

Top spots tighten up in LNAC finals

By **BOB ELEY**
Sports Editor

There's going to be quite a race for the top spots in today's final heat of the Gene's Chrysler Limited North American Championship Sled Dog Race at the Jeff Studdert Racegrounds.

Leaders in all of the six classes of racing—one-, two- and three-dog skijoring and four-, six- and eight-dog mushing—are still very close, but it would be hard to get any closer the six-dog class.

Just a half-second separates the top two teams in the six-dog class and only 53.9 seconds separates the top six finishers.

To make things even more interesting today's final heat is an extra 1.8 for a distance of 7.7 miles. Each team raced 5.9 miles on the first two days of the three-day event.

Kouros Partow has a two-day time of 36 minutes, 1.3 seconds to lead the field, but Jiri Krejci closed in with a two-day time of 36:0.8.

Other racers still in the hunt are Greg Sellentin at 36:18.9, Rudi Ropertz at 36:21.2, Bev Stevens at 36:32.4 and Ken Chezik at 36:55.2.

Krejci posted the fastest time on Friday with a run of 17:43.2, followed by Partow in 17:51.8 and Stevens in 17:56.7.

Ewe Radant, who set a course record in the four-dog class saw his lead cut to 35 seconds heading into today's 5.5-mile run.

Radant had the third-fastest time on Saturday, but still holds the overall lead with a time of 26:25.2. Jiri Trnka closed in on the leader by winning Saturday's heat in 13:09.2 for a two-day total of 27:00.4. Lou Serre holds down the third spots in 27:19.3 and no other racers are within two minutes of the top three mushers in the four-dog class.

Pam Richards and Partow round out the top five finishers in the four-dog class with times of

29:21.1 and 39:30.5, respectively.

Serre finished second in Saturday's heat with a run of 13:14.4 and Radant was third in 13:25.7.

Uechi Liebhart has a lead of just over a minute in the eight-dog class after completing two days of racing in 1 hour, 5 minutes and 45.5 seconds.

Ken Chezik moved up into the second spot with a two-day time of 1:06:57.8 and Lena Westas Havimaki is third in 1:06:58.6.

Liebhart had a run of 32:37.7 on Saturday's 10.6-mile course, while Chezik checked in a 32:58.8 and Havimaki posted a 33:17.5.

The eight-doggers will run a 12.1-mile course in today's final heat.

All three skijoring classes also remained close after three days of racing.

Carol Kleckner managed to widen her lead over Brian Charlton to more than a minute in the three-dog class. Kleckner has a two-day time of 29:51.7, while Charlton rests at 30:55.5.

Amanda Byrd has a 13.7-second lead over Andy Warwick in the two-dog class. Byrd has made two trips around the trail in 32:06.0, while Warwick has a time of 32:19.7.

Kari Lovett will take a lead of just over 10 seconds into the final heat of the one-dog class. Lovett has a two-day time of 36:47.4 with Mike Malvick giving chase at 36:59.1.

Skijorers and four-dog mushers raced 4.5 miles on the first two days of the event and will race the 5.9-mile loop today.

Teams are competing for a prize fund of \$10,500.

Complete two-day results of the Limited North American are on today's Sports Scoreboard on page C2.

Sports Editor Bob Eley can be reached at beley@newsminer.com, sports@newsminer.com or 459-7581.



Eric Engman/News-Miner

HANG ON TIGHT—Sarah Thornton holds on to her gang line as she takes a corner along the 4.5-mile course while competing in the two-dog skijoring class during the second day of racing at the Alaska Dog Musher's Association Limited North American Championships at the Jeff Studdert Racegrounds Saturday morning.