



## Badgers Blitz Bayfield: Midwest Collegiate Cup Mt. Ashwabay Results

*UW-Madison Men claim first win in four years; St. Olaf Women extend lead;  
Nationals Qualifiers & Regional Champions determined*



*Above: UWM's Katie-Milligan Susong surges to an early lead in the Women's 12k Skate. Courtesy of David Zoll.*

BAYFIELD, WI: Saturday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, marked a bluebird day in the shadow of Mt. Ashwabay and a banner day for the University of Wisconsin-Madison in the MCSA's second contest of 2024. With Badgers Katie Milligan-Susong and Benjamin Martin at the head of both the Men's and Women's races, the UWM Men secured their first event win since the [2020 Birkebeiner](#), in a single-point tiebreaker the University of Minnesota-Duluth. While the Midwest Collegiate Cup standings held in the Women's Division, with St. Olaf College, winning the day and extending their lead over the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities and UWM, the UWM Men are now tied for third with the UMNTC Men.



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Besieged by warm temperatures in the preceding days, the Mt. Ashwabay race crew stood stalwart on the Chequamegon: By slashing the classic leg and reducing the 25k Skiathlon to a 12k Skate, they succeeded in preserving a dizzyingly-quick, technically-exacting deck for some 90 MCSA skiers across 15 teams. Dominated by a single, opening climb over the eponymous Alpine slope, the winding, icy course saw skiers maneuver for position on a series of fast flats and slippery corners – setting up close finishes in both Divisions, with the top three Men finishing within two seconds of one another, and the top five Women crossing the line less than twenty seconds apart.

In light of the 2024 Vasaloppet USA cancellation, another round of late-night voting saw the MCSA adjust its Regional Championships schedule and scoring system. Accordingly, the St. Olaf College Women and the University of Minnesota-Duluth Men are officially the 2024 MCSA Regional Champions, with Benjamin Bauer (UMD) taking the Men's individual title, and Amae Kam-Magruder (SOC) and Katie Milligan-Susong (UWM) jointly securing the Women's title. Full details of the scoring changes and season outlook are below.

### *Mt. Ashwabay Summit Breakdown*

In conventional snow-coverage years, the [Mt. Ashwabay Summit Skiathlon](#) pits skiers against one another in a continuous-pursuit race, with a 10k Classic leg preceding a 15k Skate leg. Given substantial deterioration of the classic tracks, race organizers opted to change the race to a single, 12k Skate lap. While the Skiathlon may be the Collegiate Cup's most idiosyncratic race – demanding mastery of both disciplines – Saturday's shortened race proved equally atypical for a circuit dominated by marathon-distance events, yielding unexpected results in



*Above: Nick Petersen (MTU, 2<sup>nd</sup> for the day) leads the opening kilometers of the Men's 12k Skate.*

*Below: The stream of skiers continues in the Men's Skate, with UMNTC's Ziggy Bjurlin front and center. Both photos courtesy of David Zoll.*





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both the Men's and Women's Divisions. True to tradition, an embarrassment of baked goods awaited our famished freestylers at the finish line, tempering this test of agility and adaptability with Mt. Ashwabab's celebrated hos-pie-tality.

In the **Women's 12k Skate**, **Katie Milligan-Susong** (UWM) followed her second-place finish in the [Women's Half-Noque Skate](#) with a win at Mt. Ashwabab, taking the day's top spot in 33:02. **Amae Kam-Magruder** (SOC), untouchable at the Women's Half-Noque Classic, finished second in 33:06; teammate **Lily Hubanks** – the 2023 USCSA National Champion – was third in her first MCSA appearance of 2024, finishing in 33:14.

In the **Men's 12k Skate**, another Badger led the way, with **Benjamin Martin** (UWM) securing his inaugural MCSA podium in 30:11. He is the first Men's Badger to win an MCSA race since Douglas Shield (45k Classic at the 2021 American Birkebeiner). **Nick Petersen** (MTU) and **Benjamin Bauer** (UMD; winner of the Half-Noque Skate) followed in second and third, respectively, both finishing in 30:12.

With five Oles in the top-ten, the **St. Olaf College Women** carried the morning, netting a commanding 177 points. As the Mathie-Halvorson System does not include a tiebreaking procedure, the **University of Minnesota-Twin Cities** and **University of Wisconsin-Madison** tied in Collegiate Cup standings, each with 122 points. Defaulting to the sixth skier to determine the day's podium and pie allocations, UMNTC took second (15-point tiebreaker A. Casper), and UWM took third (1-point tiebreaker M. Wenning). Note that

tiebreaker points are not included in Collegiate Cup standings.

