



andy wilson

Iditarod trail invitational, 2005

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Iditarod Trail Invitational, Alaska, Feb 2005

The 2005 race is under way with a big field. 44 entrants this year with 10 going to Nome. 21 on bikes, 19 on foot, and 4 skiers

Race started on 26 February 2005, 14:00 (Alaska, 23:00 GMT). All times shown are local Alaska times.

Thanks to Margriet at Earth B&B who has provided the following updates on the Alaska Ultrasport website, from where all the following have been copied.

The race to Nome

last update: 20:00 GMT, 7 April 2005

April 5 2005

Nome

09.00 AM DIMITRI WALKED INTO NOME

What a strong man! He is Special! Terrific Finish with no body pains, no blisters! Cheerful and Happy. The last leg was a 22 hour walk in -11 degree F. About 10 miles out of Nome one of his sled Poles broke so he had to pull his sled on one side.

The highlight from this unique walk for him were: Seeing Alaska in slow motion! Lots of wildlife, friendly people especially the old, only saw 1 other walker. He recommends walking to everybody. It is a great time to think, to attune to your inner self! He now realizes that he wants to spend more time with his Family and Friends.

The most challenging part was that he had to make his own trail for about 200 miles on snowshoes, not even a dogsled trail to be seen. 5 days on the mighty Yukon of which 3 days with 75 miles winds was horrendous. The lights of Nome were to be seen from far away and they seem like the Ghost of Nome. First think he did was drinking a milkshake at "Fat Eddy's". Father and son might fly out tomorrow but right now Dimitri wants to savor the old gold city of Nome. Bravo!

White Mountain

Our last phone connection with Dimitri before he arrives in NOME! As usual..... a strong and bubbling voice of Dimitri on the line. He had left Golovin a bit later than planned but arrived in White Mountain at 03.00 AM. Was able to sleep in the school and had been waiting for the grace of the Post office Lady to give him his drop bag on this Sunday! She arrived while we were on phone.

Dimitri is on his way again and will sleep in the only cabin between here and Nome. Than tomorrow..... a last 55 Miles to NOME. Hopes to arrive in middle of the night or early Tuesday morning. He WILL phone me at that time!! GOOD!

Last night the Aurora Borealis was Magnificent! Like flames of Light they danced for HIM. The weather is beautiful. Nice stretch and well packed trail. He did see some people along the way and had to watch out for the late night snowmachine riders between the villages. He is wondering if his Dad is in Nome to welcome him in. So Dad.... if you have not taken flight yet..... better hurry to the airport! Smiles! The world is Proud of Dimitri!!!

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April 2 2005

Golovin

Our lone walker has arrived here at 06.50 PM Happy that he had a real Trail to walk on. So he has picked up speed a bit. He saw 2 people during the day too! As the Trail is hard at night he is leaving again now and hopes to sleep in White Mountain in the AM around 05.00 AM. Your messages have been given to him. That is like food and water... a real support but here again our Dimitri is as strong as an ox. Never I hear a sign of exhaustion in his voice. Still time for you out there to fly to Nome and welcome him IN!!!

April 1 2005

Elim

Good news from Dimitri again. He sounds so Strong and Full of Energy! He had left early yesterday morning in Koyuk but the wax on his sled was not working. He went back to Koyuk and was able to get an old pair of cross-country skis which he cut in half and mounted under his sled. So he had a late start at 11.00 AM.

He just arrived in Elim. Ate in the post-office and his heading out into the night right now. Intends to sleep in a cabin about 6 miles out. I wished him warmth and he giggled and said... "I know the tricks by now." I gave him Wilco his message. That cheered him up even more. Dimitri sounds absolutely Happy! Anyone who wants to give a message to Dimitri contact Margriet at Earth B&B

March 30 2005

Koyuk

Dimitri has his sled fixed but is waiting for the glue to dry. He has been invited for dinner by the School Head Master. Dimitri is thinking about leaving around 04.00 AM. He has listened to Roberto Ghidoni his advice and is taking Muktuk (Whale meat) and Salmon strips with him to eat. A good remedy to keep warm.

