

Let me explain about Iditarod qualifiers.....

Part 2 of the Discovery special on Iditarod showed some great footage. Did you see the steps, the gorge at night, the gravel bars and bare dirt leaving Rohn. Even with all that 2008 was an easy year with 78 of 96 teams finishing. Compare that to 2007 where only 58 of 82 teams made it to Nome.

Put yourself in the position of the race officials, and tell me how you know that a rookie is qualified to run something like that? It is an ongoing discussion at many levels.

Everyone agrees that the 200 and 300 miles qualifiers are necessary, but they are not sufficient. The qualifiers I ran would have been postponed or canceled for conditions like those shown on the Discovery special. But Iditarod rule number 5 states "The race will be held as scheduled regardless of weather conditions. The starting place and/or re-starting place may be changed by the race marshal due to weather and/or trail conditions." Pretty wild stuff, eh?

Check out all the rules at <http://www.iditarod.com/pdfs/2009/2009RulesFinal.pdf>.

Let me give you another example. It takes 2 1/2 days to run a 300 mile race at the back of the pack. Let's say that you haven't quite got your feeding routine down and your dogs loose 1/2 lb / day. They've will lose 1 1/4 lb over the course of a 300 mile qualifier and most people will never know. But the Iditarod can take 14 days and now your dogs have lost 7 lbs. You have a serious problem you never knew you had. This is what happened to me in my Rookie year.

There are other example related to getting enough rest (musher and dogs), hydration, keeping your mood upbeat, coping with the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, etc. The simple length of Iditarod (or the Quest) changes everything.

Give the races that exist today I don't think there are any answers (a 500 or 700 mile qualifier would make good sense), but maybe you can appreciate the issues.

Keep 'em Northbound

Eric

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