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## **NASCAR meets the Arctic: KTUU-TV to air Iron Dog special on NBC Sports Network**

ANCHORAGE, AK– For the first time ever, the Iron Dog Snowmobile Race will be featured in a one-hour documentary for a national audience, airing on NBC Sports Network in late March. The Iron Dog, billed as the “world’s longest, toughest snowmobile race,” is a 2,000 mile sprint across an ice-locked Alaska wilderness, blending man and machine in an extreme test of endurance, skill and luck.

KTUU-TV’s Iron Dog documentary is scheduled to air March 31, 2015. Emmy Award-winning sports producer Peter Henning will lead production of the project in partnership with KTUU’s Brad Hillwig. Henning’s career in television has spanned extreme sports coverage, including documentaries produced on the Iditarod, Eco-Challenge and most notably, the Emmy Award-winning Iron Man Triathlon in Kona, Hawaii, for which Henning served as Executive Producer for the past 15 years. Hillwig, a former award-winning photojournalist at KTUU and current Marketing Director, will work with Henning and collaborate with the Channel 2 Sports team and KTUU’s Syntax Productions to produce the documentary. Hillwig has won numerous awards for producing KTUU promotions and in 2014 he was recognized with a Northwest Regional Emmy Award.

“The Iron Dog is one of the world’s most extreme challenges, and it is a great Alaska story,” says Henning. “Our documentary will provide a national audience with a glimpse into a uniquely Alaskan event and the racers who take on this challenge of endurance and perseverance.” The race is scheduled to air adjacent to primetime programming on the East Coast at 11 p.m., and in primetime on the West Coast at 8 p.m. Pacific Time.

The 2015 Iron Dog race will begin with a ceremonial start on Anchorage’s iconic 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue on February 21st, in recognition of the city’s celebration of its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The timed race will officially begin the following day in Big Lake, AK as riders launch onto the historic Iditarod Trail for a 1,200 mile ride to Nome. After a brief layover in Nome, the trail turns to the frozen Yukon River for a grueling 800-mile leg to the finish line in Fairbanks. Racers compete in teams of two and often reach speeds of 90-100 miles per hour. Teams must navigate a harsh terrain, battle Alaska’s sub-zero arctic conditions and maintain the mechanical integrity of their machines.

“It is a race to the finish line, and anything can and does happen,” said race director Kevin Kastner who expects nearly 40 teams to enter the Pro Class division and compete for prize money. Another 10 or so teams will race as trail riders, riding solely for the challenge of completing the world’s toughest snowmobile race. Race rules require participants to ride through remote and road-less areas with a partner for safety.

Racer Scott Davis, a record seven-time Iron Dog winner, has been participating since the race's inception thirty-one years ago. Davis says the 2015 documentary will give a national audience a keen look at "a true test of perseverance."

"There is no race on earth where an individual relents to the mercy of a machine, a partner and the harsh arctic environment, an experience the masses will never [undertake]," Davis said.

In addition to the national documentary, KTUU's Channel 2 News and Sports teams will provide comprehensive coverage of the race. "Viewers in Alaska and around the world will be able to watch this iconic race as it unfolds, with live and taped coverage," said Tracy Sabo, Channel 2's News Director. "From the live ceremonial start in Anchorage to daily reports from the trail and live coverage of the finish in Fairbanks, KTUU-TV and KTUU.com will offer complete coverage of the 2015 Iron Dog race," says Sabo. The seven-day event will be covered within Channel 2 News broadcasts, which are carried in urban and rural Alaska via satellite uplinks, and offered on KTUU.com for a worldwide audience.

"Our abiding commitment is to tell Alaska's story, and we will continue to do that through coverage of Alaska's toughest races as they cross cities, rural villages and the most remote trails in the state," Sabo said. "Every year, we push forward new efforts in our quest for coverage, and adding the national documentary on NBC cable in 2015 seemed like a perfect new partnership to advance our coverage efforts."

For Henning, his latest trip to Alaska follows decades of unique sports production in the 49<sup>th</sup> state and spans numerous networks, including coverage of the Iditarod for ABC, CBS and ESPN for nearly two decades.

"We are lucky to be working with a seasoned pro like Peter Henning and a partner like NBC cable sports," said Andy MacLeod, President and General Manager of KTUU-TV. "The combination of a challenging and unparalleled 2015 race pitting top competitors and a strong, experienced TV production team will undoubtedly make for another great Alaskan story and memorable documentary."

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**About KTUU-TV**

KTUU-TV's early beginnings date back to 1953. Over the ensuing six decades, the station has built a reputation of excellence as Alaska's most watched news source, producing more than 22-hours of news and sports content each week on television. Online, KTUU.com has become a digital news leader, and Channel 2's mobile News and Weather applications are on the leading edge of mobile journalism in Alaska. Nielsen Media research shows that Channel 2 News products reach more than 89-percent of the adults who watch local news in a week, and more than 85-percent of those viewers watch Channel 2 News exclusively. That strong reach and brand loyalty are augmented by added distribution to the state's capital and more than 244 rural communities throughout Alaska.