March 30 2005

Dimitri just phoned. He arrived in Koyuk last night at 10.30 PM. The school was closed so a very nice Family took him in for the night. He had crossed the sea ice with very strong winds which had blown the trail over and he had to make his own trail. He slept ON the sea ice in minus 30 degree F

The hole in his sled is rather big now and he is looking for some place to fix it. Dimitri sounds in very good spirit and expects to be in Nome before the 38 days are over.

People on the trail ask him why he is so many days behind Roberto and he wants to hit them with his ski poles. Roberto is an animal, a machine with super long legs and had his mind set on breaking the record. Dimitri has time to enjoy the trail , the people and wildlife and nature!

March 28 2005

Dimitri arrived at 10.30 PM in Shaktoolik. He sounded very good and was happy to continue in the morning over the sea ice! He planned to leave after the post office opened at 08.00 AM. He saw lots of caribou. He had to pull his sled over a lot of barren ground and got a hole in the sled but was excited to have seen so many animals. He saw a pack of wolves eating 2 caribou. That is already a highlight during his incredible trek to Nome.

March 26 2005

Dimitri phoned in and was excited having arrived in Unalakleet at 10.30 PM on March 25. He was planning to leave after the post office was open. He was real bubbly and had had a nice companion for a while. He met a man who walked from South America during the last 6 years and was heading for Nome too.

March 23 2005

Dimitri Kieffer called from Kaltag last night. He arrived there at 8 P.M. after fighting 75-80mph head winds, blown in trails and a broken snowshoe on the Yukon. He was in high spirits and planning to leave Kaltag after the post office opened at 9:30 this morning. He expects to be in Unalakleet in two to three days.

March 22 2005

Roberto Ghidoni arrived in Nome last night at 11:57 P.M. He sets a new foot record for the southern route. His total time is 23 days 9 hours 57 minutes.

In a year when the trail from Ophir to Kaltag was as bad as it gets due to excessive snow and warm temperatures Carl and Roberto amazed us all with their record setting times. Congratulations to both of you from all of us.

Dimitri Kieffer should be arriving in Kaltag tonight or tomorrow after the long stretch (123 miles) up the Yukon river with no chance for communication.

March 20 2005

Carl Hutchings arrived in Nome today at 2:47 P.M. His total time of 22 days 47 Minutes sets a new overall and new bike record for the southern route. Congratulations Carl!!

Roberto Ghidoni arrived in White Mountain today at noon. He plans to leave there at 6 P.M. and finish in Nome sometime late tomorrow night.

March 18 2005

Roberto Ghidoni arrived in Koyuk at 2:15 P.M. He was facing strong head winds last night crossing the 30 miles of seaice .He plans to sleep for 2.5 hours and leave Koyuk around 7.00 P.M stop at a shelter cabin for about 3 hours and then continue on to Elim. The weather was beautiful today, temperature around 28 degrees F.

Dimitri Kieffer called in from Grayling last night around 8 P.M. He planned to sleep for a few hours and then get back on the trail for the 130 mile stretch to Kaltag.

Carl Hutchings just called , he arrived in Koyuk at 5 A.M and was planning to leave at 9:30 A.M for Elim.

March 17 2005

Day 19 on the trail. Carl Hutchings arrived in Shaktoolik at 1 pm. After getting his drop he will get back on the trail to Koyuk. He is now leading the race to Nome.

Roberto Ghidoni came into Shaktoolik at 3 pm. He plans to only rest there for 4 -5 hours and then continue on to Nome.

March 16 2005

Roberto Ghidoni arrived in Unalakleet this morning. He straight away went to look for a new snowshoe and to get his drop box from the post office. He now is on his way to Shaktoolik.

Dimitri Kieffer just called from Anvik. He was in good spirits and plans to leave for Grayling in the morning after he gets his drop from the post office.

March 15 2005

Day 17 on the trail. Dimitri Kieffer called in from Shageluk at 2 P.M. He was planning to leave for Anvik soon.

Carl Hutchings arrived in Kaltag at 2:15 P.M. and was planning to leave by 6 P.M.

No word yet from Roberto Ghidoni who is still leading the race and is on his way to Unalakleet.

March 14 2005

Eric Schmidt our snowmachine guide just called from Kaltag. Roberto Ghidoni is on his way to Kaltag, he is expected there in about 7 to 8 hours.

