

The DOG DERBY of the FROZEN NORTH

HOW MAN AND DOG FOLLOW THE SPEED THAT KILLS



Judge Albert Fink, originator of The All-Alaska Sweepstake Race



This Year's Winners and Scotty Allan, Their Driver

Alaska's Great Sporting Event Takes Contestants Over Frozen Course of 412 Miles—Woman Puts Winning Team Over the Line.

BY WM. AHERTON DU PUY.
ONE of the most unique, thrilling, endurance-testing sporting events that has ever been arranged by those rugged pioneers, the men who are making Alaska, has just been witnessed along the ice-bound coast of Bering Sea. That annual sweepstake dog race, where men and their teams go out for a test of speed and courage and generalship and training in a dash that must cover more than 400 miles strewn with almost inconceivable difficulties, has just been run. This year a woman, well known in social circles in the various Pacific Coast cities, has put a team across the winning line. So has a woman won an event that is gaining such fame that men who love sport the world around are coming to Alaska for a try at this most thrilling of speed contests.

The annual all-Alaska sweepstake dog race is to the inhabitant of Alaska what the grand prix is to the boulevardier of Paris and the derby is to the cockney of London. Both are followed by the "sport of kings" in European countries. Dog racing is a sport that is not well adapted as a pastime for kid-gloved dudes and molluscoides, but one requiring much inherent courage and power of physical endurance.

While there are many dog races in Alaska during the winter season, the all-Alaska sweepstake race of the Spring is the event de luxe. This race is over a distance of 412 miles, beginning at Nome and going thence along Bering Sea to Topkok Bluff, across a mountain range to Council City, thence up Fish River, across the dreaded Death Valley, over another divide and down the Kenai River to Candle Creek, the northernmost mining camp in the continent, and return by the same route.

This race was won this year by A. A. ("Scotty") Allan, driving a team of dogs owned by Mrs. C. E. Darling, of Sacramento, Cal. Alexander Holmstrom, driving a team of Siberian wolf dogs, owned by Lord Fox Ramsay, who won the race two years ago, was second, and Charles Johnson, driving another team of Siberian dogs, was third. Allan covered the distance in 47 hours and 33 minutes, which is 5 hours and 31 minutes longer than his time last year, when he won the race with the same team. The record for the distance is held by John Johnson, who, driving a team of Siberian wolves owned by Sir James Ramsay, traversed the journey in 71 hours, 14 minutes and 29 seconds. A team of dogs bred from Alaska malamutes and crossed with Missouri bird hounds, the species made famous by a Presidential aspirant from that state in a campaign song, was left far behind in the event this year. The same team, driven by Oliver Hatchford, ran second in the race in 1910.

A Flusher's Paradise.

Dog racing enthusiasts—and their name in Alaska is legion—are not strong on the sport from an amateur standpoint. The like the honor of winning, of course. But they think that anything worth battling for is worthy of something better for a prize than a blue ribbon. Therefore, the first prize in the big race usually consists of a mammoth silver loving-cup and \$10,000 in gold coin.

The race also is regarded as an event upon which the residents feel at liberty to back their opinion. As difference of opinion makes horse racing, so also does it make dog racing, and, as a usual thing, about \$250,000 changes hands in the Bering Sea metropolis as soon as the judges decide which team has won. The prize for this event last year, owing to a decrease in population—caused by the laws which compel Alaskans to import their coal from Canada—was cut down to \$1000 and only about \$100,000 was wagered on the result. Gambling is against the law in Alaska, but betting on the dog race is euphemistically termed "backing one's judgment." Any proposition which has within it an element of chance, combined with judgment, strongly appeals to the average Alaskan, but gambling is taboo. This love for anything that contains an element

of chance finds its strongest manifestations in the dog races and in the raffles for turkeys, which usually take place at Thanksgiving and Christmas. Quite frequently individuals win 10 or a dozen turkeys for their Thanksgiving dinners. It isn't that they want so many of these birds, but rather that they enjoy the excitement of winning them. One of the greatest difficulties that some Alaskans encounter during the winter season is to discover indigent families upon whom they might bestow their surplus turkey.

Preparing For the Event.

The Alaskan dog races are run under the auspices of the Nome Kennel Club, founded by Albert Fink, a Nome attorney, ostensibly for the purpose of improving the breed of canines used as draft animals, transporting supplies during the winter months. The development of the keen interest in dog racing—amounting in some cases almost to an obsession—was incidental. When a man begins to "talk dog" he is regarded as having been afflicted with a new form of disease, known as canineitis.

