

ECX: 'For me, my dogs surprise me and amaze me all the time'

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included his training partner, Anderson, Fowler, Rex and Bryce Mumford and Jed Stephensen. Perry turned in a time of 38 hours, 31 minutes. The Mumfords both crossed about an hour later with matching times of 39:46, with Rex in second and Bryce in third, according to the official results. Stephensen placed fourth in 41:55, and Anderson took fifth with a time of 45:31. Fowler scratched during the final stretch.

It's the start of what Perry hopes will be a good 2022, with the goal in sight of trying to win the Rocky Mountain Triple Crown. The next race, the Idaho Sled Dog Challenge, begins Jan. 30, and following that is Montana's Race to the Sky in Perry's home state.

Lombardi wins 100-mile race in ECX debut

Also claiming the first leg of the triple crown was Nicole Lombardi, another Montana-based racer who was the victor of the 100-mile race in her first time at the ECX.

"I was a little nervous, but felt fully supported by the community, the race committee, veterinarians



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

Jesika Reimer of Emigrant Gap, California, takes off at the start of the 31-mile competition Thursday, Jan. 20, 2022, in this year's Eagle Cap Extreme Sled Dog Race. Reimer won her competition.

and fellow mushers," Lombardi said.

She ran away from the four-team field, completing the 100-mile course in 18 hours, 7 minutes. Steve Madsen took second in 22:33 and Jane Devlin crossed in 22:47. The fourth racer, Kevin Daugherty, scratched during the race.

Lombardi admitted she almost dropped from the race, worried the weather conditions would not bode well for her team.

"I almost didn't go. I was afraid of giving my dogs pneumonia," she said.

do something like this," she said.

She intended to do it a year ago, but the pandemic altered those plans.

"We actually wanted to do it last year but everything was canceled due to COVID," she said.

Lombardi will be gearing up for the Idaho Sled Dog Race next week. She definitely plans to return to Joseph to race in the ECX, and said that while her career hinders it now, she would consider building up to the 200-mile race in the future.

"I would love to someday," she said.

Reimer takes 31-mile race

Another first-timer took the 31-mile, two-day race — California racer Jesika Reimer.

"The plan was just to get my yearlings some experience. All my adults have raced before," Reimer said. "They just plowed up those hills and loved the downhill."

Reimer, who owns 12 dogs, had four of the younger dogs on her team. She said she ran two of the yearlings during her first day, then switched to the others on the second day.

"The first day, because I hadn't run the course before and it's the upper limit in mileage in what we trained this year, Day 1 (plan) was to ride the brake, hold them back, run a conservative day," she said.

She let up on the reins the second day out.

"Day 2 heading out, I knew they still had a lot of gas in the tank, so I have a little leader named Arrow, this little 38-pound black dog. I let her pick the pace on Day 2," she said. "They really loved it. They hit the last five miles and they started sprinting. It was a really fun ride into the finish line for sure."

Reimer finished in 6 hours, 22 minutes, just over an hour ahead of local racer Craig Anderson, who took second in 7:35. Chantelle Chase was third in 11:15, edging Kathy Miyoshi by eight minutes. Candace Sarkesian scratched just a couple hours after the start.

Reimer said she was impressed at the performance of her team.

"For me, my dogs surprise me and amaze me all the time," she said. "I was amazed they were able to run those distances. They still had a ton of energy and were really happy. It was cool for me to see them have a good

time and that they weren't pushed too hard."

Reimer said she'll run a couple more races this year, then plans to train her team up for the 100-mile race in 2023.

"It was such a welcoming community and such a beautiful place to run our dogs," she said. "We're looking forward to coming back again."

The lone racer in the 22-mile junior race, Sofie Kaaen of Baker City, completed the first day of the race, but scratched out of the second leg.

Randy Greenshields, the race president and an Enterprise veterinarian, said the field was smaller than in recent years, as several racers withdrew before the start.

"There was some sickness. We had a couple that were not COVID, but they were sick and didn't want to expose people," Greenshields said. "Others didn't get the training miles in this year."

Still, he said it was "another good year" for the race, and spoke highly of the ideal conditions for the mushers.

"The snow conditions were the best I think I've ever seen," he said. "The mushers really enjoyed the trails."



Traci Simon
- Purchasing Manager

1001 North Georgia, OR 97631
541-426-4122



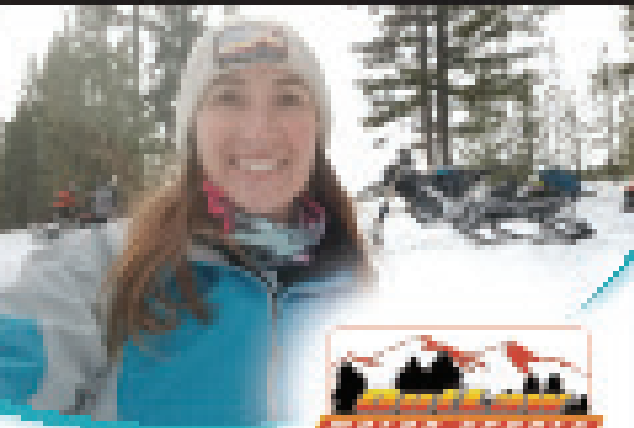
Shannon Waskovich
- Owner

348 North Side St, Enterprise, OR 97628
541-424-3825 • 800-527-9162



Eva Barnes
- Owner

101 North Side St, Enterprise, Oregon 97628
541-426-4122



Lyden James
- Co Owner

314 NW 1st St, Enterprise, OR 97628
541-426-2481



Larrea Overton
- Doctor

1001 N. Main St, Joseph, OR 97630
541-673-2294 • 800-574-8889



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541-426-4224

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Debra Wolfe
- Owner

12 SW Main St, Joseph, OR 97631
541-426-4422



JAC's
Innovative Sales and Marketing Solutions

PO Box 482, Joseph, OR 97631
541-426-4422
jacooney@gmail.com

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- Owner, Independent Sales Contractor



Amy Zahm, DVM, LAc
- Chinese Medicine, Acupuncture, Yoga, Pilates, Physical Therapy

401 W. 1st Street, Enterprise, OR 97628
541-218-4222
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