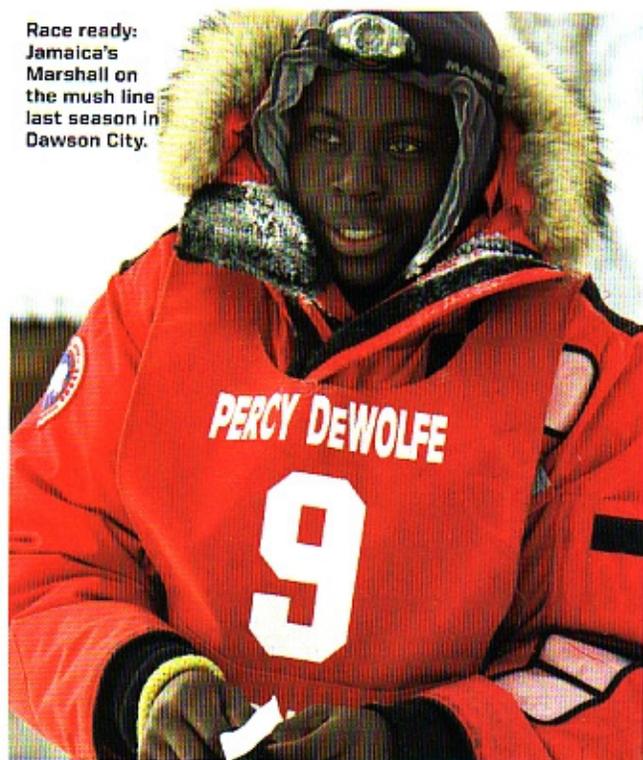


Race ready: Jamaica's Marshall on the mush line last season in Dawson City.



## Ooh yeah, we're mushin'

Jamaica's first dogsled team bids for a spot in the storied Yukon Quest

**M**USH, MON. That's the motto of the Jamaican dogsled team that hopes to compete for the first time in the Yukon Quest, the epic 1,600-kilometre slog along the old gold-rush mail route from Whitehorse, Yukon, to Fairbanks, Alaska. This year, the race kicks off on February 14, a memorable if chilly Valentine's Day for 24-year-old musher Oswald "Newton" Marshall, if he qualifies.

First, Marshall has to finish a 500-kilometre race to cement his spot on the 2009 Yukon Quest roster. In January, Marshall will be on the starting line of The Copper Basin race in Alaska to try to make the grade. By then, he will have been training for four months in Whitehorse with triple-Yukon Quest winner Hans Gatt. This is the second year of cold-weather competition for Marshall, who also trained with Gatt for five months last winter. "We are not only talking the talk," says team manager Danny Melville, who founded the team in 2005. "We are walking the walk." The serious training paid off last season with a seventh place finish for Marshall at the 340-kilometre Percy DeWolfe Memorial race in Dawson City, Yukon, his longest race to date and the first leg of his qualifying round for this year's Quest. Not bad for a guy who first saw snow in 2006.

Marshall says his biggest challenge at the Yukon Quest will be fighting the cold and staying awake. As far as sub-zero survival strategies go, "I take all good advice," Marshall says. When it comes to keeping his eyes open, however, he prefers to sing to his dogs—reggae, naturally. In Jamaica, Marshall trains with SPCA-rescued mutts that are harnessed to wheeled dogsleds. How do the huskies compare to their scrappy mongrel counterparts? "The huskies are more into it," Marshall admits.

—Kate Barker