



Zuma's
Paw Prints

THE WINNER SHOULD ARRIVE IN NOME . . .

March 13, 2006

Yippy! Girls and Boys,

The winner of this year's race is on the coast and heading toward Nome. I don't know for sure who will win the race because it could be any one of the top four mushers who have reached Koyuk on the Bering Sea coast. Jeff King had a 2 ½ hour lead on Doug Swingley who was ahead of Paul Gebhardt by 1½ hours and DeeDee Jonrowe by 2 ½ hours. Jeff King has a good lead, but Paul Gebhardt's team has a faster overall speed in this race so far. That could be enough of an edge to pass Swingley and overtake King. DeeDee Jonrowe's team has had some very fast speed between checkpoints along the trail so if they get enough rest, they could sprint ahead and take out the teams ahead of her. Doug Swingley is a four time champion and knows the trail well. He wants to win badly so that he can match Rick Swenson's five-time champion status.

As I look at the teams behind these four leaders, I don't see any team that I think can overtake all four of them to claim the championship. So I think that the winner is one of these four mushers who have been dominating the lead for quite a distance. But, I could be wrong. Aliy Zirkle is moving up right behind DeeDee. Could she have been holding back, waiting for the coast to turn her team loose and let them choose their own speed? It's possible. We will have to wait and see. Isn't this exciting?

Jeff King has checked in and out at Elim. The next teams due in at Elim are Doug Swingley who left Koyuk 7:16 p.m. tonight. Paul Gebhardt left Koyuk at 9:33 followed by DeeDee Jonrowe at 9:35 and Aliy Zirkle at 9:42 p.m. John Baker checked out of Koyuk at 10:48 p.m. Right now it is looking more and more like a battle between King and Swingley for the win, but anything can happen.

I have posted a "Paw Print" showing some of the dogs of the Iditarod. I will be sending you more as we move along. The dogs are real heroes of the Iditarod and I want to share them with you. I am sure you will enjoy seeing them as much as I did.

Now, since we are likely to have a winner tomorrow night, I want you to look at the current standings on the Iditarod website and send me an email with the name of the musher that you think is going to make it to Nome first. I want to see my email box flooded with email voting for the winning team. I will post the results tomorrow evening while we wait for the winner to get to Nome. Send that email to zuma@iditarod.com, I will be waiting. Let's all see who gets the most votes. I will tell you my pick tomorrow when I post the results as well.



Jacque Philip travels in the wind outside of Unalakleet. The winds have been pretty constant for the teams traveling from Ruby to Unalakleet. They have died down a great deal today but we will be watching those weather reports on the coast. The Bering Sea coast is known for it's extreme weather conditions. I am hoping that there won't be another major storm while the mushers are on the coastal trail.



This is Unalakleet resident Harris Ivanoff who is one of the volunteer checkers at Unalakleet. Harris is just one of an army of volunteers that work on the race to make sure that the race goes smoothly. It is their efforts that insure that there is an Iditarod race for all of us to watch. Some volunteers have year around positions. Many are working on the next race, already in the planning stages. The 2007 Iditarod race will start in Anchorage on March 3, 2007.

Maybe some day when you are grown up, you can come and volunteer on the Iditarod race too. It's lots of fun.

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. Most of these pictures are from the Ruby checkpoint today.