

Is the Iditarod CRUEL TO DOGS?

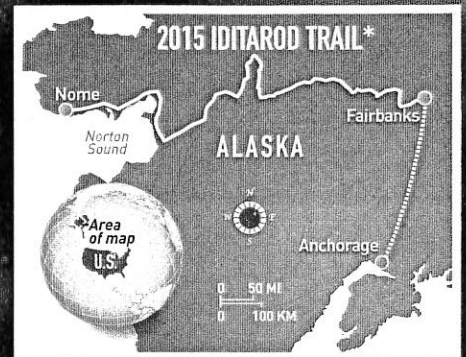
Alaska's famous dogsled race stirs controversy

by Laura Anastasia

Earlier this month, more than 900 sled dogs and drivers dashed across the starting line of the Iditarod (eye-DIT-uh-rod), one of the most grueling competitions on Earth. For several days, they raced nearly 1,000 miles in subzero temperatures and blizzard conditions across the Alaskan wilderness, navigating snowy peaks, frozen rivers, and wild tundra.

During the annual race, teams of 12 to 16 dogs haul their human drivers, called mushers, on sleds from Anchorage to Nome—about the distance from New York City to Orlando, Florida. Most teams complete the race in 9 to 17 days.

The Iditarod commemorates sled dogs' lifesaving role in delivering medicine to Nome to stop a deadly diphtheria outbreak in 1925. Critics, however, say the race has become a symbol of something else entirely—cruelty to dogs. They want the Iditarod stopped in its tracks.



*This year's route was changed because of too little snow. After a ceremonial start in Anchorage, teams drove about 300 miles to Fairbanks to officially begin the race.





YES It's Inhumane

The Iditarod's extreme distance, terrain, and weather conditions put sled dogs at risk of injury and death, says Colleen O'Brien, a spokesperson for People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals in Virginia. More than 130 dogs have died during the Iditarod since it started in 1973.

The canines that survive also suffer, says O'Brien. "For nearly 1,000 miles, the dogs are subjected to biting winds, blinding snowstorms, subzero temperatures, and falls through treacherous ice into frigid water," she tells *JS*. "Their feet can become bruised, bloodied, cut, and worn out." And some dogs run multiple races a year.

Running that far, that fast, is not instinctive for dogs, says Marc Bekoff, an animal expert in Colorado. Wolves—dogs' wild relatives—don't cover Iditarod-like distances either, Bekoff explains. "Wolves may travel 50 miles a day, but they rest and they're mobile when they want to be."

Even the dogs that made the heroic medicine delivery in 1925 didn't cover nearly as much ground, says Margery Glickman, the director of the Sled Dog Action Coalition in Florida. A train carried the medicine part of the way, with 20 mushers and 150 dogs splitting the remaining 674 miles. The longest stretch one team ran was 91 miles.

"Dogs in the Iditarod race a 1,000-mile course, which is over 10 times the maximum a dog would have run in [1925]," Glickman says.

Mushers may be taking advantage of dogs' goodwill toward humans, Bekoff says, especially since there is more than \$725,000 in prize money at stake.

"It's very misleading to say that just because dogs will do it, they like it," he says. "Dogs would do pretty much anything for a human."

NO Born to Run

Sled dogs love to run in the Iditarod, especially huskies, which have been bred to thrive in Arctic conditions, says Alaskan musher Lisbet Norris. This year is her second Iditarod.

"Sled dogs are naturally incredible athletes," she tells *JS*. "Through training, conditioning, and top nutrition, they are capable of accomplishing feats of incredible speed and endurance with relatively little effort on their part." Norris starts her team's training with 1- or 2-mile treks several months before the race, increasing the distance gradually.

Mushers have a big incentive to take excellent care of their dogs, says Mark Derr, a dog expert in Florida.

"If the dogs are not being treated well or they're tired, they will quit," he tells *JS*. "They'll just lie down on the trail."

Race officials also put the dogs' safety first, supporters say.

Iditarod rules forbid cruel treatment of the dogs, including any action or inaction that causes preventable pain and suffering. The canines undergo heart and blood tests before the race, and 52 vets are stationed along the trail to monitor the dogs at checkpoints.

The very purpose of the race is to honor sled dogs, supporters say. Alaskan Dorothy G. Page dreamed up the Iditarod in the 1960s after realizing that many people did not know about sled dogs' vital role in the state's history. The canines also helped deliver supplies and building materials during the construction of Alaska's roads and bridges.

To Norris and other mushers, sled dogs are more than just Iditarod racers.

