

The Journey Continues

August 27, 2008

Cripple to Ruby

With the warm weather all my meat in Cripple has thawed. The beef refroze into a solid mass and looks so bad I don't think I can feed it. I re-split the lamb into snacks, but it takes time. For some reason I only have one people meal in my Cripple bag. Good for dinner, but that means I have nothing but snacks to eat when I camp on the way to Ruby. I always carry one spare meal and sometimes two (sure paid off at Don's cabin last year) but it has been so warm they thawed long ago and I worried about spoilage. I dumped both of them intending to replace them later from checkpoint spares. But there have been no checkpoint spares.

I intend to leave Cripple about 3 AM. Between the extra vet care I asked for (see Ophir to Cripple), difficulty falling asleep, and general lethargy in the morning it is 8:27 AM when I finally get going. Even with that, we pulled into Cripple in 80th place and left in 74th.

Shades of Skwentna. We are 10 minutes down the trail and Dukat is neck-lining (being pulled along by his collar with the neckline). I am just about to go back to Cripple and drop him when Art Church passes us. All at once I have a new dog team. Everyone, including Dukat, is pulling hard again chasing Art. What a difference. I put my Harry Potter audio book back on the walkman and off we go.

About ½ way to Ruby we pick up an old mining road and a bit later I pull off to camp. After the trip up from Ophir, I'm in no mood to push this team. Four hours of rest later we are back on the trail. After being blown off the knob 10 miles out of Ruby in 2006 and then the screaming descent down the hill on the icy road coming into town, I'm not looking forward to the rest of this trip. The team feels slow and I estimate we will arrive in town about midnight.

It's 10 PM and I'm in cruise mode, deep into "The Prisoner of Azkaban" when I notice lights to the side of the trail. I don't remember any cabins here or any villages close to Ruby. I'm bemused, but not troubled when we roll out onto the main street of Ruby and I recognize the checkpoint. We are an hour and a half early and I never saw either the knob nor noticed the steep downhill run into town. Either better trail conditions have made them unremarkable, or I've gotten better, or both. What a pleasant surprise. The dogs are feeling good again (later I realize they probably are picking my emotions much more than I ever thought). Sisco is still fighting loose stools (and will for the rest of the race) but they don't seem to be bothering him.

When I shipped runner plastic to the trail, I assumed (silly me) that the interior would be cold and only shipped soft, cold temperature, black plastic to Nikolai. I carried it as my spare, but it's really been too warm to use. I've been running on the same blue training plastic since I lost the white just outside Rohn. I did ship new white (warm, tougher plastic) and new black to Ruby. When I change plastic I notice the blue on the right runner has worn completely through in one spot. I keep that for a souvenir to sell on eBay.

We take our 8 hour mandatory on the Yukon here (actually we take 9 hours) and pull out for Galena at 7:30 AM.

Keep 'em Northbound

Eric

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