



Iditarod Musher Q & A with the 2016 Iditarod Class

Name: Kristin Knight Pace

Q: Where were you born?

A: Ft. Worth, TX

Q: Where do you live now, and what is it like?

A: Healy, Alaska. We have 20 acres right on the edge of Denali National Park. You can't drive to our house and we have no running water. We haul in supplies either by skis or dogteam in the winter or by pulling a wagon in the summer.

Q: When you were a child, what was your favorite book?

A: When I was really little, I loved *The Girl Who Loved Wild Horses* by Paul Goble. Then *The Wizard of Oz* and *Black Beauty*. Then *Anne of Green Gables* and *Little Women*. I loved *My Side of the Mountain* except for the end. And of course, *Bridge to Terabithia*. There were so many books I loved and still love to this day. Reading was a huge deal in my family and still is.

Q: What is your favorite game to play?

A: A game called "The Sentence Game" or "Paper Telephone."

Q: Have any of your family members raced in the Iditarod?

A: No

Q: What is your favorite color? Why?

A: Green. It's hard to believe that color even exists up here during most of the year, and then when all the leaves and trees and grasses bloom, you can hardly believe your eyes!

Q: Who is your favorite superhero?

A: Rogue from the *X-Men* comic books. But not from the *X-Men* movies. They made her kind of lame in the movie.

Q: What is your favorite movie?

A: *Cold Mountain*

Q: How many dogs do you have?

A: 30

Q: What is your favorite animal besides dogs?

A: Wolves

Q: When did you first learn about the Iditarod?

A: When I was a little girl.

Q: Who inspired you to race in the Iditarod?

A: When I was volunteering at the 2011 Iditarod, I was a dog musher for Denali National Park. It was a totally different kind of mushing than racing, but watching all those teams come in excelling at a thing I loved made me confident that I could do it too.

Q: How old were you when you decided to do the Iditarod?

A: 28

Q: Who is your role model?

A: I have many positive role models in my friends and family. Fellow mushers inspire me. My husband has taught me so much about patience and thoughtfulness. And my dogs have taught me

more than just about anyone. They feed off of your energy, and they need you to always be positive and to always believe in what we are doing. They are such a happy group, and they've taught me that nothing is worth getting in a bad mood.

Q: Have you ever seen the northern lights? Do you want to see them as a musher in the Iditarod?

A: I see the northern lights very often. They are one of my all-time favorite things about living in Alaska. I have seen them from the runners many times and during last year's Yukon Quest they were so mesmerizing that I almost crashed my sled!

Q: Have you ever seen a moose on the trail? What other wild animals have you seen?

A: Yes, my dogs and I have seen moose, caribou, wolves and lynx on the trail. We even had a grizzly bear come into the dogyard last summer!

Q: Have you ever mushed in a blizzard?

A: Many, many times. When we have blizzards during the training season, we go out in them on purpose with the dogs. It's so important to show the dogs positive experiences during hardship, and to show them that we're able to have fun even when things seem like they should be scary.

Q: Who is your lead dog?

A: We have many lead dogs, but my two most reliable leaders are Solo and Littlehead.

Q: Have you ever gotten frostbite?

A: No, and I hope I never will! It was -67F on the Yukon Quest last year and the dogs and I managed to stay healthy and not get any cold injuries.

Q: Who is your oldest dog?

A: Zigzag. She is our only retired dog and she is 9 years old. The rest of our team is between 0 and 5 years old.

Q: Have you ever lost any equipment on the trail?
If yes, what do you do about it?

A: Yes, I've lost a headlamp during a race. Always carry an extra. And learn to be creative and fix things with what you have.

Q: What is your favorite food on the trail?

A: Candied bacon.

Q: Do you have any puppies?

A: Yes, right now we have two 4-month-old puppies and five 4-week-old puppies.

Q: Where did you get your sled? Did you make it?

A: My friend Cody Strathe built my sled. He is also running the Iditarod as a rookie this year.

Q: How long do you train each day? In a week?

A: Right now we are running four hours a day. But the work we do before and after a run consumes many additional hours. Right now, each run we do is between 15 and 20 miles. By December, we will be running up to 90 miles at a time. Every ten miles on a dogsled takes about an hour and a half. Dog chores like feeding and scooping poop take about an hour and a half per day. So by the time we're in the height of training, we are working up to 16 hours a day.

Q: How long does it take to train for the Iditarod?

A: It takes many years. First, you must qualify for the Iditarod with 750 miles of qualifying races. These qualifying races are shorter distances (100 to 300 miles each). People usually qualify over one or two years' time, then sign up for the Iditarod.

Q: Do you have someone who helps you train?

A: My husband Andy. He is also a dog musher who is running the 1,000-mile Yukon Quest this winter.

Q: Is it hard to train a dog to run in the Iditarod?

A: It's hard, but it's harder to train a human! Dogs love to run, and they live for the cold and for the

adventures they have along the trail. They are made for it, physiologically. Humans are the ones who have to adapt to the conditions and to the dogs' natural schedule.

Q: What is it like on the trail when you are mushing?

A: Sometimes it's like a dream and sometimes it's like a nightmare. I always have to be prepared for the unexpected and be ready to fix something that has broken or to get us through a hard section of trail. But since I'm always preparing for and expecting the worse, I'm always surprised and delighted when things go well, which they often do. Every day on the trail is different and full of surprise and adventure.

Q: Have you ever fallen off your sled?

A: YES.

Q: Have you ever been to Austin, Texas?

A: Yes I have! In high school I played against several teams in Austin in field hockey, basketball and softball, so we traveled there for games and tournaments. One of my brothers also lives in Austin. Austin is an awesome town and I love visiting! Kerbey Lane pancakes are my favorite!

Thank you for sharing with us!