"My dogs are my best friends," she says. "I spend many hours with them every day—feeding, cleaning, training, petting, and loving them."



JIM McMINN/AP/ANSA; (MART) KEVIN HOBAN/THE IMAGE BANK/GETTY IMAGES (DOGS/LEI)

Should School Start LATER?

Delaying the opening bell could have big benefits,
but it could also interfere with after-school sports and clubs

Are you dragging yourself out of bed to get to school? About 40 percent of American high schools start classes before 8 a.m., and more than 20 percent of middle schools start at 7:45 a.m. or earlier.

Studies show that starting school later—even by half an hour—has major health and academic benefits. The American Academy of Pediatrics recently recommended that middle and high schools delay their opening bells to 8:30 a.m. or later so kids can get more sleep.

But some people argue against letting students hit the snooze button. Opponents say starting classes later in the day is expensive for school districts and cuts into time for extracurricular activities and homework.

Do schools need a wake-up call when it comes to start times?

Let Teens Sleep In

Jilly Dos Santos, a senior at Rock Bridge High School in Columbia, Missouri, had trouble getting up for her school's 7:50 a.m. start time.

"I was habitually 10 minutes late for school, and it was disruptive," she tells *JS*.

After learning that administrators were planning to move the first bell even earlier, Jilly organized a social media

campaign that convinced her school to start later—at 8:55 a.m.

"I have no issues getting up now," she says. "Things aren't so rushed and stressful. I'm not a zombie for part of the day."

A too-early start to the school day can deprive kids of much-needed sleep. According to the National Sleep Foundation, 59 percent of sixth- through eighth-graders and 87 percent of high school students in the United States aren't getting the recommended 8.5 to 9.5 hours of sleep a night.

Studies show that well-rested teens get better grades, have higher standardized test scores, and miss fewer days of school. They also have a lower risk of being in car accidents and have fewer health problems, such as depression, mood changes, and being overweight.

So why don't kids just hit the sack earlier? It's not that simple, says Danny Lewin, a sleep specialist at Children's National Health System in Washington, D.C.

"Adolescents have a deeply programmed biological [clock] to go to bed later and wake later," he tells *JS*. As kids get older, their sleep-wake cycle shifts so it's difficult for them to turn in before 11 p.m. Teens are wired to be night owls, he says.

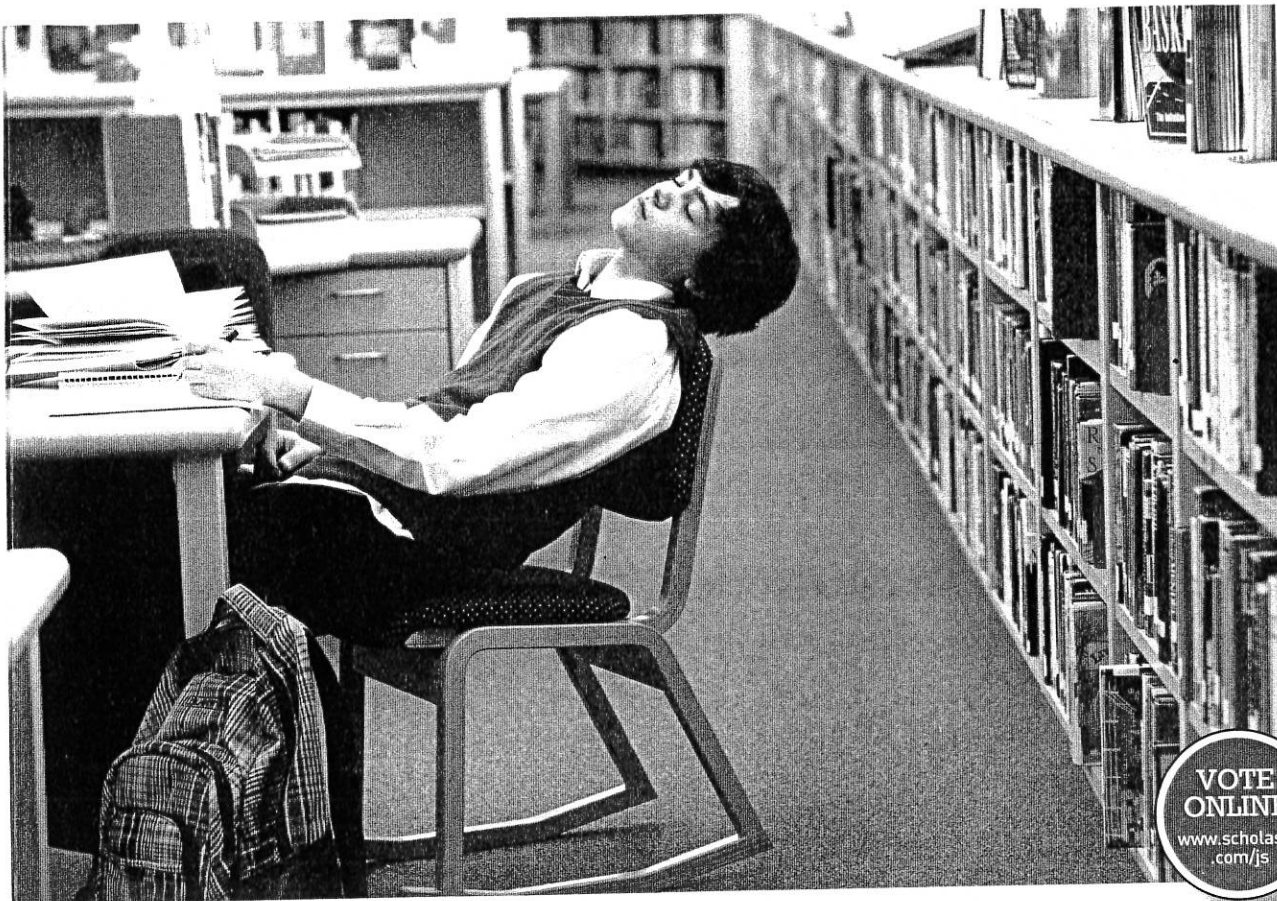
Complaints from sleepy students have prompted many schools, from Kissimmee, Florida, to Jackson Hole, Wyoming, to push back their start times. Next fall, classes at McLean High School in Virginia will start about 40 minutes later.

