



For Immediate Release

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By: Spc. Paizley Ramsey, 134th Public Affairs Detachment

Alaska Army National Guard Soldier Finishes Iditarod *Mackey protégé places 37th in Iditarod XXXVII*

CAMP DENALI, Alaska—Alaska Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Harry Alexie crossed the burlled arch in Nome on March 21 at 4:40 a.m. to finish the 2009 Iditarod with 10 of his 16 dogs.

Alexie finished the more than 1,100-mile long race in 12 days, 14 hours and 40 seconds, putting him in 37th place out of 52 finishers. He won the ExxonMobil 37th Iditarod Award in which the oil company presented an Iditarod gold coin valued at \$2,500 to Alexie for being the 37th musher to arrive in Nome.

“We are absolutely pleased with Staff Sgt. Alexie’s performance in the Iditarod,” said Lt. Col. Joseph Lawendowski, Alaska Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention commander. “For anyone to finish a race with a team of dogs requiring constant care in extreme weather for more than 1,000 miles it’s an awesome accomplishment. His final standing exceeded our expectations.”

As a rookie Iditarod sled dog racer, Alexie is elated about his completion of Iditarod XXXVII and considers the experience a personal victory.

“To me it was a once in a lifetime experience, and I’m proud to say that I finished,” Alexie said. “Anything I start I must finish is what I tell myself. I found along the way a determination and a willpower that I didn’t know I had.”

“The Last Great Race on Earth” is a test of endurance, personal courage and mental acuity, and it did not go without its struggles for Alexie, who often found himself pushing the boundaries of his own limits.

“It was tough,” Alexie said. “We started in mild temperatures, but once we hit the Yukon River we started facing head winds from the north for about 130 miles. At that point, I felt like turning around, but I knew I was representing the Alaska Army National Guard and myself, and if I quit, all the training would mean nothing.”

Alexie trained with now three-time consecutive Iditarod winner Lance Mackey, who won this year’s race and finished on March 18 at 11:38 a.m., to prepare for the epic race.

“The training definitely helped Alexie,” Lawendowski said. “But, this guy’s got a lot of heart, and I think his determination and effort is what pulled him through.”

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Alexie Iditarod cutlines

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Lance Mackey, left, three-time Iditarod champion, sends off Staff Sergeant Harry Alexie, Alaska Army National Guard, with a good luck handshake at the Willow start of the 2009 Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race. Alexie, a 2009 Iditarod rookie, trained with the veteran musher for months leading up to the race at Mackey’s comeback kennel outside of Fairbanks. Photo: Brandon Oursler, National Guard Strength Readiness Support Center

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Along the Trail. In the middle of Alaska’s wilderness, Staff Sergeant Harry Alexie, Alaska Army National Guard, races along the Iditarod XXXVII trail. Alexie went on to finish in 37th place, winning the ExxonMobil 37th Iditarod Award in which the oil company presented Alexie with an Iditarod gold coin valued at \$2,500. Photo: Brandon Oursler, National Guard Strength Readiness Support Center

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Soldier and Musher. Staff Sergeant Harry Alexie is the first Alaska Army National Guardsman to run and finish the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race. Photo: Photo: Brandon Oursler, National Guard Strength Readiness Support Center