Carl Hutchings is in Grayling and soon to be on his way on to Kaltag. Temperatures are above normal, in the 30's and 40's which makes the trail soft and punchy. The trail into Unalakleet has been rerouted. It will add 6 miles to the total.

No word yet from Dimitri Kieffer who should soon be into Shageluk.

March 12 2005

Roberto Ghidoni got into Grayling today at 1 PM. One of his snowshoes broke, but it was fixed. He is now on his way to Kaltag.

Carl Hutchings is in Shageluk. He is waiting for the post office to open at 1 PM to resupply and plans to leave right away for Grayling.

Allan Sheldon and Marco Berni got back to Anchorage this morning.

March 11 2005

Eric Schmidt our snowmachine guide called from Shageluk to report Roberto Ghidoni was in to the village and planning to leave soon for Anvik. Carl Hutchins is out of Iditarod headed to Shageluk. At last report Carl was finally able to ride a bit after many tough miles of extremely soft trail pushing his bike. Temperature was 40 degrees and it was snowing but expected to turn to rain. No word yet from Dimitri Kieffer who is out of Ophir on his way to Iditarod. The racers will have plenty of company on the trail for the next few days as they are caught and passed by the Iditarod mushers. Bob Lisey returned to Anchorage today already planning next year's race. He said Allen Sheldon and Marco Berni were recuperating at Peter's in McGrath and should return to Anchorage tomorrow.

March 10 2005

Bob Lisey just called from Peter's house in McGrath. He walked back to McGrath and is not continuing on to Nome.

Roberto Ghidoni is in the lead to Nome followed by Carl Hutchings. Allan Sheldon flew back to McGrath after pulling a groin muscle.

Nome racers were encountering waist deep snow after the ghosttown of Iditarod. This portion of the trail had not been used since 2001.

Marco Berni turned around after Iditarod and is on his way back to McGrath. Dimitri Kieffer was in Ophir yesterday and continues on to Nome.

March 9 2005

Allan Sheldon and Carl Hutchings continue to lead the race to Nome. At last report they were waiting for snowmachines to put in the trail from 10 miles beyond Don's cabin.

Roberto Ghidoni and Marco Berni were at Don's cabin planning to join Allan and Carl some time today.

Dimitri Kieffer got to Takotna last night at 6:30 PM. He planned to leave Takotna this morning by 7:00 AM.

Bob Lisey turned around somewhere beyond Ophir after his stove and one of his big toes malfunctioned. He is walking back to McGrath.

March 8 2005

Dimitri Kieffer left McGrath at 10:00 AM headed on to Nome.

March 7 2005

A man name Eric called. He was in Don's cabin 30 miles out of Ophir. Roberto left at 8:00 PM last night in Takotna.

Moving down the trail... Carl Hutchings and Alan Sheldon are about 37 miles past Ophir. Running out of food while they wait for the trail to be put in by the Iditarod Dogsled Race people. Our snowmachine guide and Italian press gave them food. All is well so far.

March 6 2005

Takotna

Roberto Ghidoni is in Takotna. Arrives at 09:30 PM March 6. His feet are giving him trouble. He will stay there today and wait for the trail to be put in by Iditarod Dogsled Race Trail people to put a trail in after Ophir. We pray that his feet will be healing good.

The race to McGrath

Final Decision on race records

After a great deal of thought and consultation I have decided that the course records are the fastest times from start to finish. We can not compare the times of a start to finish race with those of a race with a mandatory overnight. The men's bike record set by John Stamstad in 1998 of 3 days 8hrs 15 min including a mandatory overnight is a superhuman achievement and remains the record for the old race format. This applies also to Chloe Lanthier-Brandner's female bike record of 5 days 15hrs 47 min. All of us who were on the trail when these records were set can appreciate the efforts of these two athletes during their record setting rides. Since we have no plans to include a mandatory overnight in our race format these records are set in stone as they deserve to be. Mike Curiak's time of 3 days 6 hours is the new Alaska Ultra Sport men's bike record to McGrath. Kathi Merchant's time of 5 days 7 hours 48 minutes is the new female bike record.. Steve Reifenthul broke the men's foot record with a time of 4 days 15 hours. Gail Koepf set the female ski record and won the ski division with her time of 7 days 6 hours 18 minutes. Alicja Barahona set the female foot record of 7 days 16 hours.

