

Jamaican musher was one of the most popular

By **DAN DAVIDSON**
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DAWSON CITY – Oswald “Newton” Marshall got a hearty round of applause at last Saturday night’s mush-

ers’ banquet for his seventh-place finish in the Percy DeWolfe Memorial Mail Race.

The musher from Jamaica was undoubtedly the most unusual entry in this year’s race, and one of the most

popular.

24-year-old Marshall was in Dawson to run a race that would qualify him to enter the 2009 Yukon Quest.

He is part of the Jamaica Dogsled Team, an island tour enterprise which is part of the Chukka Caribbean Adventures group in Jamaica, which is owned by Danny Melville.

“He loves dogs and has a passion for Jamaica,” Marshall said of his boss.

Back home, the dogs pull people in a buggy on a tour of the island, not much different from how mushers here train on wheels when there’s no snow.

“We carry two persons and the musher,” Marshall said. “It’s really fun. Everybody that has tried it loves it and wants to do more.”

Melville’s ambition was to tie his touring operation into real dog mushing, so Marshall was dispatched to the Yukon last November to train under Hans Gatt.

An earlier press release describes his training regime as consisting of up to four 160-km runs a week.

“If it wasn’t for him (Hans) giving me those really good tips, I wouldn’t have finished as well at all,” Marshall said.

“I was really happy on the trail and really confident that I was doing something good. It was really fun.”

Marshall apparently had so much fun that all the other mushers voted him the Sportsmanship Award for this year.

“This is the coolest award because

it’s voted on by everyone by what they’ve seen on the trail,” said race marshal Mel Besharah.

“It’s the person they think is the best out there, the most fun out there, the most helpful. This year, the prize goes to the coolest guy out there: Newton.”

“My heart is pumping,” Marshall said as he took the microphone. “I want to say respect in all aspects to you guys out there. Thank you.”

In addition to being part of the tour group, the Jamaica Dogsled team is sponsored by singer/songwriter Jimmy Buffett’s Margaritaville organization, along with Sorel, Annamaet Petfoods and Alpine Aviation.

Another team member, Damian Robb, has also been competing this year, training in Minnesota and running races there and in Wisconsin.

Chukka owner Melville hopes that one day Buffett will write a song about the team.