



Zuma's  
Paw Prints

## LANCE MACKEY FIRST TO CAMP OUT AT HQ

June 21, 2006

Hello Everyone,

Wow, when Lois & I got to work Monday morning, we found that there were two campers in the parking lot! We knew right away that they were mushers who were there to camp out until Saturday. No one was stirring so we just grabbed a couple of pictures and went on into work. We could come back out later when they were up. They had probably sat up most of the night talking. We had plenty to do in the office.



We spent the morning doing the mail, sorting the ballot envelopes by membership number and putting them in the lock box. Then we did the email and ordered lunch. When lunch arrived, we went out to visit with the mushers.

The first musher to arrive at Iditarod HQ to camp out for the week was Lance Mackey. Lance arrived after everyone had left on Friday from work so we didn't know he had been there all weekend until we talked to him. He brought his son, Cain, for company along with one pet dog.

It was interesting listening to Lance talk about why he wanted to be first to sign up this year. Lance is a two time Yukon Quest Champion and he wants to be an Iditarod Champion just like his father Dick Mackey in 1978 and his brother Rick in 1983. Now this is where it gets interesting. His father and his brother were both wearing bib # 13 when they won the Iditarod. He figures that it is a lucky number for the family, but beyond that for competing in the Iditarod. One of the times that Rick Swenson won the Iditarod, he was wearing, bib # 13 and in 1975 when Emmitt Peters won the Iditarod and set the 14 day record that held for years, I bet you have already guessed that he was also wearing bib # 13. Bib # 13 has a history of its own and appears to bring luck to contenders who wear it. Lance has been planning on making this his year to win the Iditarod and nothing would be better then to be wearing the same bib number 13, like his father and his brother.

While we sat and talked, Lance related how he had been in the lead on the Quest this past February and had gotten off the trail about 20 miles from the end. He lost valuable hours finding his way back and he had it figured that if he could get back on the trail, he could possibly finish 3<sup>rd</sup>.

He got to the place on the trail where the mushers are handed their bib to wear to the finish line and asked the checker how far ahead the other teams were. The checker looked at him strangely and said, "you're the first one to get here!" Lance said he almost broke down and cried at that point. He was going to win for the second year in a row. WOW! That is awesome!



I asked him if he was going to run the Quest again and if so, would he use the same dogs on both races. He told us that he had used some of the same dogs in both races for the past two years, but this year, he was going to put his number two team in the Quest and keep the "A" team for the Iditarod and there may or may not be dogs from the Quest team but probably no more than one or two, the very best of the best.



While we talked, Lance began talking about his pet dogs. I asked him how come he had not brought a dog with him. With that, he jumped up and went to his camper. He emerged with a tiny little ball of fluff. He introduced us to Pebbles, a Pomeranian / Lhasa Apso cross. I was so surprised to see a musher with a dog he could carry around in his pocket. I mean it would take a team of a hundred of those dogs just to make it from the staging area to the starting line of the Iditarod. I think that Pebbles is a cute little thing if you are into small animals. Lance is certainly proud of his little dog. He told us that the family has several little dogs like this and that they all sleep with him and his wife. We are learning that a lot of mushers have small dogs as well as their big team dogs. I guess

the contrast between sled dogs and teeny-tiny dogs is fascinating to mushers.

As you can see, Lance is very relaxed. He is determined to win the Iditarod, he believes in himself and his dogs and that is what a musher must do to win the Iditarod.

Until next time,



Lots of Tail Wags,  
Zuma