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March 18, 2025

Iditarod 53 Special Awards Recipients Honored at Finisher's Banquet in Nome

The 2025 special awards for the Iditarod 53 were presented to the deserving mushers at the prestigious Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race awards banquet held in Nome, Alaska on the evening of Sunday, March 16, 2025. These special awards honor extraordinary achievements and highlight the spirit of perseverance, sportsmanship, and excellence during one of the world's toughest endurance races. Below are the 2025 award recipients:

Alaska Air Transit Spirit of Iditarod Award

First presented in 2019 and given to the first musher to reach the McGrath checkpoint, this award was given to the first musher to reach the Grayling 2 checkpoint for the 2025 Iditarod. The Grayling community has strong ties to Iditarod and special gifts of Beaver fur musher's mitts with beadwork on moose hide, which are handmade by Loretta Maillelle who was raised in Grayling and a beaver fur hat made by Rosalie Egrass of McGrath.

2025 Recipient: Jessie Holmes

GCI Dorothy G. Page Halfway Award

While there was obviously a "first musher to the halfway point" in every race, there are no records of who that person was prior to 1980 when the first Halfway Award was presented. GCI became the sponsor of this award in 1994. The winning musher receives the award on the spot and then it is symbolically presented in Nome. This award, given in honor of the late "Mother of the Iditarod," is presented in Iditarod, when following the Southern route in the odd years, and Cripple, when following the Northern route in even years. However, this year, the Halfway point was the Grayling 1 checkpoint. The first musher to reach this checkpoint received a trophy and his/her choice of \$3,000 in gold nuggets symbolic of the history of this interior area of the Iditarod Mining District or a brand-new smartphone with a year of free service from GCI. A beautiful perpetual trophy made of Alaskan birch and marble and featuring a photograph of the late Dorothy G. Page remains year-round at Iditarod headquarters.

2025 Recipient: Jessie Holmes



Feast on the Yukon Award

Presented since 1983, this award (traditionally called the 'First to the Yukon') is typically given to the musher to arrive in Ruby in even years on the Northern Route and the first musher to arrive to the Yukon River in odd years on the Southern Route. This year, the award will be given to the first musher to reach the Galena checkpoint. The winning musher received a gourmet dinner prepared by Top Chefs from Locally Grown Restaurants, which owns the popular Anchorage eateries Spenard Roadhouse, Snow City Cafe, Crush Wine Bistro and South Restaurant and Coffeehouse.

2025 Recipient: Paige Drobny

Bristol Bay Native Corporation Fish First Award

This award has been presented by Bristol Bay Native Corporation since 2014 to the first musher to reach the Kaltag checkpoint. This year, the award will be given at Kaltag 2, teams' second stop through Kaltag before they head to the coast. This award consists of 25 pounds of fresh Bristol Bay salmon filets, \$2,000 and a wood-burned art piece by BBNC shareholder artist Apay'uq Moore.

2025 Recipient: Jessie Holmes

Ryan Air Gold Coast Award

This was first presented in 1987. Ryan Air began sponsoring this award in 2019 and for this year it was given to the first musher to reach the Unalakleet checkpoint. The winning musher received \$1,500 in gold nuggets, a gold pan award and two hand-carved wooden loons.

2025 Recipient: Jessie Holmes

Northrim Bank Achieve More Award

This award was first given out in 2018. Northrim Bank presented the award to the first musher to reach the White Mountain checkpoint. The winner received a check for \$2,500 and a one-of-a-kind print.

2025 Recipient: Jessie Holmes



Nome Kennel Club Fastest Time from Safety to Nome

One of the longest-standing awards to an Iditarod musher is presented by the Nome Kennel Club. The club awards \$500 to the finishing musher in the top 1/3 of the field who has the fastest time from Safety to Nome.

2025 Recipient: Travis Beals

Howard Farley Sr. Memorial award presented by the Nome Kennel Club

Introduced in 2024 by the NKC in memory of the late Howard Farley Sr., this award honors perseverance on the trail. All finishers who do not place in the Top 20 will be entered for their chance to win \$500.

2025 Recipient: Ebbe Pedersen

Rookie of the Year Award

There has obviously been a top finishing rookie in every Iditarod. In fact, rookies won the first three races. It wasn't until 1976 that the top-finishing rookie was not the winner. For purposes of this award, a rookie is defined as a musher racing his/her first Iditarod. This year this award is presented by the Peldiak Family to the top-placing rookie, who received a beautiful trophy along with a check for \$2,000.