During the period of eight months of ice and isolation, when the residents of Northwestern Alaska, hemmed in by ice, are cut off from the civilization of the outside world, dog racing becomes the one question of importance. The result of a Presidential election or of a championship prize fight are regarded as secondary matters until the Al-

aska Sweepstake prize fight has been settled. The race usually lasts three days, and during this time all business, excepting that of the saloon keeper, is absolutely suspended. The laundries, the courthouses, all Government offices, the mines, the stores and every other place of business and industry are closed down until the race is over. Nobody sleeps. There is only one matter worthy of discussion.

At the Start.

Yet from a spectacular standpoint, the dog race is not all that could be desired. The process of the event to the spectator is something like this: He walks from the main street to Bering Sea, well shielded to protect himself from the blizzard, which usually is raging at that time, and stands in line with a number of others, till he hears a pistol shot fired by the official starter. Then he sees a streak of dog with a sleigh and a man hanging on behind it, vanish into the atmosphere to the southward. Then he returns uptown, warms his hands at the saloon stove, and 15 minutes later he returns to the ice-covered Bering Sea, where he hears another shot fired and sees another team go streaking over the frozen trail. He continues this process 10 or 12 times, or until all of the teams have started on their journey. Then, for three days and nights, he stands around the saloon, leaving it only long enough to grab a hasty meal at a near-by lunch counter, and, with pencil and paper, figures out the relative positions of the

various teams as they pass the stations on route and are reported in by long-distance telephone. If he is fortunate enough to have a family or any acquaintance of the gentler sex, he sometimes leaves the saloon long enough to telephone them the latest bulletin. The women folks in little groups of 10 or 12 in the various homes, in which telephones have been installed, and for three days they also engage themselves in mathematical problems, in which the positions of the various teams are computed, and speculations as to which team shall be the winner.

At the Finish.

About 48 hours later the teams are on their return journey and the excitement grows greater and increases until the teams are nearing home, when it reaches fever pitch. By the time the leading team is reported at Fort Davis, four miles from the winning post, every resident of the country for 100 miles around, excepting those who are in the hospital or otherwise incapacitated, has found a perch on the ice hummocks of Bering Sea from which to watch the winning team cross the line; and the race is over for another year.

The driver of the winning team is raised shoulder high and carried to the Arctic Brotherhood Hall, where a wreath is placed upon his brow and he is given a public ovation. The presentation of the prize is deferred until after all the teams have returned, and all questions of dispute, if any arise among the drivers, have been settled.

The keen interest in the dog race was well illustrated in the year of the inception of the sport. In 1909, a Nome attorney, the day before the dog race, said to Albert Fink, who had been retained in a case involving \$1,200,000 in gold dust:

"Say, Albert, we must put in an answer today or the case will go by default."
"Well, go and see if you can't get the Courthouse closed," answered Fink.
"I haven't time to attend to the matter just now. The dog race starts tomorrow morning."

Tests of Endurance.

One of the conditions of the Kennel Club is that every dog starting in the race must be taken clear through to Candle Creek and return to the finishing point, either dead or alive. This condition causes the owners and drivers to exercise much discrimination in the selection of their team. Every animal must possess not only proved speed, but unquestioned endurance. A speedy canine, not endowed with sufficient qualities of endurance often proves a handicap to his driver and team-mates, for when he becomes exhausted he must be hauled in the sleigh. Carelessness in selecting a team once lost a prize of \$10,000 and many side bets for William A. Gilmore, the Nome



One of Uncle Sam's Mail Trains Which Competed for Racing Honors



Siberian Wolves That Have Been Sweepstake Winners

Look all right and up to now they have been running very nicely."

Asiatic Wolves As Winners.

The stranger who had been expecting payment for his team was so astounded at Ramsay's exhibition of "nerve" that he couldn't say another word till the Englishman was half a mile farther down the trail.

Ramsay was not at all successful the first year. It soon became apparent that he was to be left far behind, and when a telephone message conveying the information that he had stopped for "uffin" at one place and for afternoon tea at another were received, the odds against his team were posted at 500 to 1. He finished last.

The next year, however, he took his revenge. In conjunction with his uncle, Sir James Ramsay, and Colonel L. Stuart Weatherly, a wealthy Englishman, young Ramsay chartered a schooner and went to Siberia, where he picked up about 200 Asiatic wolf dogs. From these he selected three teams and they finished first, second and third in the race the following year, and established the record of 71 hours 14 minutes and 20 seconds for the distance of 412 miles, a feat which never before nor since has been equaled. Ramsay not only trained all the teams, but drove one of them. In the race he proved that he possessed much of the courage that distinguished his compatriots on the ill-fated ocean leviathan, Titanic, a few years later.