I hope my decision seems fair to all concerned. Bill Merchant Race Director

A COURSE RECORD FOR THE BIKE?

Although Mike Curiak's time of 3 days, 6 hours is a BLAZING-FAST time, it is unofficially NOT a course record. When congratulated for setting a course record, Sportsman Curiak was quick to distinguish that John Stamstad's record-setting victory INCLUDED a mandatory layover (campout) on Flathorn Lake, back in the day when the Iditasport organized the race. Stay tuned for verification of the true course record. Our apologies to John Stamstad!

March 7 2005

McGrath

Marco Berni thought he might have a stress fracture; took a snowmachine ride from Nikolai to McGrath. No times available until mail arrives from Nikolai with time sheet.

March 6 2005

Nikolai

Only John Schweiker is still out on the trail between Buffalo Camp and Nikolai.

March 5 2005

McGrath

Roberto is trying to get his drop bag from the post office and continue to NOME today!

March 3 2005

Buffalo Camp

where's Buffalo Camp? In the middle of the Farewell Burn. Great hospitality there by the Runkel family!) Roberto Ghidoni made it there this a.m. Enjoying some good stew and visiting with his friends. One other Italian racer on foot just left there. Name?? Aldo Mazzocchi?? More soon...

Rohn

Roberto Ghidoni came by our checker's tent around 6:00 p.m. last night. He left again shortly after that. Aldo Mazzocchi and Marco Berni and Ryuji Sakata left Rohn last night, no times known. A racer came by the camp from the Italian Press near Rohn early this morning. Not known who it was. The trail from Rainy Pass to Rohn was awesome yesterday! Most beautiful winter wonderland ALASKA!

Satellite phone update from the middle of nowhere! Bob Lisey was able to connect with his wife before his batteries ran low, who was kind enough to give us all an update about the racers. THANKS!

Roberto Ghidoni - Out 10:00 PM 3-2

Savino Mussico - Out 04:00 AM 3-3

Gigi Mazzocchi - Out 04:00 AM 3-3

Diane van Deren - Out 06:30 AM 3-3

Gail Koepf - Out 08:30 AM 3-3

Bob Lisey - Out 08:30 AM 3-3

Elliott McAllister - Out 08:30 AM 3-3

Ryuji Sakata left, no time available 3-3

Donald Kane left at 8:30 a.m. or p.m., no one knows out there?!

McGrath

Eric came hobbling in on one leg. His other leg was not functioning due to a bad knee. Peter Basinger is doing the dishes and feels terrific! Another record--Steve Reifentstahl snatched the foot record. He is about a day ahead of Roberto (he said). Steve's snoring did not sound like human breathing last night... the other finishers are saying. His feet look like hamburger meat. Alan Sheldon and Carl Hutchings are preparing to leave McGrath for NOME around 11:00 a.m. They are well aware that they have a good chance to break the overall record to Nome if the trail stays in the condition it is now. WOW!

Peter Basinger reports that the trail this year has been the best since he's been doing this race. So much was rideable for him including much of Rainy Pass, the Farewell Burn and the trail from Nikolai to McGrath! Very little of his trail was effected by wind blown snow. He said that he probably pushed as much or less than the racers doing the Susitna 100 the weekend prior! Many thanks to trail breakers and volunteers of the Interior community, Alaska Ultrasport, the Iditarod and the Iron Dog for their excellent trail work!

Nikolai

Kathi called in at 06:15 a.m and was bubbling. They did a 20 hour stretch and she did not even sound tired. The race so far has been more than special. Beautiful day riding and the nights were magic. Northern lights, moon, shooting stars. They only pushed their bikes for 50 to 70 miles. Bill's bike rack broke but they fixed it with duct tap. Kathi had to use Bill's asthma inhaler to give her relief from her bad cold but no complaints, only enthusiasm!

March 2, 2005

McGrath

All the racers are so happy they made it IN and are still spaced-out. Not even thinking about calling into headquarters so that we can update the web. Sorry Family, Friends and Sponsors. Hard to train these big kids. They are celebrating first. Smiles!