2025 Recipient: Samantha LaLonde

Lynden "Committed through the Last Mile" Red Lantern Award

The Red Lantern Award acts as a symbol of perseverance for the Iditarod. According to historians, awarding the red lantern for the last place finisher has become an Alaska tradition in sled dog racing. The award of \$1000, presented by Lynden, is given to the final team to cross the finish line in recognition of their perseverance and commitment to completing the job despite unexpected challenges.

2025 Recipient: Ebbe Pedersen



Most Improved Musher Award

The concept for an award for the most improved musher began in 1987, when the mushers honored Ted English. English had finished 18th in his second race and eight the following year. This award is given to the musher who has improved by the most places from their previous career top finish. Two mushers tied for this award this year, and the winners received \$2,000 in cash and a commemorative trophy.

2025 Recipient: Bailey Vitello & Lauro Eklund

Donlin Gold Sportsmanship Award

A sportsmanship award was initiated in 1977 by the Alaska Native Brotherhood to honor Native musher Ken Chase. The ANB continued to present the Ken Chase Sportsmanship Award through 1982. Since then, the award has been presented by the Iditarod Trail Committee, and various other sponsors, to the person chosen by his/her peers as the best sportsman on the trail. In 2015, Donlin Gold began sponsoring the award. The winner will receive a \$3,000 check and a plaque.

2025 Recipient: Nicolas Petit

Hilcorp Alaska Most Inspirational Musher Award

Presented since 1986 to the most inspirational musher, the recipient of the Most Inspirational Musher Award is chosen by fellow mushers. Winner receives a paid entry fee for the following year's Iditarod.

2025 Recipient: Calvin Daugherty

Northern Air Cargo Herbie Nayokpuk Memorial Award

This award began in 2007 and is awarded to the individual chosen by the checkers in the checkpoints who best epitomizes Herbie Nayokpuk's spirit of mushing the Iditarod. The winner receives \$1,049 in pocket change and a Northern Air Cargo jacket. This year, the winner also received hand-crafted moccasin slippers as well as ivory earrings and bracelets, presented by the Nayokpuk family.

2025 Recipient: Matt Hall



Golden Clipboard Award

The annual Golden Clipboard Award is presented by the Iditarod official finishers to the checkpoint the mushers feel is the most helpful along the trail.

2025 Recipient: Grayling Checkpoint

Leonhard Seppala Humanitarian Award presented by the Pike Dog Wellness First Initiative

Presented since 1982 to a musher that demonstrates outstanding dog care while remaining competitive throughout the race, the recipient of the Leonhard Seppala Humanitarian Award is chosen by the veterinary team. Starting in Iditarod 2023, this award is now presented by the Pike Dog Wellness First Initiative. Recipient receives an engraved lead crystal trophy and a paid entry fee for the next year's race.

2025 Recipient: Paige Drobny

City of Nome Lolly Medley Memorial Golden Harness Award

Lolly Medley, Wasilla harness maker and one of only two women to run the second Iditarod in 1974, began presenting a golden harness to an outstanding lead dog chosen by the mushers, in 1977. Lolly Medley died in August 1996. The award continues in her honor now presented by the City of Nome.

2025 Recipient: Polar & Arctic from the team of Jessie Holmes

Northern Air Cargo 4-wheeler drawing

This award was started in 2008 by Northern Air Cargo, who wanted to present something every musher would have a chance to win. For this year a virtual key is presented to each musher who then tries to start the 4-wheeler with their key. There is only one right key and the one who starts the 4-wheeler, wins.

2025 Recipient: Matthew Failor



With the final finisher crossing under the burled arch in Nome on Saturday, March 17, 2025 the Iditarod Trail Committee is able to announce the official breakdown of the race purse by finishing position. This breakdown is determined based on the number of total finishers, coming in at 22 for the 2025 race.

Below is a chart that details the prize money for places 1- 20, as well as the \$2,000 payment for the remaining finishers (21 & 22), which totals \$550,000 for the 2025 Iditarod prize purse:

Payout By Position	22 Finishers
1st	\$57,300.00
2nd	\$48,500.00
3rd	\$44,600.00
4th	\$40,600.00
5th	\$37,200.00
6th	\$32,100.00
7th	\$29,900.00
8th	\$28,200.00
9th	\$26,500.00
10th	\$24,600.00
11th	\$23,100.00
12th	\$21,800.00
13th	\$20,500.00
14th	\$19,300.00
15th	\$18,100.00
16th	\$16,850.00
17th	\$15,750.00
18th	\$14,700.00
19th	\$13,700.00
20th	\$12,700.00
21st	\$2,000.00
22nd	\$2,000.00
Total Prize Money	\$550,000.00

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