



Bryce Mumford, 200 mile winner, starts the race- with his 12-dog team of Alaskan Huskies.



Dave Bush, of Bend, Oregon, sports scratches and cuts on his face from where a set of tire chains hit him on the head, knocking hi out, en route to the ECX.

Cold Calling

Extreme weather, extreme finishes at this year’s ECX

Story and photos by Ellen Morris Bishop
For The Chieftain

The 2017 Eagle Cap Extreme may go down in history for the most extreme weather challenges. So far, it tops the list for hotly contested races and close finishes, too.

“In ECX history, only twice have the top two finishers been separated by less than 10 minutes,” said Troy Nave, ECX public relations director.

Bryce Mumford and Brett Bruggeman finished less than a minute apart. The top four teams finished a total of just 13 minutes apart, with fourth-place finisher Laurie Warren only a minute behind third place Mark Stamm, and closing.

“For a race of this duration and difficulty, that is almost unheard of,” Nave said.

Iditarod veteran Mark Stamm led for most of the 200 miles. Mumford and Bruggeman passed him on the last part of the course, with Warren closing near the finish.

For the last hour of the race, Laurie kicked alongside her sled, like a skate boarder, to help her team,” Nave said.”All 95 pounds of Laurie were chasing down three teams: two dog teams from the back-to-back ECX champion, and one driven by an Iditarod veteran,” Nave said.

The 100-mile race boasted similar intrigue, with Bino Fowler leading most of the way, until winner Clayton Perry passed him near the end. Only 2 minutes separated these two mushers at the finish line.

Because of the ice and deeply drifting snow, race officials eliminated two portions of the 200-mile course: the out and back ridge-top leg to P.O. Saddle, and much of the Twin Lakes segment. The changes shortened the course by about 45 miles.

“It was still an adequate distance for an Iditarod qualifying race, especially considering the conditions,” Nave said.



Maeva Waterman, whose team and sled slid off an icy trail and over a cliff, hugs her lead dog before the start. No-one was hurt in the mishap, but Search and Rescue helped her recover her sled and dogs. Race rules disqualify a musher who had help.



Laurie Warren, of Council, Idaho, hugs her lead dog after her 4th place finish in the 200-mile race, with a time of 35 hours, 48 minutes.



Bino Fowler, of Bend, Oregon, won the 100 mile race last year and was second to Clayton Perry this year. Bino took the “Best Kept Team in the 100-mile race” award, however, and also helped another musher who had slid off the trail get back into the race.



Bino Fowler, winner of Best Cared-for Team, 100 mile, applies Hooflex to his dogs’ feet before the race.



Clayton Perry, of Power, Montana, won the 100 mile race this year, but took last year’s Best Kept Team award for the ECX race.



Neil Bowlen’s team awaits the start of the race.



Morgan Anderson finishes the second of two 31-mile courses known as the POT race, and wins handily, with the best combined time. Next year, the 17-year-old wants to run the 100 mile ECX race.