

SADLER'S ALASKA CHALLENGE TAKES ON HATCHER PASS



Photos by CARRIE BROWN

Brutal climb to victory

The world's longest wheelchair and handcycle race came to a grueling conclusion Sunday at Hatcher Pass. Competitors in the Sadler's Alaska Challenge, already fatigued from six straight days of racing, climbed more than 3,500 feet to the finish line at Independence Mine. Claiming victory in the 25th edition of the race across Alaska were Ernst Van Dyk of South Africa, Elmar Sternath of Germany, Saul Mendoza of Mexico and Monique Van der Vorst of the Netherlands. A record field of 36 racers competed in the 223-mile, seven-day, eight-stage race that went past five glaciers and crossed three mountain passes. "They really weren't kidding when they called this thing Ultra Challenge," racer Susan Katz of Colorado Springs, a gold medalist at the 2004 Paralympic Games in basketball, wrote on her blog. Katz called Sunday's ascent of Hatcher Pass "heinously brutal." For final standings and results of Sunday's 30-mile road race, check the race Web site at sadlersakchallenge.org.



Above: Ernst Van Dyk works his way up a Hatcher Pass hill in Sunday's final stage.

Right: A participant climbs toward the finish line.