

REPORTER

NOW THAT WAS AN AMAZING RACE

The 2009 edition of the Yukon Quest International Sled Dog Race will go down in the record books as one of the most memorable in the event's 25-year history.

For starters, this year's competition was a veritable nail-biter, producing the closest-ever finish. After nearly 10 days of racing over the 1,600-kilometre course, only four minutes separated the eventual winner—Sebastian Schnuelle



THE JAMAICAN ROOKIE: OSWALD MARSHALL IN THE YUKON QUEST.

of Germany—from the second-place musher, American Hugh Neff. Schnuelle also posted the fastest-ever time of nine days, 23 hours and 20 minutes, beating the previous record set in 2007 by American Lance Mackey. To add to the drama, second-place finisher Neff was penalized two hours for accidentally travelling along a road at one point instead of the trail. That penalty, served at the last checkpoint, cost Neff the race.

Of the 29 teams that started the endurance test in Whitehorse, Yukon, on February 14, only 18 made it all the way to Fairbanks, Alaska. Among them was Oswald "Newton" Marshall, a rookie competitor from Jamaica (see *explorata*, Winter 2008). Marshall placed a respectable 13th, coming in two days after the winner. He was met at the line by Yukoner Hans Gatt, a three-time winner of the Quest, who had helped train Marshall for the past two winters.

The first Canadian to cross the finish line was veteran musher Michelle Phillips, who came in fifth place.

—Kate Barker

LEFT: CHRISTIAN PONDELLA; RIGHT: CAROLE MELVILLE