



MEDIA RELEASE

2015 Yukon Quest a New Experience for Mackey

February 20, 2015 (Fairbanks, AK) – It wasn't quite the lantern he had hoped for, but when Lance Mackey crossed the finish line in Fairbanks Thursday evening, he was handed the "Almost Red Lantern", marking the end of a journey that revitalized the four-time champion.

"I don't have to win this damn race to be successful," said Mackey, adding he's realized he's already successful. "I've got a new attitude towards my race and my future."

Mackey joked while on the trail that he was determined to win the Red Lantern this year since it's one thing he's never won before. His pace was a bit too quick for that, as he finished in 14th position – two spots up on the Red Lantern. Still, it was a race he will never forget.

"It was awesome! My best, most funnest Quest ever!" exclaimed Mackey, who rested longer in checkpoints and shared stories with the volunteers about his experiences on the trail.

Mackey said he was "ecstatic" with the performance of his young dog team, which turned in a time of 12 days, seven hours, two minutes in their first Yukon Quest.

"This is the most memorable bonding experience I've had with my team."

The veteran musher was greeted by several of his peers in the finish chute, including this year's champion, Brent Sass, as well as Brian Wilmshurst and Damon Tedford.

"It was awesome running with you guys...or at least behind you." Mackey joked.

While he plans on running the same dog team in next month's Iditarod, Mackey said he's already looking forward to the 2016 Yukon Quest.

"So when can I sign up?"

Olson First Female Musher to Cross Finish

Ryne Olson finished her first Yukon Quest with a blazing run on the last section of trail, clocking a time of just eight hours and three minutes from Two Rivers to Fairbanks, arriving at 12:56pm Thursday.

The rookie musher was the first female to cross the finish line in this year's race, with a total elapsed time of 12 days, two hours, and eleven minutes. She was greeted at the finish line by past champions Allen Moore and Aliy Zirkle, who helped Olson get her start in mushing.

Praised as a force to be reckoned with in the future, Olson said she was pleased with her team's race, adding her dogs made her smile. It's the first time her dogs have run 1,000 miles.

Kristin Knight Pace, who travelled a large portion of the trail with Mackey, was the 15th musher to cross the finish line, arriving to large cheers from the crowd of friends, family, and fellow mushers.

Knight Pace completed the race in 12 day and 11 hours on the dot.

A group of kids from Orion's Belt School of Self Defense, which sponsors Knight Pace and her team, came out with signs and stayed to ask her some questions after her dog team was take care of.

"It was the trip of a lifetime. The coolest thing I've ever done, hands down!" Knight Pace said about the Yukon Quest.

Asked about the extreme cold weather on the first half of the trail, she replied, "I don't have a thermometer on my sled, so ignorance is bliss."

Knight Pace also praised musher Cody Strathe, who greeted her at the finish, for building her dog sled.

"I know his sleds are really tough, because I hit lots of stuff," she laughed.

Asked if she's going to run the Yukon Quest again, Knight Pace paused, and then answered that her husband Andy has to go first.

One more musher will cross the finish line of the 2015 Yukon Quest. Rob Cooke was still completing his eight-hour mandatory layover in Two Rivers as of midnight and is expected to arrive in Fairbanks around lunchtime on Friday.

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