



Susan Butcher, assisted by York Mendenhall, left, and Mike Scott, draws for her starting position in the Kobuk 440.

Butcher claims \$10,000 1st prize

by Barbara Crane
for the Tundra Times

KOTZEBUE — When Susan Butcher, winner of the Second Annual Kobuk 440 Sled Dog Race, crossed the finish line at 6:14 a.m. on April 3, most of Kotzebue was still asleep.

She had not been expected in that early, and the small group that greeted her in the darkness was in sharp contrast to the noisy send off she and the other mushers had

received three days earlier.

Imagine 238 impatient barking dogs, 20 excited mushers and a cheering crowd of 600 spectators, and you've got the start of the 1989 Kobuk 440, "Alaska's Longest Mid-Distance Sled Dog Race."

In an unusual stampede start, two waves of 10 teams each tore across the starting line and headed out across the ice.

They left at noon on March 31, and three days and 440 miles later,

Butcher claimed the \$10,000 first prize and a trophy made of NANA jade.

Butcher's actual running time was 65 hours and 14 minutes, which would have set a new course record, but she was penalized an additional four hours for missing a turn and taking the wrong trail between Noorvik and Kotzebue.

Ed Iten of Kobuk was the second musher back to Kotzebue, winning

(Continued on Page Nine)

• Sportsmanship award goes to race marshall

(Continued from Page One)

\$7,200, and Kathy Swenson of Two Rivers took home \$5,400 by coming in third. Cash prizes totaling \$30,000 were awarded.

Frank Jones of Kotzebue took home the Rookie Award for being the rookie with the fastest time.

The mushers voted the Sportsmanship Award to Race Marshall Chuck Schaeffer.

"Chuck did an outstanding job and was an excellent choice for the Sportsmanship Award," said Mike Scott, president of the Kotzebue Dog Mushers Association.

John Gourley of Knik came the longest distance to participate. A two-time Iditarod finisher, he decided to enter the race after talking to mushers who had run it the previous year.

The mushers were a mixture of famous names from around the state and local hometown favorites.

"Teams are limited to 12 dogs each," said Scott. "That way more local people with smaller kennels have a chance to compete with the big names."

The race begins and ends in Kotzebue and passes through the villages of Noorvik, Kiana, Ambler, Shungnak, Kobuk and Selawik.

It is a race that happens because the people of the region want it to. Many volunteers work long hours to make the race a success.

In Kotzebue, Homer Russell Sr. painted the large banner at the start/finish line, and Isabel Mendenhall and Ruth Goodwin sewed the numbered bibs which identified the mushers.

Volunteers in the other villages marked trails, provided hot water for mixing the dogs' food and made sure the mushers were well taken care of.

At the mushers' meeting before the race, one rookie asked race marshall Chuck Schaeffer how much food the mushers should take for themselves.

"Don't worry," was Schaeffer's reply. "You'll never go hungry."

Corporate sponsors like Alaska Airlines, the Kotzebue Lions Club and Baker Aviation also made the race possible by donating their services to keep the costs down.

Each musher had instant celebrity status in the villages. No matter what the hour or how far back in the pack the racer was, crowds turned out to welcome each arrival.

Children wanted autographs, and crowds gathered around each team to ask questions and admire the dogs.

Elders like Ray Jackson Sr. and Alfred Wells of Noorvik, Johnson Black of Kiana, Mark Cleveland of Ambler and William Sheldon of

Selawik reminisced about the dogs they once had and the races they had run.

"We used to make up teams from the villages and race against each other just for the fun of it," said Sheldon.

Race results:

1. Susan Butcher, Manley
2. Ed Iten, Kobuk
3. Kathy Swenson, Two Rivers
4. Sonny Russell, Kotzebue
5. Lucy Nordlum, Kotzebue
6. David Monson, Manley
7. William Greist, Ambler
8. Frank Jones, Kotzebue
9. Frank Sampson, Noorvik
10. Louis Nelson Sr., Ambler
11. Tony Jones Jr., Selawik
12. Randy Romenesko, Nome
13. John Gourley, Knik
14. Rollyn Jackson, Kiana
15. Raymond Woods, Shungnak
16. Charlie Foster, Ambler

Scratched: Jim Wilson, Kobuk; Robert Libbey, McGrath; Elmer Ward, Kobuk; Mike Zagars, Kotzebue.