and other news from the trail.

Until 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 about the race.