

Eagle Cap Extreme returns to Joseph

By Katy Nesbitt
Go! Magazine

ENTERPRISE — After a year hiatus, the Eagle Cap Extreme Sled Dog Races return to the Wallowa Mountains.

The 200-mile course is one of the few qualifying courses in the lower 48 states for the Iditarod and Yukon Quest, attracting mushers from around the U.S. Three other races provide fun and adventure for both experienced mushers and those new to the sport.

The races run through the Wallowa Mountains beginning at Ferguson Ridge Ski Area outside of Joseph. The 100- and 200-mile courses are along forest roads — up to Salt Creek Summit along the Canal Road and down to the Imnaha River through the ponderosa, pine and spruce stands of the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest. The two-day, 31-mile and 22-mile courses are out and back, starting and finishing at Ferguson Ridge.

This year marks Morgan Anderson's eighth year as a musher. Anderson, formerly of Enterprise, started watching the Eagle Cap Extreme as a grade school student and soon became a volunteer. With the gift of her own sled dog, she started a team and raced in the first junior races. She now lives in Power, Montana, and has 26 dogs. She will pit her skill and endurance against some of the best mushers in the country when she enters the 200-mile race.



Wallowa County Chieftain, File
Morgan Anderson and her 12-dog team start the 200-mile race in the 2020 Eagle Cap Extreme sled dog race in Wallowa County. The 2021 race was canceled over COVID-19 pandemic concerns. This year's event begins Jan. 20, 2022.

Bino Fowler is a well-known name in the Eagle Cap Extreme world. Hailing from Bend, Fowler has been racing for 17 years and has received the award for best cared team in both the 100-mile and 200-mile courses.

Steve Madsen, of Cougar, Washington, is another longtime Eagle Cap Extreme veteran, returning to race the 200-mile course. Madsen said skijoring was how he started over-snow sports with dogs and has been

racing on the back of a sled for 25 years.

The races begin Thursday, Jan. 20, at noon. Spectators are invited to leave their cars in the parking area along Tucker Down Road and take a shuttle bus to the race start at Ferguson Ridge beginning at 9:45 a.m. Get there early to secure a spot along the race course's starting line and bring your camera to capture the excitement of the dogs and mushers as they begin their jour-

ney into the mountains.

Another great vantage point is the Salt Creek Summit Sno-Park, which requires a permit. The mushers come through this first checkpoint about 1 p.m., or an hour after the race's start.

The second leg of the 31-mile and 22-mile junior races are scheduled for noon, Friday, Jan. 21, but race officials suggest checking in with Race Central as the start times of the second stages may be adjusted.

The 100-mile racers are estimated to finish Friday morning at Ferguson Ridge while the 31-mile and 22-mile race stage finishes can be viewed late Thursday and Friday afternoons. The 200-mile racers will finish their course at Ferguson Ridge Saturday, between early morning and afternoon.

To see the dogs and their mushers up close and personal, check out the veterinarian checks on Wednesday, Jan. 19 — 9 a.m. at Enterprise and 1 p.m. at Joseph. This is an opportunity to witness the care the dogs receive and to learn more about the sport.

The long-held tradition of the pre-race potluck will not be held due to COVID-19 precautions; however, the bib draw will be livestreamed Wednesday, Jan. 19, on Facebook at "Eagle Cap Extreme."

The awards banquet is also suspended due to COVID-19 concerns, but the ceremony will be livestreamed from Wallowa County Fairgrounds' Cloverleaf Hall on Saturday, Jan. 22, at 6 p.m.

For up-to-date race information visit www.eaglecapextreme.com.

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