



Iditarod plans underway

The race is on for 1979. According to Iditarod Trail Committee President, Dick Mackey, the 1,049 mile sled dog race will leave Anchorage, north bound for Nome on the historic Iditarod Trail, February 24.

Mackey says a \$50,000 purse will be awarded to the top 20

drivers.

The musher line-up for 1979 already looks interesting with a team from New Zealand and several possible entries from the lower 48.

To date, the women mushers officially entered in the marathon race outnumber the men. Susan Butcher, the first woman to come in the money in 19th place, will be competing again this year along with 1977 champ Rick Swenson, Emmitt Peters, Joe Redington, Sr., and the Flying Anderson Brothers.

Peters set the record in 1975 by arriving in Nome in only 14 days, 14 hours, 43 minutes, and

45 seconds. Dick Mackey of Wasilla came close to beating that record in '78 with a finish of 14 days, 18 hours, 52 minutes, and 24 seconds.

Mackey's lead dog crossed the finish line one second ahead of Rick Swenson's team making it the closest race ever. Veteran mushers say that with the number of good long distance dog teams and experienced drivers growing every year there will be more and more close finishes. Last year, if not for a sudden storm near Solomon that separated the front runners, there may have been eight teams driving down Front Street at the same

time.

In the early days of the race, it could be several days between the first two or three mushers into Nome.

The entry fee for the 1979 Iditarod Trail Race has been set at \$550. This amount includes the mandatory fee for air support along the trail. Mushers are asked to contact the Iditarod Trail Committee at Pouch X, Wasilla, AK 99687 or call 376-5155 for more information.

Officials are working to implement changes in the race rules and will make them available to the public by December. The changes will primarily affect the degree of assistance a musher may or may not receive along the trail.

The race route will take the alternate trail used every other

year.

From Anchorage the teams will race North to the Weigh Station on the Glenn Highway. They will then be trucked to Wasilla where the Restart will take place on Lake Lucille. From there they race to Knik, Susitna, Skwentla, Finger Lake, Rainy Pass, Rohn River Farewell, Nikolai, and McGrath. Out of McGrath the trail will run to Ophir and from there follow the original Iditarod Trail through the ghost town of Iditarod and the villages of Shageluk, Anvik, Grayling, Eagle Island, and Kaltag. From Kaltag the trail follows the Yukon to Unalakleet and turns north to Shaktoolik, Koyuk Elim, White Mountain, Solomon and finally Nome.

1979 marks the seventh running of the Iditarod Trail Race.