



MEDIA RELEASE

Sass, Mackey Claim 2015 Yukon Quest Hardware

February 21, 2015 (Fairbanks, AK) – It was an emotional end to the 2015 Yukon Quest 1,000 Mile International Sled Dog Race, as the new champion and a four-time past champion took centre stage at the Finish & Awards Banquet.

Before a packed room at the Westmark Fairbanks, Brent Sass and Lance Mackey entertained with stories from the trail, thanks for their team members, and their love of mushing.

“I love this sport, I love this race, and I love the people in it. More importantly, I love the lifestyle.” Said Mackey.

The veteran musher was shocked to receive the Challenge of the North Award, an award selected by Race Officials for the musher who most exemplifies the Spirit of the Yukon Quest. Mackey also took home the Sportsmanship Award.

“I’m pretty sure everybody in this field deserves that award,” he said.

He talked about his new outlook for this year’s race, travelling with Kristin Knight Pace and Ryne Olson at the back of the pack, and bonding with his young dog team.

“I had the time of my life,” he told the audience, choking back tears.

There were also tears as Sass stepped up to the microphone to receive his finisher’s patch, getting a standing ovation from those in the room.

“I’ve already anointed this cry-fest 2015, so be prepared,” he joked.

Sass said coming to the finish line this year was unbelievable, thanks to the hundreds of fans lined up.

“There aren’t words to describe how amazing it was.”

He thanked his parents for standing by him through it all; his handlers for helping him get back up when he falls, and his dogs.

“I love these guys more than anything in the world. Hats off to my dog team.”

Sass’s love for his dogs was on full display this year, as the veterinary team chose him for the Veterinarians Choice Award. The award is presented to the musher that best demonstrates outstanding dog care while remaining competitive.

“Wow, this means way more than winning,” said Sass, thanking Mike and Sue Ellis for motivating him to take his dog care to another level.

Sass’s lead dogs, Basin and Sound, had their moment in the spotlight. The two received the Golden Harness Award, which goes to the Champion Lead Dogs. For all their hard work, Basin and Sound enjoyed juicy steaks, as well as the brand new golden harnesses.

Also weighing Sass down when he left the banquet was four ounces of gold, as part of his Dawson City Award. Donated by the Fellars family in Dawson, the gold goes to the first musher to reach Dawson and then go on to finish the race. Sass told the crowd each of his handlers would receive an ounce of the gold for their hard work.

Other awards handed out Saturday include the Rookie of the Year Award and the Red Lantern Award. With a fourth overall finish, Vancouver resident Damon Tedford grabbed Rookie of the Year. Rob Cooke was the 16th and final musher to cross the finish line.

“It’s been an amazing race and I’m quite happy to be the Red Lantern,” said Cooke, who joked about Mackey wanting the award. “He said it was the only award he hasn’t won.”

Mackey came close, with his handler Della crafting an “Almost Red Lantern” to present to him at the finish line, when he came across 14th.

Twenty-six mushers started the 2015 Yukon Quest and 16 of them were presented with finisher’s patches at the banquet.

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