

Attla wins sixth North American

By MITCH DEMIENTIEFF

SECOND AVENUE—The Huslia Hustler, George Attla of North Pole swept all three heats of the North American Sled Dog Race this past weekend and claimed his sixth title. The race, which was held in memory of Andrew Kokrine, was not decided until the third day when Attla's 14 dog string shattered the mark he set last year in the 30 mile heat.

Attla tied Dr. Roland Lombard for the most wins in the North American with six and also marked the fourth time that he has swept both the Fur Rendezvous and North American in the same year, breaking the record of three wins each he has shared with Doc. After Attla's earlier Rondy victory he remains tied for the most wins in Alaska's two major sprint type races.

Attla's total elapsed time of 243.53 was over five minutes faster than second place finisher Carl Huntington of Galena. Huntington who was the 1977 North American Champion finished the 70 miles at 249.07. Knik musher Tim Redington finished third at 249.44.

First Day

Carl Huntington led the field out of the starting chutes on Friday's first 20 mile heat and set a fast pace through the earlier checkpoints. Then No.5 musher, Gareth Wright of Fairbanks, who was racing in the North American for the first time in 5 years, began to make his move and dominated through the 16.5 mile checkpoint.

Huntington negotiated the trail with a very fast time of 69.75 and the crowd buzzed as Wright crossed the finishing line moving at a very fast lope. Gareth was not able to maintain the blistering pace he had set earlier and his time fell off in the home stretch. Wright's day time was 70.07; With Wright and Huntington across the finish line, the crowd anxiously awaited the arrival of No.13, Dick Brunk, No.14 George Attla, and No.16 Harvey Drake. Brunk had been running slightly ahead of Attla throughout the day, however, through the 16.5 mile checkpoint Brunk picked up a dog in the basket and his time dropped off. About five miles from the finish line, Attla started talking to his 16-dog team and leaders Trot and Keys began to roll and caught and passed the burdened team of Dick Brunk. Drake, the 1976 champion, maintained a slight advantage over Attla all day. The pair, separated only by Brunk, moved toward the finish line and served notice that their times were going to change some positions. Change positions they did as Attla streaked across the finish in a time of 68.68 to take first place for the day and Drake finished at 69.31 to assume second place.

Second Day

The second 20 mile heat run on Saturday was started with Attla's 15-dog team leading the pack out of town with Drake in hot pursuit. Third place musher Carl Huntington, fourth place musher Gareth Wright, and Harvey Drake all reported through the first two checkpoints faster than Attla. At the 12.5 mile checkpoint on Farmer's Loop Road, Attla's team made the Turn-around with considerable ease. Drake then roared through the checkpoint over one and a half minutes faster than (See ATTILA, Page Seven)

CARL HUNTINGTON and his team sweep past into the 12.5-mile checkpoint during Sunday's 30-mile leg of the North American Championship held in Fairbanks last weekend. He finished second behind George Attla in the overall times.



GEORGE ATTLA, the satisfied champion shown just after he crossed the finish line Sunday to take the North American for the sixth time.

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Attla. Then out of the woods came Carl, Gareth, and Tim Redington, all beating the defending champion's time.

Through the final checkpoint at Creamer's Field, Drake picked up a dog in the basked and fell off the pace slightly. Huntington was nearly a minute slower than Drake, and Redington* was still faster than the champ. In the final stretch run Attla burned up the trail and crossed the finish line in a time of 70.11. Drake struggled over the finish line with two dogs in the sled, but still with a respectable time of 72.00. Huntington crossed the finish line at 70.66 and for the first time in the race actually beat George's time in the home stretch. Wright posted a time of 73.37 for the day and was hard pressed by Tim Redington who clocked in at 70.74 for the day.

After the first heat Huntington had these comments, "we're waiting for the third day; that is when the race starts". Tim Redington also echoed the same thoughts.

Final Heat

In Sunday's final heat it was all Attla as he took charge of the race at the 22.5 mile

checkpoint and simply ran away from the field down the home stretch. As Attla charged down Second Avenue there was little doubt in anyone's mind that he had won his second straight title. George crossed the finish line, rested his dogs briefly and loaded them in the truck before second place musher Carl Huntington approached the Avenue. Attla's daytime was 104.74 and his total elapsed time was 243.53.

"Anybody could do what I did with that dogteam", Attla said about his team. "It looked to me like they could keep going", the champ continued.

Huntington checked in at 108.66 for the day and 249.07 total elapsed time, claimed second place for the race. Afterwards Huntington offered these

thoughts, "Now I can go home. I had too many stiff dogs in the team and they took too long to limber up".

Tim Redington roared across the finish line next with the day's second fastest time at 107.59, and finished third overall at 249.44. "They almost made it all the way", Redington said.

At the banquet on Sunday evening Attla offered these thoughts on the race, "I don't care about the rest of the season. I'm satisfied with what I've done so far". If that were true that could be the best news that George's competition has heard all year.