

Race is on as Iditarod leaders reach Nikolai

Herbie Nayokpuk, the "Shishmaref Cannonball" and Jerry Riley from Nenana were hot on the trail of Iditarod leaders Rodgers Nordlum from Kotzebue and "Cowboy" Larry Smith from Dawson City, Yukon Territory. All four mushers reached Nikolai Tuesday.

Both Nayokpuk and Riley passed by Rohn Roadhouse, the last veterinarian checkpoint without dropping any dogs despite a lack of snow on the trails which has caused four mushers to scratch.

Nayokpuk left Rohn River in third place Monday afternoon at 3:37 pm following Nordlum and Smith.

Riley arrived at Rainey Pass late Monday night in

24th place, stayed for three and a half hours, then headed for Rohn River. He arrived in Rohn River Tuesday morning at 8:16 am, departed from Nikolai at 8:40 am. He is now running in 9th position.

Nayokpuk and Riley consider the 70 mile trail from Rohn River to Nikolai the most treacherous section of the entire trip because the trail traverses the snow barren Farewell bend and does not have a check point halfway between Rohn and Nikolai. Most other areas of the trail have check points scattered at 40 to 50 mile intervals except for the 80 mile section from Beaver Creek to Unalakleet which could also cause problems.



Herbie Nayokpuk, the Shishmaref "Cannonball" who finished second in last year's race, is looking to move up a notch this March.

START



Gary Attla of Huslia gets set to hit the Iditarod trail at the Ntik starting line.