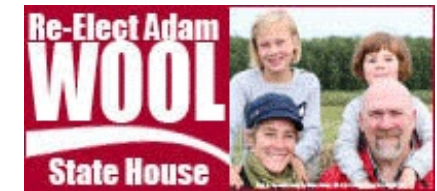




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Husband and wife bring competitive spirit to ONAC



Tim O'Donnell, todonnell@newsminer.com Mar 19, 2016 (0)

FAIRBANKS — Lina Streeper likes to try and beat one musher more than any other in races: her husband, Buddy Streeper.



“I want to beat him more than anyone else,” Lina said after the

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second day of the GCI Open North American Championship on Saturday at Mushers Hall.



Lina and Buddy, from Fort Nelson, British Columbia, are going head-to-head for the second straight ONAC at the Jeff Studdert Racegrounds. Buddy, the defending champion, holds the lead entering today's final heat while Lina sits in fourth place overall.



"We both want to do as well as we can," Buddy said. "We are a team. We want to do what's best of each other. We won't do any sabotaging or anything like that. There'll be friendly rubbing and some ribbings but we'll both give each other a big hug at the end of the race and say well done."

Lina, who went by Lina Glad before marrying Buddy, finished sixth at last year's ONAC as a rookie. This weekend's race is the first of the season for her.

Buddy enters today's final heat of the ONAC with a 44-second lead over Salcha's Jason Dunlap, who's in second. Lina is 2:02 behind Buddy.

Mushers are scheduled to go 28.08 miles in the final heat today, which gets underway at 1 p.m.

When it comes to deciding who gets to race with which dogs, the decision is left up to Buddy.

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“What we do, when we come to a race, we want to bring a team that’s going to win it,” Buddy said. ‘We’re going to build a team that’s going to win it. I’ve got the experience here, so I get that team. These are the dogs I’ve been working my whole life with, that’s the team I bring.

“Lina’s bringing a team of —they’re not leftover dogs — but a real quality team. She’s starting to get the experience needed that’s she going to be able to take the main team here in a couple of years,” Buddy added.

Buddy has won the ONAC three times. Along with last year, Buddy also claimed the title in 2007 and 2003.

“He is really good,” Lina said. “He’s done this so much longer than me. And he trains them a lot more than I do.”

The dogs on each team do change from race to race.

“The dogs on my team are just as much his dogs,” Lina said.

“This race, I run these dogs. In the next race, he will be running some of these dogs and I’ll be running some of them.”

The Streeppers came to Fairbanks with two dog teams loaded onto one truck.

The Streeppers’ two daughters, Clara (3) and Alva (5) are also on the trip from Fort Nelson.



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“It’s challenging. We have a lot of dogs on one truck here,” Buddy said. “It’s a big commitment to bring one team to the line and we’re bringing two. It’s a lot of work. I have a lot of family at home that helps us out.”

One member of the family is in Fairbanks. Lina’s sister Anna flew to Fort Nelson from England on Monday before driving with the Streepers to Fairbanks.

It’s the first time Anna has watched Lina race in North America. Anna used to help Lina when she was racing in Sweden.

The Streepers first met when Lina, originally from Sweden, came to Canada to work for Buddy’s dad Terry 10 years ago.

“She loves it. She loves the dogs as much as I do,” Buddy said. “It’s great for our relationship. That’s what brought us together. That’s what established our love for each other. It’s not just our commitment to each other but to the animals. We have a common hobby and interest. I think that’s important for any relationship.”

Contact sports reporter Tim O’Donnell at 459-7583. Follow him on Twitter: @FDNMSportsGuy.



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