

November Newsletter

Training;

Today was another full day of training; 36 dogs, 3 runs of 14-19 miles, depending on the team. The two main race teams went out on 19 mile runs in varied conditions---gravel, ice, water. You notice I did not include snow! There has been no year in memory without snow on the 19th of October. It is still warm--for us anyway; most years would have seen a day or two around zero or below by now, our coldest has been 15 degrees. The lakes in the Paxson area are frozen, other than Paxson Lake and Summit Lake.

We have been working with the puppy and rescue team on a daily basis; finding a good front end for that crew is important. Diesel, from the race team, has been helping. He is a good gee/haw leader with a few minor growling issues to fix. He seems less threatened with the pups behind him so is having happier runs where he can concentrate on his job instead of those behind him. Today we did some pretty technical directional training and he came through flying. He was able to take several twisting, undefined turns with 12 dogs behind him, plus work his way through a swamp with no trail at all. He has been up with Slick, (one of the pups), and now Slick is beginning to see glimmerings of what a leader does. They do need to work on holding tight when we stop instead of peeing on every bush..... Flint, (a rescue), is still wanting to flip upside down when we go fast, but is improving, he was cruising along at 18 mph. and not bothered by that for short stretches. He will be a very good dog soon. Buzz, another rescue, is looking better every day; he is getting more focused on his job rather than how he can give the dog next to him grief. Penny is making a bit of progress, but that is coming along slow---I guess that since we have been working with her for 5 years, that we can give her another few. Maybe when she is 10?

Jericho is running lead some in the race team, he is happy and focused; he has gone through water and over breaking ice without problems---though gee and haw are yet to be in his vocabulary. Fender, one of the pups, has stepped up into the main team. She is one of the most talented pups we've had in quite awhile. She can lead in the race team and is comfortable trotting at 14 mph.

Snow;

The first snow to stay came to Paxson the last week of October. This is as late as I can remember. No ice to speak of yet either at least on Paxson Lake---the other Lakes are froze hard enough to walk on, though we are not testing the middle. Our September snows melted away, leaving us frozen ground and rocks. The dogs don't like that, it is tough on their feet. We now have about 4" on the ground and this is here for the winter. The temperatures are dropping and we are having the normal October winds. When they quit for a day the lake will freeze in a few hours.

Comments;

Zoya and I ran the dogs through the BLM campground on Paxson Lake the other day; there are two parts to the campground; one side for RV's and the other side for tent campers. The tent side has always had amenities; picnic tables and fire rings. Now we notice that some of the campsites have tent platforms

too----they are sure enabling people to become whoosie----what? Tenters can't camp on the ground anymore? It is the American way I guess; we have to make everything easy so to eliminate any vestige of discomfort. Can we let folks figure how to do things on their own?

Penny;

Penny had a very good run yesterday, (28th), she pulled hard and never looked back; we were able to run her up in the swing position, behind the solid support of Hunter. She has her moments....she would make a very good house dog for someone, but for now she is learning to become a sled dog. I remember when she first came here 5-1/2 years ago; she was so shy you couldn't touch her unless you went to the end of her chain where she was cowering. Now she comes over wagging her tail to be petted as soon as you get within 50' of her spot. We can turn her loose and she will follow us around.

Yukon Quest;

The Quest is looking for trail help this year; they really need a trail coordinator. Last years' coordinator, me, is busy helping with the dog team and Jona, so is not available. I will still be helping where I can, however. If you have a snowmobile and can work and travel comfortably in minus 50's, then you are who the Quest is looking for. Call them at 907-452-7954.

Halloween;

We went to Meiers Lake for Halloween evening, the entire crew; Jona was a lady bug, Zoya was a sexy red devil, Jackie; a baby, Annya,; a punk-rocker, and I: a fisherman. About a dozen people showed up---we stayed up too late, esp. considering we had a town trip planned for the 1st.

Ice;

We finally have ice on the Lake! Paxson Lake froze between 6 and 7 a.m. on the 1st. It's pretty cool to stand there and watch it freeze; pans of ice start to form, then suddenly they are joined together---it is hard to really see it, it just happens. Caribou were walking on it by the morning of the 2nd. We were chopping holes for the fishnet by the morning of the 3rd---three inches of ice already. The temperature the past couple of days has been around zero or slightly below. Now we need a little snow and we will be on the sleds. Soon. (?)

Marlin;

Doug and Connie Kiburz update us with pictures of Marlin; they adopted him in March of 2007---he was one of those dogs who could be a great sled dog, but would rather not..... Now he lives the life of Marlin, in the house and around the yard; he has horses and a family, plus a dog buddy, (Stoney). He likes his rides in the car. It is a pretty fine life for a sled dog from the Pound. He not only looks happy in the photos; he looks regal. Thank you, Connie and Doug, for continuing to make a huge difference.

Dogfood;

We are using Eukanuba Premium this season; Euk. Used to be a great dogfood—dogs preferred it to meat in many instances, then the company was sold to a *big* outfit that cut some corners....palatability suffered, as did digestibility. Over the years, the formula was fiddled with constantly---and finally they have come up with a useable dogfood again. It is working super for us; there is nothing left in the pans, the dogs' weights are good and the stools are great! (If you are a musher that is important....)

Sponsors;

Thanks to Rick and Lori Townsend for a bunch of very good Northern Outfitters gear. Thank you Jodi and Dan Lease for sponsoring the Demon-dog. Thanks Pam Liechi of Big Sky Country Quilts for doing trophies for the Gin Gin 200. Thank you Mary Beth Gardner and her nurse, Rebecca of Women's Interior Health for your help toward the 2010 Iditarod. Thanks to Lisa Schandelmeier for a bag of premium dogfood. All of this helps; it gets the team on the trail certainly, but more than that it allows us to bring attention to the dogs that nobody wants, it shows that they can work hard and be successful too.

More Comments.....

Jona and I are sitting in the REI parking lot in Anchor-town waiting for the girl, (who is looking for a good winter coat for Jona); Jona is playing with her dog, the three-legged stuffed one, and I am watching cars. (I don't get out much) Anyway this guy drives around the parking lot 3 times, which is mostly empty except for the area up by the entrance to the store; he bypasses all of the empty spots until he can finally squeeze his F-250 into a spot between two mini-vans that is one spot closer to the door. Quite an outdoorsman he is; doesn't want to walk that extra 4 steps..... He really had to squeeze to get out his door.

Good Ice!

Yesterday, the 6th, we finally got on the ice with the 4-wheeler! It surely saves on the beating of the mushers.....the dirt trail out of the yard about ruined both of us and the ATV. We can now bypass the rough part and go straight to the better sections. Last night on the final run out, a cross fox followed us for about a mile along the shoreline of the Lake. He was pretty brave; I am thinking he is the one who has been hanging around the yard and getting the dogs to bark in the evenings. The sky keeps threatening snow and a few flakes come down, though not enough to measure. There is enough frost on the ice to provide footing for the dogs and traction for the ATV. The caribou are also on the ice and seeming to move without sliding much----come on SNOW!

