

Iditarod underway

Three former champs in the field

ANCHORAGE — Three former Iditarod Trail race champions led a pack of 55 mushers out of Mulcahy ball park in Anchorage on Saturday for the long trek to Nome. The champions are Rick Swenson of Eureka who won the race in 1977, Jerry Riley of Nenana who won in 1976, and Emmitt Peters of Ruby who won in 1975. Absent from the field for the first time was Iditarod President Dick Mackey of Wasilla. Mackey who had run every Iditarod since 1973 was also the defending champion. This leaves Ken Chase of Anvik as the only man who has started every Iditarod race since the race began in 1973.

Swenson finished the '77 Iditarod in 16 days, 16 hours, 27 minutes and 13 seconds, and Riley won the '76 race in a time of 18 days, 22 hours, 58 minutes and 17 seconds. Emmitt Peters won the '75 Iditarod with a record setting pace that still stands today, 14 days, 14 hours, 43 minutes and 45 seconds.

Herbert Nayokpuk of Shishmaref who placed fourth in '75, third in '74 and fifth in '73, was back in the field after a three year absence. Isaac Okleasik of Teller who finished sixth in 1973 and won the 50-mile 1967 Iditarod Centennial Race will also run the race for the first time in several years. Don Honea and Howard Albert both of Ruby are included in a trio of teams in the race from the small Yukon River community. "Eep" Anderson, one half of the Flying Anderson brothers was in the field as well as the father of the Iditarod, Joe Redington Sr., of Knik.

If the weather conditions stay as favorable as they have been it

is very likely that a new record may be established this year.

1. Leonard Seppala (Honorary)
2. Joe May, Trapper Creek
3. Isaac Okleasik, Teller
4. Keith Jones, Ambler
5. Victor Kotangon, Unalakleet
6. Gayle Hienhueser, Anchorage
7. Karl Clausen, Wasilla
8. Brian Blandford, Nome
9. Bill Rose, Palmer
10. Joe Redington Sr., Knik
11. Jerry Riley, Nenana
12. Rick Swenson, Eureka
13. Clarence Towarak, Unalakleet
14. John Barron, Plamer
15. John Wood, Chugiak
16. Ron Aldrich, Willow
17. Robert Chlupach, Willow
18. Dr. Terry Adkins, Cheyenne, Wyoming
19. Rick McConnell, Anchorage
20. Howard Albert, Ruby
21. Emmitt Peters, Ruby
22. Steve Vollersten, Takotna
23. Susan Butcher, Knik
24. Ernie Baumgartener, McGrath
25. Herbert Nayokpuk, Shishmaref
26. Ron Brinker, Wasilla
27. Melvin Adkins, Willow
28. Jim Rowe, Nome
29. Gene Leonard, Finger Lake
30. Eep Anderson, McGrath
31. Prentice Harris, Fairbanks
32. Don Montgomery, Lima, Oh.
33. Jerry LaVoie, Anvik River
34. Lee Guardino, Chugiak
35. Dick Peterson, Chisana
36. Myron Angstman, Bethel
37. Ken Chase, Anvik
38. Rick Mackey, Wasilla
39. Steve Adkins, Willow
40. Gary Hokkanen, Eureka
41. Jim Lanier, Anchorage
42. Ron Gould, Clear
43. Patti Friend, Chugiak
44. Walter Kaso, Talkeetna
45. Rome Gilman, Chugiak
46. Joe Garnie, Teller
47. Cliff Sisson, Soldotna
48. Terry McMullin, Eagle
49. Sonny Lindner, Delta Junction
50. Don Honea Sr., Ruby
51. Del Allison, Willow
52. Kelly Wages, Fairbanks
53. John Van Zyle, Eagle River
54. Richard Burmeister, Nome
55. Bud Smyth, Fairbanks
56. Mark Couch, Palmer



KEN CHASE, from Anvik, nearing the Eagle River checkpoint on the first leg of the Iditarod race. The race began under sunny skies on February 24.

— PHOTO BY HAROLD SCHETZLE