Sophomore Melanie Pincus is looking forward to the extra sleep. "I hope to have more energy at school," she tells *JS*.

Rise and Shine

Not everyone is in favor of earlier start times. Many school districts say they would present big challenges.

The Issaquah School District in Washington State recently decided not to change its first bells, which



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ring at 7:40 a.m. for middle school and 7:25 a.m. for high school.

“We had a committee work on the problem for two years, and they couldn’t come to a recommendation to change the start times,” says L. Michelle, the executive director of communications for the district. “A later release time can really upset things.”

For Issaquah and many other school districts, transportation is a huge obstacle. Many districts use the same buses for elementary, middle, and high schools. Changing start times—and bus schedules—can raise safety issues.

“We would be having elementary kids at the bus stop early, in the dark, or even walking home in the dark,” Michelle tells *JS*.

A later start, say opponents, also interferes with some teens’ part-time jobs and disrupts after-school sports and clubs.

That’s why Ben Zebrowski-Rocheleau, a seventh-grader at Forsythe Middle School in Ann Arbor, Michigan, doesn’t mind getting up early for class. His school recently considered starting later but decided against it.

“A later school day would interfere with tennis and possibly baseball,” Ben tells *JS*. His current schedule allows him to see friends after school and still have time for homework.

And then there’s the cost. Issaquah, for example, would need to buy new buses and build a garage for them. For some school

districts, the costs could run into the millions.

Plus, says Mateo Perpetuo, a seventh-grader from Monroe, Connecticut, not all kids have trouble getting up in the morning. “I feel energized after breakfast,” he tells *JS*.

To get plenty of ZZZ’s, experts recommend that kids limit their use of electronic devices at night. Kids also need to establish routines so they go to bed earlier—no matter when the first bell rings.

—Lisa M. Herrington



Which statements best support the arguments for and against later start times?