However, the Saturday's most surprising results were undoubtedly the in the Men's Division, where the **University of Wisconsin-Madison Men** secured their first podium finish since the [2021 American Birkebeiner](#),<sup>1</sup> and their first win since the [2020 Birkebeiner](#),<sup>2</sup> with 128 points. The Badgers prevailed over the second-place **University of Minnesota-Duluth** by a single point tiebreaker (UWM's 6-point tiebreaker S. Fjellman, vs. UMD's 5-point tiebreaker E. Williams-Heim); UMD also scored 128 Collegiate Cup points. **St. Olaf College** was third for the day, with 108 points.

In Collegiate Cup standings, the **Women's Division** held steady, with **St. Olaf College**, 366 points, extending their lead over the **University of Minnesota-Twin Cities**, 297 points. The **University of Wisconsin-Madison** remains in third, with 248 points.

In the **Men's Division**, the **University of Minnesota-Duluth**, 306 points, managed to eke out some breathing room ahead of **St. Olaf College's** 285 points (the Bulldogs led the Oles by only one point after the Half-Noque). As the Oles grew their lead over the third-place **University of Minnesota-Twin Cities**, the Badgers' Bayfield blitz was sufficient to boost the **University of Wisconsin-Madison** onto the podium – UWM and UMNTC are tied, with 243 points each.

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<sup>1</sup> Racing as the Buckingham Badgers.

<sup>2</sup> Where fanatical devotee of this publication, Evan Wetzel, placed third *overall* in the 55k Classic.



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Team Scores: Women (Mt. Ashwabay)							
MCSA Rank:	Team:	Composite Score:					
1	SOC	177	Kam-Magruder (46)	Hubanks (43)	Rothe (34)	Personius (28)	Everest (26)
2	UMNTC	122	Jensen (32)	Krull (30)	Hilgendorf-Roost (24)	Reineke (20)	Anderson (16) <i>Casper (15)</i>
2	UWM	122	Milligan-Susong (50)	Meza (37)	Bennett (14)	Vandentop (11)	Licha (10) <i>Wenning (1)</i>
3	UMD	77	Ecker (40)	Suhr (13)	Hetchler (12)	Wolf (9)	Martin (3)
4	UWEC	27	Bussmann (18)	Johnson (6)	Williams (2)	Robertson (1)	
5	CC	10	MacLaury (5)	McGee (4)	Reusch (1)		
6	NC	1	Keffer (1)				
Team Scores: Men (Mt. Ashwabay)							
MCSA Rank:	Team:	Composite Score:					
1	UWM	128	Martin (50)	Long (30)	Koob (20)	Page (18)	Baker (10) <i>Fjellman (6)</i>
1	UMD	128	Bauer (43)	Schwinghammer (28)	Hanson (26)	Heidorn (22)	Collis (9) <i>Williams-Heim (5)</i>
2	SOC	108	Sumner (40)	Bosworth (24)	Dorsey (16)	Erdahl (15)	Stoufifis (13)
3	UMNTC	98	Preston (37)	Bjurlin (34)	Lidahl (14)	Anderson (12)	De Ruiter (1)
4	MTU	83	Petersen (46)	Miller (32)	Zoll (2)	Janowski (1)	Oldenburg (1)
5	NMU	4	Hart (4)				
6	CC	2	Tullio (1)	Roslanksy (1)			
6	NC	2	Fischer (1)	Eichinger (1)			
Total Teams: 15							
Total Skiers: 90							

