



Veteran musher Lavon Barve of Wasilla gets ready for the race.

photos by M.A. Klueber

Iditarod '87: They're off!

by Holly Reimer

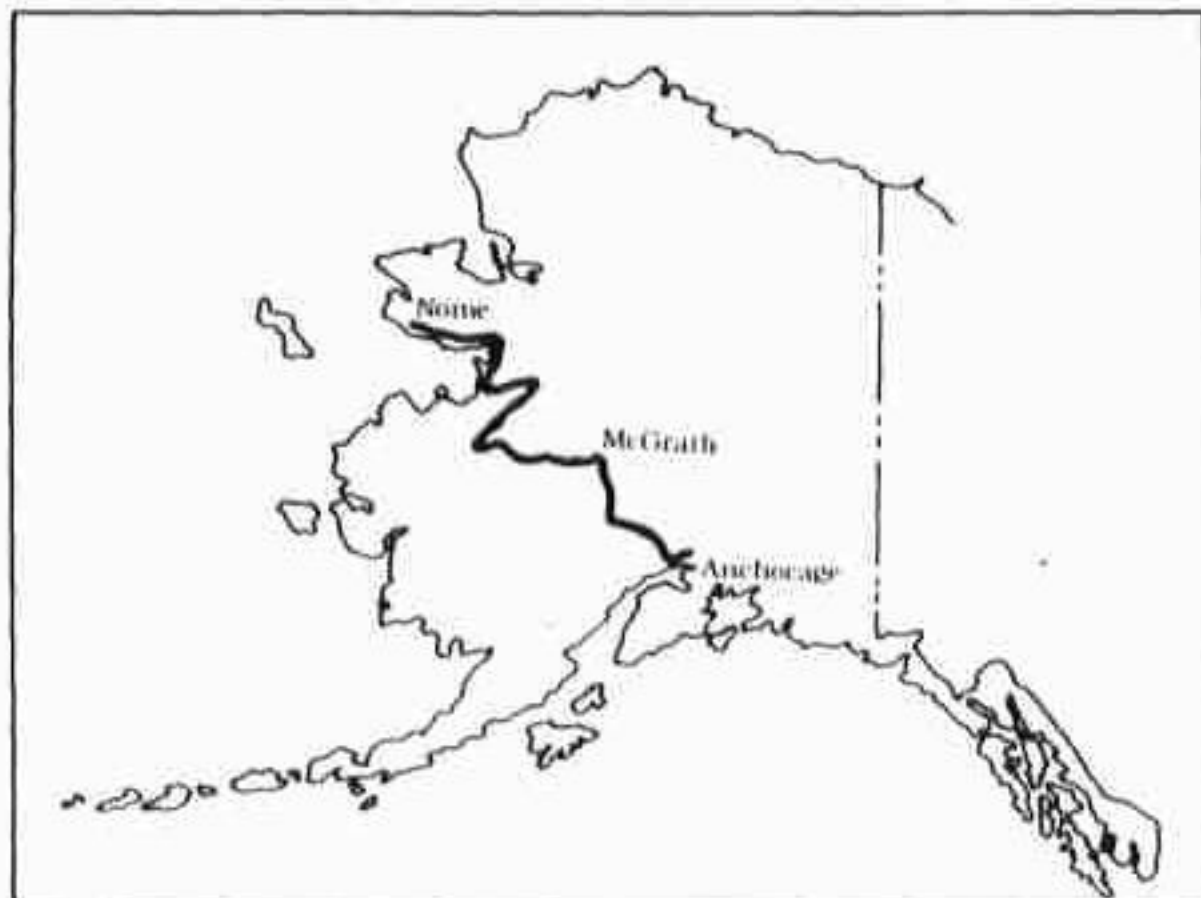
Tundra Times writer

Iditarod '87 — "The last great race on earth" — from Anchorage to Nome is in its 15th year. This unique race, which started Saturday, has 63 competitive mushers battling with the trail

and elements to be the first to cross the finish line at Nome.

This race covers more than 1,000 miles of trail, with conditions that are unpredictable and sometimes unexpected.

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The Iditarod Trail covers more than 1,000 miles

Safety is number one priority

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In 1985, Susan Butcher's team was stomped by a moose, forcing her to drop out of the race with 15 out of 17 dogs injured.

Race Manager Jack Niggemyer, speaking at a recent pre-race press conference, expressed concern about how important safety is on the trail for both the mushers and the dogs.

"Musher and dog safety is priority number one to all people who are involved," Niggemyer said.

Communications Coordinator Jim Larson explained that communications through both volunteers — 100 "HAM" amateur radio operators — and professionals sponsored by Alascom are "the finest this race has ever had." Also, through Alaskanet, Larson is hoping to have hourly race

updates.

Niggemyer also discussed trail conditions facing the mushers this year.

"The trail is icy until about 20 miles out of Knik where snow conditions get better," he said.

The winner of the race gets \$50,000. There are also other prizes awarded throughout the race at different checkpoints.

The first musher that arrives in Anchorage, the first checkpoint along the trail, will be awarded with a six-course gourmet meal with wine served with each course, compliments of the Clarion Hotel, official Headquarters for Iditarod '87.

At the halfway point, this year being at the ghost town of Iditarod, the first musher to arrive will be awarded with a silver trophy and \$2,500 in silver ingots, courtesy of Alascom.