

Unit 24 Adventure sports

Before you read

Think about these questions. Do you know of any sports that involve animals? Have you ever heard of the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race?

Read the story

Susan Butcher on the Iditarod Trail

It was the fourth year Susan Butcher had run the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race, and she wanted very much to win it. An hour into the race, Susan and her sled dog team sped down a hill and crashed into a fallen tree. Although hurt, Susan untied her sled and her team of Alaskan husky dogs and continued the difficult race across the frozen Alaskan wilderness.

The Iditarod started in 1925. A doctor in Nome, Alaska, U.S.A. was desperately in need of medicine to stop the spread of diphtheria, a deadly disease. Only a hospital in Anchorage had the supplies he needed, and it was 700 miles (654 km) away! But it was January, too dangerous to send a boat and too stormy for his tiny airplane. The only hope was to use several sled dog teams following a trail, called the Iditarod Trail, through snow-covered mountains. They passed the medicine from one sled team to another. Wind and snow and a temperatures as low as -60° (-51° C) did not stop the men and their dogs. The medicine was delivered in record time. The Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race follows the route of the famous medicine run. It is over 1,000 miles (935 km) long and is considered the toughest race in the world.

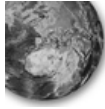
Susan Butcher was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, U.S.A. She loved animals and the outdoors. In her teens Susan was given a Siberian husky dog and became very interested in huskies as sled dogs. After reading about the Iditarod Race, Susan moved to Alaska. She worked at several jobs to earn money to buy herself a sled and a team of huskies. After years of hard work and training, Susan achieved her dream of racing on the Iditarod trail.

In 1978, at the age of 24, Susan entered the race for the first time and became the first woman to finish in the top 20. In 1982 she came in second. In 1984 she was leading her team across a frozen waterway when they fell into the frigid water. Her lead dog managed to pull Susan and the other dogs out of danger. Remarkably, she came in second.

In her fourth race, in 1985, a starving moose attacked her dogs, killing two and injuring eleven. Susan had to leave the race. Another woman, Libby Riddles of Teller, Alaska, became the first woman to win the Iditarod. In 1986 Susan joined the race again. This time, she won. She won again in 1987. In 1988 she became the first person ever to win three Iditarod Races in a row. Unbelievably, Susan won for the fourth time in 1990.

Her strength, stamina, and dedication had made Susan the most famous dog sled racer in the world.

Source: Adapted from *More About the USA* by Milada Broukal and Janet Milhomme, Longman



Build your reading skills: Organizing information

Number the sentences to show the correct order of events.

- _____ Susan Butcher moved to Alaska.
- _____ The medicine was passed from one sled team to another along the Iditarod Trail.
- 1 A doctor in Nome, Alaska, needed medicine for the deadly diphtheria.
- _____ Susan Butcher entered her first Iditarod Race.
- _____ Susan Butcher became the first person to win three Iditarod races in a row.
- _____ Susan Butcher read about the Iditarod Race.

Check your comprehension

Match the descriptions with the information in the box. Write the letter of the correct answer.

a. 1925 medicine run	b. Alaskan huskies	c. diphtheria
d. Susan Butcher	e. Nome, Alaska	f. Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race

1. It's the 1,000-mile-long race men and women participate in with their teams of sled dogs. f
2. The event that inspired the Iditarod Race. _____
3. The Iditarod Race started in this town. _____
4. In 1925, the doctor in Nome wanted to stop the spread of this deadly disease. _____
5. The first person to win the Iditarod Race three years in a row. _____
6. Dogs native to Alaska, often used to pull sleds for transport and races on snow. _____