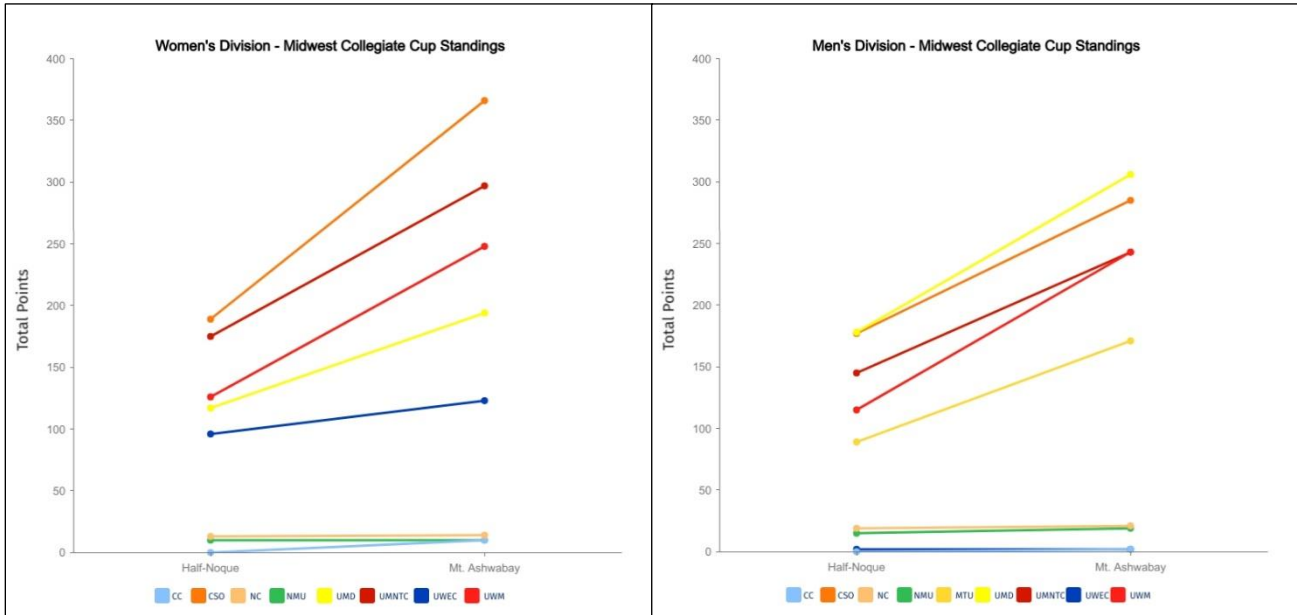
Above: Mt. Ashwabay Team Standings, 2/3/2024. Calculated using the Mathie-Halvorson Scoring System. Note: There are no tiebreaking procedures for Mathie-Halvorson scores.

<b>NOTE: Collegiate Cup Standings are congruent with MCSA Regional Team Standings at the conclusion of the Mt. Ashwabay Summit Race.</b>				
Collegiate Cup Scores: Women				
MCSA Rank:	Team:	Composite Score:	Half-Noque	Mt. Ashwabay
1	SOC	366	189	177
2	UMNTC	297	175	122
3	UWM	248	126	122
4	UMD	194	117	77
5	UWEC	123	96	27
6	NC	14	13	1
7	NMU	10	10	0
7	CC	10	0	10
Collegiate Cup Scores: Men				
MCSA Rank:	Team:	Composite Score:	Half-Noque	Mt. Ashwabay
1	UMD	306	178	128
2	SOC	285	177	108
3	UMNTC	243	145	98
3	UWM	243	115	128
4	MTU	171	89	82
5	NC	21	19	2
6	NMU	19	15	4
7	UWEC	2	2	0
7	CC	2	0	2
Total Teams: 17				
Total Skiers: 127				

Above: Midwest Collegiate Cup Standings, 2/3/2024. Calculated using the Mathie-Halvorson Scoring System. Note: Regional Championships Standings are congruent with the above standings.



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*Above: Midwest Collegiate Cup Standings, 2/3/2024. Calculated using the Mathie-Halvorson Scoring System. Note: Regional Championships Standings are congruent with the above standings.*



*Above: UMNTC skiers (from left) Lydia Anderson, Ainsley Casper, and Emma Reineke at the 2023 USCSA National Championships. Photo courtesy of the USCSA.*

### *2024 Regional Championships; USCSA National Championships Qualifiers*

With the Vasaloppet USA canceled due to low snow, and Birkie Uncertainty marring many a mind, the Midwest Nordic Assembly was forced to reconsider its schedule and scoring for the second time in as many weekends. With Assembly President Emma Reineke serving as an able arbitrator of the discussion, the MCSA's Teams arrived at the following unanimous conclusions on Friday evening:

First: Given the absence of alternative events (and viable venues), no races will be scheduled to replace the Vasaloppet USA on the Collegiate Cup and Regional Championships calendar.

Second: The 2024 MCSA Regional Championships (and USCSA National Championships qualifiers) will be determined by Midwest Collegiate Cup scores following the Mt. Ashwabay Summit Race.



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Third: Regional Championships individual results will be determined by a skiers' *single*-best race points, with ties broken by their second-best points.

Accordingly, the **University of Minnesota-Duluth Men** – Champions in [2023](#) – and the **College of St. Olaf Women** – Champions in [2022](#) and 2023 – are the 2024 MCSA Regional Champions.

In the **Men's Division**, St. Olaf College is runner-up; the University of Wisconsin-Madison (Regional Champions in [2020](#)) and University of Minnesota-Twin Cities tie for third.

In the **Women's Division**, the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities finishes Regionals in second; the University of Wisconsin-Madison (also Regional Champions in 2021) finishes third.