Nikolai

Eric has problems with his knee. He is really hurting BUT strong racer as he is... he will continue. Last night on the Farewell Burn he had a hard time staying awake.

Puntilla

Aldo, our Italian Toro, is excited and could not wait for his brother to get out into the night again. Marco, our skinniest racer, is looking very strong. Riccardo, poor guy. Bad blisters. The trail was bumpy and more difficult than past years. It was a punishing stretch from Finger Lake to Puntilla. Blisters are being patched and well deserved sleep is taken by most. The night is calm and clean and stars and moon give this pass area a spectacular atmosphere.

Finger Lake

Sad news. Andy Sterns from Fairbanks had to scratch. He was about 15 miles out of Finger Lake when he got real weak from a bad flu he had been battling for days. He crawled in his sleeping bag. Ray Molino came by and checked on him. Saw that he was not doing any better. Biked back to Finger Lake and got help from a snowmachine who drove out to pick him up. Ray Molino has scratched and will ride back to the start at Knik. Several of the racers that scratched will try to fly out today. A plane has landed for them at Finger Lake but it is snowing there and it is misty at the Anchorage airport.

12:36 p.m: Roberto made it from Shell Lake to Finger Lake in 5 hours and that is VERY FAST! He joked and said... "The trail is too short for me, that is why I got lost 2 times. Now I can make an even 2000km instead of 1800 km." What a wonderful attitude! Riccardo has terrible blisters. Our checker had never seen such bad looking feet. It is amazing that he made it this far. He can barely walk, poor guy! Tanya... "It quit being fun. It felt like a death march last night." The weather is good, just a few snow flurries. Enjoy, racers, Enjoy!

March 1, 2005

WE HAVE A WINNER!!!

Mike Curiak arrived in McGrath March 1st, 8pm - an unofficial record of 3 days 6 hours

McGrath

Mike Curiak made it into McGrath at 08:00 p.m. He slept about 5.5 hours during the entire race. Whatever weight he lost on the trail he is putting back on right now. There were so many highlights on the trail for him. Today, one highlight was the stretch from Nikolai to McGrath. It was Great, Beautiful, Silent, Warm and he was able to ride 100%. The lowlight of the race was last night crossing Farewell Lakes. It was scary, overflow, cracks in the ice, water and 100 miles from everything it felt. He is in and very very happy. Mike now has the unofficial course record of 3 days, 6 hours, beating John Stamstad's record of 3 days 8 hours 15 minutes.

Nikolai

Olene from Nikolai called. Mike Curiak left Bison Camp in the Farewell Burn at 05:00 a.m. and is on his way to Nikolai. When he comes flyting into that next checkpoint we will update you again about our race leader!

Buffalo Camp

Jeff Oatley and Carl Hutchings have left Buffalo Camp (Farewell Burn area) at 06:00 PM.

Puntilla

Our Rookie Kathi Merchant is very anxious to GO ON. She is really happy about her race experience and being the first woman in the lead! Bill, her husband and race organizer, has been the best trainer for her. Congratulations!

Finger Lake

Lots of activity or better to say IN-activity at Winter Lake Lodge on Finger Lake. Racers everywhere! Resting. Several racers had to fight the disappointment of losing the trail but the mood is GOOD.

Shell Lake Lodge

Roberto, Dimitri and Wilco are still there. Two racers came and went during the night. No Names! John Schweiker left early this morning.

It was a tough day yesterday but spirits are high! Sorry, I cannot give you an update about a few racers who are working their way down the trail between Skwentna and Finger Lake and of course there is no radio communication between Puntilla, Buffalo Camp and Nikolai.

February 28, 2005

Skwentna Roadhouse

A cold and mysterious night behind us. A few Racers must have made camp along the river. No sign from them yet, but do not worry! Beautiful Day Light again now! Some sad news. Tom Jarding has a pretty bad flue and is forced to scratch at Skwentna.