Are Pro Athletes

BY LAURA ANASTASIA

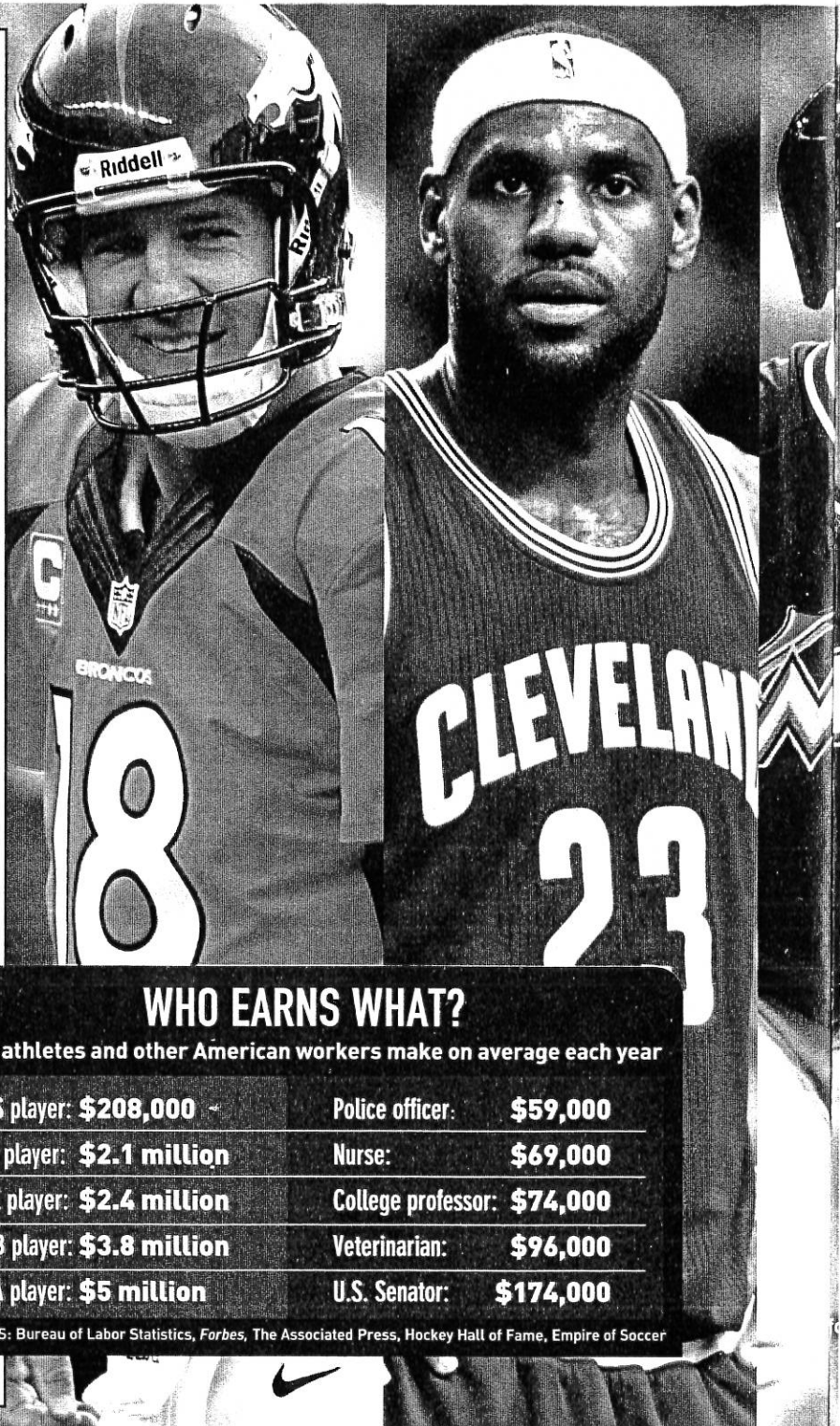
How much is a home run worth? Millions of dollars? The Miami Marlins think so. The Major League Baseball (MLB) team recently gave slugger Giancarlo Stanton the largest contract in North American sports history: \$325 million over 13 years.

Stanton's supersized salary follows his record-setting 2014 season. The 25-year-old outfielder topped the National League with 37 home runs despite missing the last 17 games because of an injury. He was also the runner-up for the league's Most Valuable Player (MVP) honor.

Stanton's contract is \$50 million higher than the previous largest contract, Alex Rodriguez's 10-year, \$275 million deal with the New York Yankees in 2007.

Baseball players aren't the only athletes pulling in huge paychecks. Jay Cutler, a quarterback for the Chicago Bears, signed a seven-year, \$126.7 million contract last year. And LeBron James, a two-time National Basketball Association (NBA) champion, earned about \$19 million for last season alone.

As the number of multi-million dollar payouts in professional sports continues to grow, more people are asking whether athletes deserve the big bucks.



WHO EARNS WHAT?

What athletes and other American workers make on average each year

MLS player: \$208,000	Police officer: \$59,000
NFL player: \$2.1 million	Nurse: \$69,000
NHL player: \$2.4 million	College professor: \$74,000
MLB player: \$3.8 million	Veterinarian: \$96,000
NBA player: \$5 million	U.S. Senator: \$174,000

SOURCES: Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Forbes*, The Associated Press, Hockey Hall of Fame, Empire of Soccer