In the **Men's Individual Standings**, **Benjamin Bauer** (UMD) – second in the 2023 Regionals Pursuit – is the 2024 Champion, with 50 points from his Half-Noque Skate victory (and 43 points at Mt. Ashwabay); **Wes Sumner** (SOC: 50 Half-Noque Classic points, 40 Mt. Ashwabay points) takes second; **Benjamin Martin** (UWM: 50 Mt. Ashwabay points, 20 Half-Noque points) takes third; **Hayden Zoll** (MTU: 46 Half-Noque points, 2 Mt. Ashwabay points) takes fourth; and **Nick Petersen** (MTU: 46 Mt. Ashwabay points) take fifth.

In the **Women's Individual Standings**, **Amae Kam-Magruder** (SOC: 50 Half-Noque Classic points, 46 Mt. Ashwabay points) and **Katie Milligan-Susong** (UWM: 50 Mt. Ashwabay points, 46 Half-Noque Skate points) tie for the 2024 title; **Hadley Jensen** (UMNTC: 50 Half-Noque Skate points, 32 Mt. Ashwabay points) takes second; **Eleanor Bennett** (UWM: 44 Half-Noque Classic points) takes third; **Kaia Hilgendorf-Roost** (UMNTC: 43 Half-Noque Skate points, 24 Mt. Ashwabay points) takes fourth; **Lily Hubanks** (SOC: 43 Mt. Ashwabay points) takes fifth.



*Above: St. Olaf College skiers pose with their pies at Mt. Ashwabay. Photo courtesy of Tor Hanson.*

Full Regional Championships Individual Standings are available for download [here](#).

[As in 2023](#), the top five Men's and Women's teams from the Regional Championships have qualified to represent the Midwest at the USCSA National Championships, which will [return to Lake Placid, NY](#).

In the Women's Division, the following teams have qualified for Nationals: SOC (1st), UMNTC (2nd), UWM (3rd), UMD (4th), UWEC (5th).

In the Men's Division, the following teams have qualified for Nationals: UMD (1st), SOC (2nd), UMNTC (3rd), UWM (3rd), MTU (4th).



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### *From the Athletes*

With a short course, treacherous corners and perilously-narrow trails, our MCSA skiers applied last week's Marquette Mantra to Saturday's 12k Skate – get out front, and get out fast! Beginning with an essentially-unbroken, 300-foot climb for the opening three kilometers of the race, followed by a cascading series of downhills and flats to and around the base of Mt. Ashwabab, this course rewarded early attacks – and skiers who could stay on their feet. UMD's Aubrie Ecker (4<sup>th</sup> place) wrote that “conditions were zooming,” and with substantial descents, she actually “no-pole skated the majority of the race.” Ecker noted that the short distance prevented the pack breakups typical of longer events, and kept positions closely-contested throughout the race.

Men's winner Benjamin Martin (UWM) described a “skinny start with a lot of people.” This necessitated a hard double-pole off the line to “get good positioning” before the first significant pitch (roughly, the 1-kilometer mark), where a cluster of five broke from the main body of the race. Part of this lead pack, MTU's Nick Petersen (2<sup>nd</sup> place) described the group “mak[ing] moves the whole race to try and break away,” creating a “super exciting race dynamic” and a “really fun” day.

Benjamin Bauer (UMD, 3<sup>rd</sup> place) agreed that the race was narrowly decided on a “rock hard and rocket fast” deck, with a spill for himself and Petersen on the “first major downhill corner” adding to the drama at the front of the Men's Division. Bauer conceded that, “looking back, [he] led a bit more than [he] should have” – including through a brief course deviation in the final kilometer, quickly remedied by a well-placed volunteer – and that he “started a surge a bit early,” but was pleased to “hang on for third,” and a Regional Champion Title. (Bauer clarified that at least the top fifteen Men,



*Above: UWM's Benjamin Martin leads Nick Petersen (MTU) and Benjamin Bauer (UMD) in the final meters before the finish line. Below: Carleton College's Olliver Tullio. Both photos courtesy of David Zoll.*





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*Above: Bulldogs Shelby Suhr and Mikaela Hetchler approach the finish. Photo courtesy of David Zoll.*



*Above: UMNTC's Nelson Han hoists the Peter de Ruiter Award, bitterly-won after he suffered, but finished with, a binding broken on an icy Mt. Ashwabay descent.*

*Below: The UWM, SOC, and UMNTC scoring Women at the finish line. Photo courtesy of Katie Milligan-Susong.*



including Petersen and Martin, made an identical final-kilometer course error, and that there was likely “no change” in the results due to the detour.)