Shell Lake Lodge

Roberto quietly had come in there and left again. No time known. Report from the Trail yesterday about conditions between Shell Lake and Finger Lake. Most of it was Pushing for the Bikers until about 1 miles before Finger Lake. McGrath shows -14 Fah. So the Racers will be happy about that! We all now wait for the Radio phone message from Rainy Pass. Front Runner News should arrive soon.

Puntilla (3:10 PM)

Mike Curiak in the lead. He is getting ON and interested to stay in First Place. Steve was checking to see how close Roberto Ghidoni is following him. The "Italian Moose" Roberto is going on to Nome so is pacing himself wisely! The trail is softer than the racers were hoping for.

Yentna Station (4:07 PM)

Sad news again. Dan McDonough and Dave Sell have scratched. They are so far behind due to taking the wrong trail and having to go so much farther and therefore discouraged. They will prepare for next year.

Shell Lake Lodge (7:09 PM)

Roberto Ghidoni is back in the lodge. He lost trail and moved 15 miles in the wrong direction and had to back track 15 miles again to find Shell Lake Lodge. He is taking it easy now and sleep. Rumors are that more racers made similar misjudgment of the trails as tracks were sighted by Guide Eric and Italian film crew who are on snowmachines. No further news yet.

February 27, 2005

Just had a report from the plane from Kirk and Peggy between Skwentna and Shell Lake. The weather is fantastic from the Air. Lots of racers on the river below them. The weather is very nice and sunny here. Not too cold but hopefully cold enough for a hard packed excellent trail for ALL today! Only a few left to check into our first Checkpoint. It is a sunny and warm winter day. Soft trail for sure on the first stretch. No worries Big Boys and Girls it is freezing pretty good for you farther up the trail. Some of our racers did take a wrong trail for 6 miles and had to back-track again due to misleading old markers from the last week Susitna Race.

Our FIRST WOMAN Racer going strong with the Big Boys. Kathi Merchant is in the top 10 at Skwentna. She slept 1 hour and is ready to hit the trail again soon. Bill and Kathi pushed their bikes for about 2 miles into Skwentna to save energy. They hope to reach Finger Lake checkpoint tonight but the trail conditions seem not in favor for biking today.

Flathorn Lake

Report about last nights (2-26)nd early morning happenings out there at the first sign of lights after race start. One of our Sponsors "Red Bull" had a Tent set up and provided high energy drinks. Our friends Peggy and Kirk, who live out there, surprised racers with hot food and a nice fire and sparkly Peggy gave moral support as always. Last racers out of Flathorn were Wilco (drying his clothes first) and Dimitri and John Schweiker (trying to fight the flu). Today Kirk and Peggy will fly to Shell Lake and check on the racers for us, along a sunny Trail.

A note from afar: "Hi Margriet! It is hard to be home, when hurt is with friends OUT THERE! I'll be with them and you every minute!--Rajko"

Yentna Station

The lovely owners from the Luce's Lodge are ready for a good night sleep but, 2 racers are missing. Dan McDonough and Dave Sell. After some checking I found out that they had a leisurely lunch at Eagle Song Lodge (wrong trail) and headed out of there between 01.00 PM and 02.00 PM and went their way to Yentna Station where they were reported in around 05.00 PM. The boys are asleep. Pity, they missed the first check point but they were having a real good time. A Sunday afternoon stroll?!

5 Racers between Shell Lake and Finger Lake. Seems like there is about 20 Miles of Bike pushing in there for them. Is everyone at Skwentna and Finger Lake waiting for the cold of the night to continue? We will know more in the morning.

February 26, 2005

It is a PERFECT Night! The Race is ON.

An excellent start at Knik today at 02.00 PM. The weather was crisp and clear. Mount McKinley / DENALI was showing of on the horizon. A magic spectacle. Racers were nervously preparing sleds and gear until the countdown. Dogsled teams nearby were hauling and enthusiast as well. As they too were harnessed in to hit the Trail after all our BIG Boys and Girls had left safely. Our first phone call from the Checkpoint 1 at Luce's finally came in. The whole world is waiting to receive news about their loved ones. These first Racers are doing Very, Very Well! The Italian Film Crew is around and shooting nice footage of Happy Racers , who seem to have plenty of energy. One small light is seen in the distance... another racer on his way to checkpoint 1. We all wonder who this next Racer is.