

## *Goose Bay 120 January 2005*

This has been an interesting weekend. The Goose Bay 120 is a fun, low key race - almost more like a camping trip with a side bet among friends. The start was normal, 9 excited dog teams - cross the road and a sharp right turn and down along the side of the road. I was running Lycos (yearling) and Keiko (2 yr old) in lead and Lycos just didn't look like his head was in the race. One mile into the race the trail turned off the road on a much smaller trail to the left. Lycos refused the turn. I set the hook (barely holding) and drug him over to the correct trail. By the time I was back to the sled he was back to the road trail. Three times we did this, then I swapped Base (7 yr old main leader) into lead for some control - Base did the same! While I was swapping leaders Zoya De Nure caught and passed me (after some trouble on the same turn) as did the next 4 teams. Picture major tangles, pulled hooks, and the whole dog team is passed the turn. Luckily some good folks stopped and helped me get back on the trail, but in the first mile I had gone from 5th (start) to 9th (dead last). Not an auspicious start.

Relaxing as we went down the trail I reached for something in my sledbag and missed the turn where the Goose Bay trail joins the Knik 200 trail. Noticed the lack of trail markers and was just about ready to turn the team around when we rolled out onto one of the small lakes by Big Lake. Picture glare ice with 1 inch of soft snow - no way to stop the team let alone turn them. We started up to one of the cabins and caught deeper snow, set the hook turned the team around a started back. Before I got to the turn we went down a short steep pitch and I rolled the sled into a tree - caught my neck, wrist, and forehead - no dogs injured, but I was shaken.

Finally found the turn I'd missed but was half passed it when I saw it (not meant to turn from that direction). We made the turn but had another major tangle. Got everything straightened out and looked at my watch. I had been racing for 1 hour and had lost half of that - firmly in last place! What an adventure!

Well I firmly believe that there is only so much bad luck allotted to each individual and once you've used it up you just have to do better. Unlike the start, the rest of the race was a dream. I moved Lycos back into lead and he set a solid pace into Luce's (about 5 miles downstream from

Yentna). It was a pretty trail and a warm day - I drove most of the way in without my gloves - dogs overheated and we stopped often to cool down and snack. We passed two teams and I arrived in 7th place. Not bad, huh?

There is a mandatory 8 hr layover at Luce's - full moon trying to break through the clouds and all the dogs were pumped. Rick Townsend had two girls in heat and they chewed loose and got all the boys excited. When he left my dogs went nuts trying to follow him. I was watching and a loose dog ran by, I stooped and coaxed him in and it was my own leader Base who hasn't chewed anything in the 4 years I've had him.

We finally left just before 3 am and had a great run back to the Tug Bar - caught two teams that left ahead of me and finished a solid 5th place and in the money - my first

placement in a mid-distance race. I am stoked! We made the trip to Luce's in 5:38, and the return run in 4:51 - nice to come home faster than you went out - even if it was the first hour that made most of the difference.

Now I'm busier than ever trying to get ready for the Don Bowers this Friday.

The Tug finishers are:

1 Ryan Reddington	16:25:30
2 Rick Townsend	16:47:40
3 Frank Sihler	17:02:40
4 Zoya De Nure	17:39:07
5 Eric Rogers	18:45:15
6 Jeff Deeter	19:16:00
7 Allen Davis	19:18:26
8 Tom Schonberger	22:19:00
9 Amy Gundlach	23:40:00

Eric

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