As for Martin – who had briefly separated from Bauer and Petersen during their downhill crash, before the two caught him to “ski together until the finish, trading places and making small moves” – he launched a final sprint with only a few meters of racing to go, seeing a slight widening in the trail and “just tak[ing] the opportunity to go as hard as [he] could.” Martin ultimately held off Bauer and Petersen to triumph by less than one second.

For fellow Badger Katie Milligan-Susong (1<sup>st</sup> place), the day was also shaped by a strong start and slick conditions. With the trail “honestly icier than [she] expected,” Milligan-Susong switched to a pair of colder skiers she had prepped “last minute” – although her performance in 15-20k races throughout the season gave her a “confidence boost” heading into the shortened course. Expecting Oles Lily Hubanks (3<sup>rd</sup> place) and Amae Kam-Magruder (2<sup>nd</sup> place) “to get to the front quick and break away,” Milligan-Susong “went out hard so [she] could control the pace” in the opening kilometers, before tucking in and telling herself “to stay with the front Women over the hill.”

After a fall and rapid recovery from Hubanks, Milligan-Susong and Kam-Magruder held a small but shrinking lead with four kilometers to go. “I didn’t want to have a race for 3<sup>rd</sup> place [between herself and Kam-Magruder] on our hands,” Milligan-Susong wrote, “So I stepped around Amae to see if I could hold her off.” Indeed, she could – taking a win over the SOC duo by four seconds.

Hubanks – freshly returned from a J-Term abroad in Italy – described her strategy as skating “smoothly and tactfully” after “start[ing] off strong so [she] could ski





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in the front pack.” “Although the snow was icy and it was a bit hard to get an edge in some places,” Hubanks reported that “it was amazing the race directors were able to pull off a race on natural snow considering the conditions throughout the rest of the state.” UMNTC’s Emma Reineke (13<sup>th</sup> place) concurred, writing that, “regardless of conditions” and some unfortunate, equipment-crunching crashes, “the energy was high at awards, especially with every racer getting a piece of pie.” Even with challenging warmth and consternation-inducing cancellations, “this season has shown the commitment and excitement MCSA skiers have towards our sport – relentlessly having a good time.”

### *Looking Ahead*

With the Vasaloppet USA removed from the 2024 schedule, and the Minneapolis World Cup tenaciously clinging to the penultimate weekend of February, the Midwest Collegiate Cup will conclude with the American Birkebeiner on Saturday, February 24<sup>th</sup>, pending confirmation by the race organizers.

Noting that USCSA athletes are students first, and in light of the significant academic, travel, and condition uncertainties posed by a multi-day Birkie, the Midwest Nordic Assembly agreed that the American Birkebeiner will *not* be scored if contingency plans divide single disciplines over several weekdays. If both the 50k Skate and 53k Classic take place on Saturday the 24<sup>th</sup>, the races will be scored; if the 50k Skate takes place entirely on Saturday the 24<sup>th</sup> and the 53k Classic takes place entirely on Sunday the 25<sup>th</sup>, or vice versa, the races will be scored; if each discipline is broken up over multiple days, they will not be scored, and the Midwest Collegiate Cup will be ruled concluded as of the Mt. Ashwabay Summit Race.

Irrespective of the Collegiate Cup outcome, MCSA skiers will compete at the [2024 USCSA National Championships](#) in Lake Placid, NY, March 4<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>. Bulletins addressing the remainder of the MCSA Nordic season will be issued in the coming weeks.

In the meantime, have heart, have hope, and hail Hekki Lunta: Our skiers will continue “relentlessly having a good time”; whether in Minneapolis, on Main Street, or at Mt. Van Hovenberg, we hope you’ll join us.

**The Midwest Collegiate Cup will race its final stage on Saturday, February 24<sup>th</sup>, at the American Birkebeiner in Hayward, WI.**

**Awards will be presented on the Main Street Podium at 3:00pm.**

**Full MCSA Nordic results from Mt. Ashwabay are available [here](#).**



*Above: The Women’s Midwest Collegiate Cup podium, 2023. Photo courtesy of the MCSA.*



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*USCSA is the sports federation for collegiate team ski and snowboard competition in America. The organization believes that student-athletes of all levels and abilities should have access to quality and exciting venues of competition. Our athletes agree that our team orientation fosters a collaborative approach across their collegiate athletic and academic careers, and often this mentality proves indispensable in their adult lives and careers. USCSA includes over 175 institutions from coast to coast, fielding over 5,000 female and male alpine, freestyle, Nordic, and snowboarding athletes who participate in more than 300 events annually.*

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*For more information or to schedule an interview, please visit <https://www.uscsa.org>.*