ForeWord Reviews

JUVENILE NONFICTION

Born to Pull
Bob Cary
Gail De Marcken, illustrator
Pfeifer-Hamilton
978-1-57025-146-7
(October 1998)

This book for elementary age children and up serves as a fascinating and fairly comprehensive introduction to dog sledding. Along with information on understanding and caring for the dogs—their breeds, food shelter and methods of communication—detailed advice on establishing a team of dogs is also included—training, preparing team positions, identifying the equipment and finally, racing particulars. Interspersed with the facts are true life stories about different mushers and their personal experiences. The stories are a combination of direct quotes and smooth, straightforward storytelling. The book's style of presentation is laid back and conversational making it easy and pleasurable for the facts to be assimilated. Short paragraphs on the different subjects each have their own heading. "Meat," "Foot Care," "Dominance" and "Moose Alert" are a few. They are loosely placed and broken up by numerous drawings. Most of the drawings in the book are realistic close-ups of the dogs as they sit, howl, play or work. It's as if the reader is being given a peek into an artist's full sketchbook. There's often very little breathing space on the page and hardly any uniformity. Despite the resulting cluttered look, the reader will be stimulated by the book's content.

While the facts give an overview of the sport, the stories help give the reader a sense of what it might feel like to actually own and run a team of dogs. It sounds exhilarating. This book would make a good first purchase for anyone interested in taking a look inside this demanding and invigorating sport.

Martha Topol