

Iditarod Basketball Tournament set for March 22-29

What do Lonnie O'Connor, Harold and Helen Bell, Al Salin, Gil Ozenna, Charlie Hungerford, Mary Reader, Dean Pushruk, Ed Bruns, Frank Okleasik, Andy Miller Jr. and Jerry Oliver have in common? They are the group of people who organize the Iditarod Basketball Tournament held annually in Nome.

The Iditarod Basketball Tournament was developed to cater to the villages of Western Alaska. The first tournament, held in 1974, had just five teams participating. Over the years, the excitement and interest in the tournament have grown rapidly. The tournament is now the largest of its kind in the State of Alaska. In 1985, 49 teams from 28

villages travelled to Nome to compete.

"The members of the committee are really dedicated to making the tournament a success," explains Chairman Lonnie O'Connor. "Most of us take the week of the basketball tournament off from work. We donate a week of vacation or take leave without pay to make sure everything runs smoothly. Others help out after work."

"The games start at 7 a.m. and go on until 1 a.m. the next morning," O'Connor continues. "We all pitch in. The committee members sell concessions, run the score clocks, set up the chairs, mop the floors and just about anything else you can think of. Anderson Services hauls trash for free. All

of the work is worth it, though. The teams come to Nome to play basketball and enjoy themselves."

The players are not the only ones who benefit from the Iditarod Basketball Tournament. Nome's economy also gets a boost as the tournament brings approximately 485 players into the city, according to O'Connor. "They also use the trip to Nome to do some spring shopping. A lot of money is spent during that week."

The Iditarod Basketball Tournament is funded in part by concession sales and the tickets sold at the door during the tournament games. Consistent business supporters over the past years have been the Nome Bar owners, Anchorage Cold Storage and Miller Beer. The newest sponsor for 1986 is Lee

Alaska Distributors.

This year the Iditarod Basketball Tournament will be held March 22-29 in Nome at the Recreation Center with continuous games from 7 a.m. - 1 a.m. The teams who played last year are invited to play on a first-come, first-serve basis. The \$150.00 entry fee and team roster is due by February 21, 1986. Mail entries to Iditarod Basketball, Box 1152, Nome, Alaska 99762 or phone 443-2704 with questions.

This is an adult recreation basketball tournament. Team members must be at least 19 years old to participate.

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UNDER HEAVY GUARD — Shown in action left to right are Lee Maxwell of Anchorage; referee Dennis Gunder of Bethel; Conrad Sturee of Anchorage; Weaver Ivanoff, Henry Ivanoff Jr. and Jerry Ivanoff of Unalakleet and Norman Bristol of Anchorage.

photo by Laura Kosell