



By Richard Larson, Larson Graphics

riak, left, who won the 1,150-mile Iditarod sport Impossible, and John Stamstad, right, who won the 1,150-mile Iditarod Extreme, prepare to start. No dogs allowed; only snowshoes, bicycles or skis.

Race is doggone tough

Impossible follows in the tracks of the Iditarod

Village life is pretty slow, people are just kind of laid-back."

There are actually three Iditarod races: a 100-mile warm-up race that began Feb. 19; the Iditarod Extreme, a 350-mile race that began Feb. 26; and the Iditarod Impossible, an 800-mile continuation of the Extreme. Of the 38 Extreme racers, only 13 went on to Nome.

Alaskan Rocky Reifensstuhl won the 100-miler on snowshoes.

Ultra-endurance cyclist John Stamstad of Seattle won the Extreme; he has won all four times the race has been run.

Mike Curiak of Grand Junction, Colo. was the first to reach Nome, making it to the finish on Sunday afternoon. He promptly checked into a hotel and went to bed.

Nine racers were still on the course Thursday afternoon, with Stamstad expected before nightfall.

This was the first running of the Impossible, but not the first time the entire Iditarod course has been completed under human power.

Race director Dan Bull was the first to do it in 1989. His record of 21 days was shattered by Curiak's finish of 15 days, 1

hour, 15 minutes. The winning Iditarod sled team finished in 9 days, 2 hours.

"You can have your Eco Challenges and your Raid Gauloises," Bull, 47, says, "but there's no tougher race than this one. If you don't think so, come on up."

Bull says the ideal Iditarod racer is an introvert, "someone who doesn't mind traveling alone in the Arctic in the dead of night."

He adds that "it helps to be in great shape and have a little body fat. This is a race for people with meat on their bones."

The races, in temperatures ranging from 30 degrees to 30 below zero, require special gear.

Cyclists use standard mountain bikes refitted with double-wide tires that can run at low pressure without going flat.

They also use a windscreen on the handlebars to keep their hands and gear shifters from freezing.

Skiers and snowshoers pull small sleds, but cyclists carry their gear on the bike.

There are some stops at lodges, but many of the nights are spent sleeping outdoors.

"To do this race, you've got to love adventure," Bull says.

Split squads dilute quality

Early games often don't bring out the best players to the parks

CLEARWATER, Fla. — Directives from the commissioner's office that teams use competitive teams in spring training games aren't new. Once, Reggie Jackson received a memo requesting he make

BASEBALL

By Hal Bodley

every road trip — even if he had just one at-bat.

Baseball fans shouldn't be cheated, even if it's only spring training. Guidelines have been around for years, but during the last week fans certainly didn't get their money's worth at some games.

Saturday, in a game televised to New York, the Yankees embarrassed a group of Atlanta minor league youngsters 23-7. Wednesday, the Yankees lost to Detroit 8-2 with a team that didn't remotely resemble the World Series champions.

Major League Baseball vice president Sandy Alderson dashed off a memo this week reminding teams that at least four regulars or front-line platoon players from the previous year must play in each game.

Yankees manager Joe Torre agrees with the spirit of the memo, but there are problems.

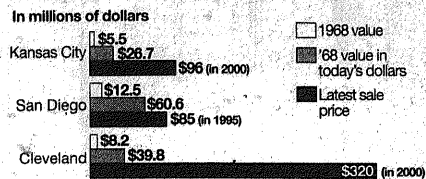
"At times, it could be a hindrance," Torre says. "You'd like to believe each manager will send people who need work. And there'll be a certain number of regulars who'll be part of that group."

Torre says Wednesday was an exception. "We played a night game on Tuesday with our regulars. I don't want to turn them around the next morning for a trip."

Years ago, teams didn't split into two squads for two teams in the same day. Instead of sending part of a team on the

Market values

David Glass is buying the small-market Kansas City Royals for \$96 million. *Forbes* magazine lists the Royals at the same price, 28th among baseball's 30 teams. In contrast, Cleveland was sold this year for \$320 million. *Forbes* ranks the Indians second at \$359 million, behind the New York Yankees (\$491 million). Here's a comparison of the Royals' value in 1968 compared to San Diego, another small-market team, and Cleveland, a large-market team.



Source: USA TODAY research

By Alejandro Gonzalez, USA TODAY

road and leaving the other players to play at home, there were morning "B" games, making it possible for all players to play.

"Night games in spring training have changed a lot of it," Torre says. "Now they want split squads so they can get two games."

Concern remains: When owners table sales of the Kansas City Royals and Oakland Athletics in September, there was concern about the viability of small-market franchises.

A group headed by New York investor Miles Prentice had agreed to pay \$75 million for the Royals. Save Mart Foods chairman Bob Piccinini offered \$122.4 million for the A's.

Throughout negotiations for the Royals, team chairman David Glass remained in the background. Tuesday, he outbid two other groups, including Prentice, to buy the franchise for \$86 million. The other owners will approve the sale this time.

Commissioner Bud Selig says "only time will tell" if Glass got the team at a bargain price.

Houston Astros owner Drayton McLane Jr. has known Glass, a retired Wal-Mart CEO, for 25 years and says he's the won who can restore the Royals to prominence. "All the years I've known him he loved baseball just as much," McLane says.

The price was relatively low, McLane says, because the Roy-

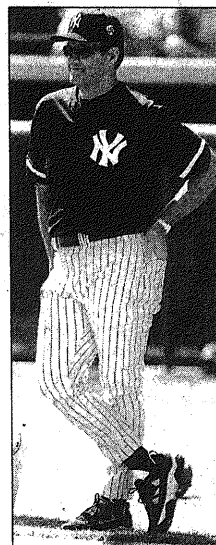
Selig says small-market teams still need help and "that's why it's so important to get the right person with economic resources." Glass getting the Royals is a great day for Major League Baseball.

Reds eastbound: It's almost certain Cincinnati will be the National League team that moves from the Central Division to the East to help create four divisions of four teams each for next year. The move, even though general manager Jim Bowden has reservations about being in the same division with Atlanta, makes sense. The Reds will be grouped with the Braves, Florida and Tampa Bay — all in the Eastern time zone.

"I think we'd move," says John Allen, Reds chief operating officer. "We've made a commitment to do what's best for the league. The only scenario we wouldn't accept would be switching leagues. Jim Bowden has some opinions, but to me you have to look long term and big picture."

Houston, also a possibility, doesn't want to move. "You won't have my vote to move to the East," McLane says.

Around the horn: Players on the Chicago Cubs and New York Mets, who open their season with two games in Japan, each will receive \$25,000 plus expenses for making the trip. Mets pitcher Al Leiter and Cubs starter Kevin Tapani, who'll open their team's U.S. games, aren't making the trip. Nearly 80 media members are going. ... George Steinbrenner held a dinner meeting with his "Kitchen Cabinet" Thursday night in Tampa. The group consists of all his baseball advisers, including Torre. The last time a session at this level was held during spring training, the Yankees traded David Wells to Toronto for Roger Clemens. ... Baseball's top attorney says he's still waiting to hear from Pete Rose's lawyers. Bob Duvy met with Rose's representatives Jan. 27 and doesn't plan to meet again until they provide additional information. So far, the sides have had one short phone conversation.



By Steve Nesius, AP

Torre: Yankees manager keeps some regulars behind.

als aren't what they've been. "The fact it's been owned by the Ewing Kauffman Foundation was an unhandy way to sell it," McLane says. If an entrepreneur had been selling it, it would have been handled differently."