

# Polardistans- The Ultimate Challenge

## WSA World Championship Longdistance 2017



For the first time in the 15 year history of the Polardistans the longtrail competition was held as the official world championship of the World Sleddog Association.



The interest of the Musers for the WC was so high (within a couple of days 130 Muser had applied), that Karina Andreasen had to come up with innovative plans to master the amount of starters. The checkpoint, never meant to be for 130 starters, had to be enlarged and the flow designed differently, a place for the Musherdinner, where everybody had a place, be found and the complete organisation adapted to the amount of Musers. The key to success was Karina Andreasen.



The preparation for the event took almost 6 months to be successful , die core of the personnel for the Polardistans was in an excellent mood, which also fired up the volunteers. Before the official start the correct handling in the starting area was exercised with a real mushing team. At the volunteers' briefing Karina issued an absolute prohibition of alcohol during the competition, in extremis a novelty I (Chris) have not yet experienced to date.

During the time of preparation from Saturday till Monday before the event, all the collaborators for the Polardistans were taken care of with freshly (grilled) prepared meals.

Tuesday the first day of the competition- Team after Team was sent onto the trail. With one difference, unlike WSA Sprint/MD. There is a time-window for each category, p.e. from 10:00-10:30 during which all teams have to start, independent of their starting time.



At the start the so called Startkort is checked. One Musher had forgotten to bring the Startkort and had to go to his car to fetch it. Again brilliantly solved- the team was parked by the volunteers and the doghandler outside of the starting area, the Musher fetched his Startkort und went relaxed on the trail.



The trails were projected in a genial way, so that for both the 160 km as well as the 300 km distance the same checkpoint was used. The first trail with 95 km, same distance for all teams, was very selective and many a team abandoned the competition either on the trail or latest at the checkpoint. The rest of the teams were met at the checkpoint, that had to be passed twice by the 300 km group, by a plethora of veterinarians and volunteers.



The moment a team arrived, the volunteers became active, the teams guided to their designated Stake-Out. The veterinarians came to check the dogs and the race judges came to inspect the team and the contents of the sled. In the area of the checkpoint poles were placed to mark the Stake-Out and to serve as anchor point for the sled. Next to it a bale of straw for the dogs was placed. Where a team had to park was indicated with a red lantern, that, once the team was parked, moved to the next pole. The genial distribution at the Checkpoint permitted a



tight control of all the groups working in a way that nobody disturbed nobody and a new start was possible without problems or interruption of the other teams resting. There were very strict rules with respect to Doghandler, who was allowed to look for water or food from the depot and where they had to wait for their team to come.



The difference between the 160 km and 300 km teams was that the 160 km teams could restart after 10 minutes after being checked by the veterinarians, unless they demanded a forced pause. When cleared, they parted on the 75 km trail back to the finish, in the night! For the 160 km group, that could restart immediately, a kind of "Take-Off" corridor aligned with white flashlights was created that went directly from their arrival to the departure, passed all the waiting teams and the Tipi of the veterinarians. The take-off lane was long and wide enough to accommodate several teams that arrived almost simultaneously.



The 300 km group had an obligatory stop for which they could select the duration. The choice was between 4 or 6 hours rest, before the next stage of 130 km could begin (tactic, meteorological knowledge and a good feeling for the dogs were asked for). However, the veterinarians had the last say. I.e. they could demand a longer pause than the Musher wanted if the condition of the dog(s) required so. And there was absolutely no discussion about the correctness of the decision. After the 130 km trail, the Musher came once more to the checkpoint, waited their obligatory time before parting on the last 75 km. The Musher was allowed, in addition to the obligatory pause, to lay out a bivouac or rest next to the trail in case of bad weather or tiredness of dogs or Musher.



At the checkpoint volunteers and functionaries were well taken care of. A Tipi with a woodstove, outside a wood fire with warm water for drinks or meals in a bag (but very tasteful and nourishing) Everybody was enthusiastic and in a

super mood. Discipline without reproach. Even the nights that I (Teun) spent there, very cold and stormy snow showers, were short. Always something to do or discuss.

A note of sadness, as with all really good competitions, it was over for us from the WSA far too fast. One thing was still open, the honouring of the winners and the Musher Dinner, which was preceded by a Greenland coffee party, (less coffee more whiskey, Kahlua, rum or vodka) to start a great dinner. During the dinner it became visible how much the Musers appreciated Karina. Tremendous applause, whatever she did, a short speech on stage or to bring a beer to someone at a table.



This was a real celebration. One after another the country teams came to the stage and thanked Karina and her staff and volunteers. How much the volunteers were appreciated, became noticeable when a minutes during applause with calls from everybody, made all the volunteers appear from the kitchen. The crowd was not satisfied before they all appeared on stage and gotten their medal (a slab of marble with the logo of the Polardistans).



Since we had to clean up a few things on Saturday, after we came back from our visit to Sveg, Irene and Chris were invited to the dinner for the Volunteers. At last during this dinner one understood what was meant with one big FAMILY. It was Karina herself that served the volunteers, that served the day before the mushers, dinner and drinks.

***Once more a big thank you to the organisation miracle Karina and her exquisite staff of collaborators that really hung in there and gave everything.***

For the WSA  
Chris & Teun

WEB: [polardistans.se](http://polardistans.se)

Gallery Chris: [PD2017](#)

Gallery Teun: [PD2017](#)

More pictures: [polardistans/gallery](http://polardistans/gallery)

