

Sports Afield

By TAP GOODENOUGH

The experts said he didn't have an outside chance. The old-timers thought he was making a mistake in even entering the race. But Dr. Roland Lombard of Wayland refused to be discouraged, recently winning the World's Championship Sled Dog Derby at The Pas, Manitoba, in his first attempt. That's like copping the Kentucky Derby with your initial colt.

A veterinarian, Dr. Lombard

Sled Dog Champ Boosts Sport

operates his animal hospital in Auburndale. At 46, he's a fit 150 pounds. And driving Siberian Huskies has made him a wiry whipl of a man—lean and tanned, imbued with enthusiasm for his hobby.

"Started raising and racing Huskies twenty years ago at my home in Raymond, Me.," said the doctor. "I became interested in the sport after seeing that great Alaskan musher, Leonard Sepala, when he visited Poland Spring with his dog team."

Later, the Lombards moved to Wayland, where the canines are bred and trained, the Huskies being conditioned for the 120-mile Derby right on the 50-acre tract, snow or not. When the ground is bare, stripped-down sports cars are dragged by the willing dogs.

21 TEAMS STARTED

"I'd aimed for the Derby for years," smiled the veterinarian. Twenty-one teams started, most of them driven by Indians or Canadians. It was run in three 40-mile heats, one each day. And I knew we'd won on the last half of the second day after going 20 miles. What a thrill that was! I could sense that the dogs realized they could win, too."

At Manitoba, drivers were limited to teams of 11 Huskies. Dr. Lombard used eight dogs the first day, then seven and six. Of course, he had the same lead dog each heat, a four-year-old named Chuck Chief. Others in his teams were Nanook, Tarku,



DR. ROLAND LOMBARD AND ONE OF HIS HUSKIES

Record-American Photo by Edwin Stephan

Malla, Sugret, Shagwah, Little John and Robin Hood. Total time for the 120-mile grind was nine hours, 30 minutes.

To drive sled dogs, you must be really rugged, able to withstand cutting winds, cold and snowstorms. At intervals during a long race, drivers often hop from their sleds and run along with the Huskies, thus lightening their load. Average sled weighs about 23 pounds.

"Siberian Huskies are a gentle breed, despite what people may think," stated the doctor. "They

are not fighters, due to proper training and breeding. And the majority of drivers and owners raise their dogs like babies. Cruel treatment is out! In the New England Sled Dog Club, whips can't be over three feet in length. "In a race, they're just snapped most of the time."

EXPENSIVE PASTIME

Racing and rearing Huskies is an expensive pastime. Dr. Lombard won \$1700 in purses this winter, but that sum won't approach paying his overall expenses. His team finished fourth last weekend in the N. E. Derby at Laconia, N. H.

Rowland Lombard, 13, does some driving under his dad's guidance, while mother (Louise) is an accomplished musher.

"It's a highly-specialized sport," commented the doc. "Yes, it requires all your energy year-round. Why, we're apt to be working with the dogs on a hot Fourth of July."

New England can well be proud of its world champion musher, who is pleased to see more youngsters taking up the sport. Next time junior wants a pet, get him a Husky. Dr. Lombard says that'll keep him healthy.

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