

# **The Iditarod**

*New York Times (1857-Current file)*; Nov 6, 1999;  
ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851 - 2006)

pg. B11

**THINK TANK**

## **The Iditarod**

Being a little bit crazy helped right from the beginning in Anchorage that first Saturday in March 1973 when 35 mushers and their dog teams left the starting line to race 1,151 miles across the winter-locked Alaskan wilderness to Nome. . . . One of the participants, Bobby Vent, summed up the mood: "Nobody figured anybody could make it."

Twenty days and 49 hours after leaving Anchorage, Dick Wilmarth and his team of huskies led by Hotfoot crossed the finish line in Nome. Twenty-two teams (including Vent's) completed the race, with last place finisher John Schultz arriving twelve days after Wilmarth. Schultz's record still stands.

●  
The Iditarod, Athabaskan for "distant place," dates to 1925, when a diphtheria epidemic swept through Nome, wiping out its supply of antitoxin. The closest serum was in Anchorage but trains could only carry the medicine as far as Nenna; there 20 sled dog teams in seven days relayed the serum over the final 627 miles to Nome.

●  
Musher Gary Paulsen wrote: "The Iditarod is not really a sled race, nor a race of people, nor of money, nor of macho idiocy, nor of feminine strength, nor intellect, nor bravery. It is a dog race . . . the base of the equation is dogs."