The Maximum of Sport.

It is doubtful whether there is any other sport in the United States that contains so many elements of danger and calls for so much courage, endurance and judgment as long-distance dog racing in Alaska. In the 70 to 80 hours during which the contest lasts, both dogs and men are keyed up to the topmost pitch of physical exertion, and often in the face of blinding blizzards in which particles of frozen snow sting the flesh like hot needles, the competitors struggle from start to finish. Frequently they do not recover from the exhaustion following the race for several days. Dog racing is no proper form of amusement for weaklings and children.

The All-Alaska Sweepstake Race is an annual event, but during the winter season several races over shorter distances, varying from ten to 100 miles are held, and, during the past ten years, contests between dog teams and reindeer teams have become popular. The Eskimo reindeer herders take to reindeer racing like kittens take to milk. So far, however, reindeer racing has not become very popular among the white people of Alaska.

Alaska's racing reindeer team covers a distance of eight miles in 15 minutes 28 seconds. This record, however, was defeated by a dog team made up of Missouri bird-hounds, owned by Sol Warren and driven by an Eskimo boy named Split-the-Wind, who covered the distance in 18 seconds less. But deer-racing and dog-racing over short distances are but the hors d'oeuvres in the satiation of the Alaskan appetite for sport. The All-Alaska Sweepstake Race, from Nome to Candle Creek and return is the piece d' resistance for the year.

Fashion in Canes.

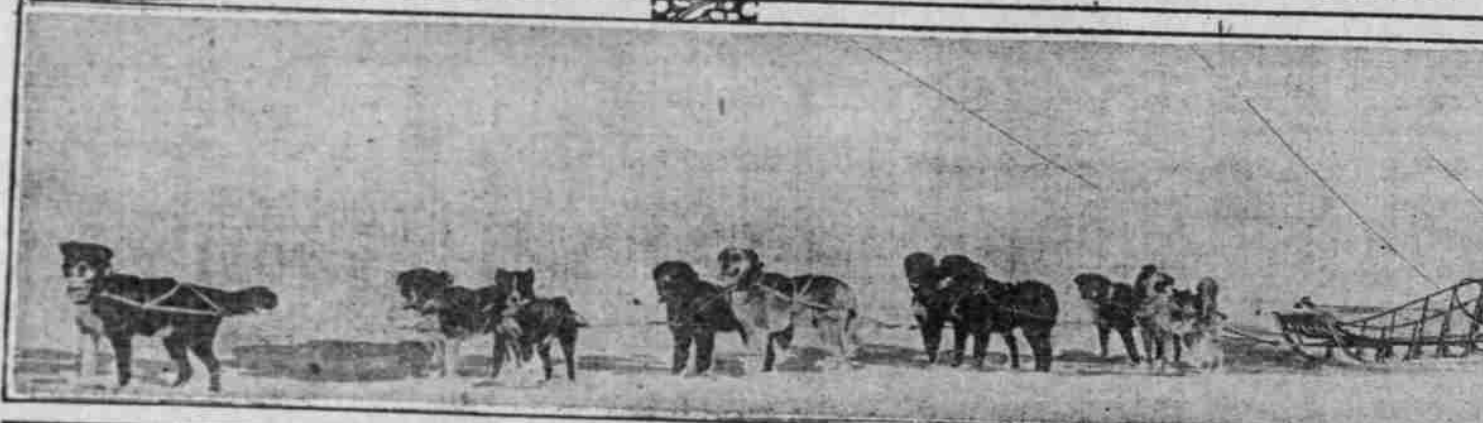
The manager of a cane and umbrella department in a large New York store was surprised at the question: "Is there such a thing as a fashion in canes?" Of course there is. The straight canes, with knob handles of all shapes and made of all materials, were, so he said, "all the rage" a few years ago. Conservative men wore simple canes, but a miniature bandmaster's baton was easily disposed of. Then came the thin, switch cane, and a few years ago nothing sold better than canes with straight handles. Today everybody wants a crook handle cane, and there is a good reason for the style. In crowded subway and elevated trains and surface cars where a man must hold to a strap and has only one hand left for the cane and paper, the crook handle comes very handy. It hangs at the pocket or over the arm, and its shape is graceful and sensible. It will not be displaced as the leader in many years.—New York Press.



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