

MCSA Nordic: 2024 USCSA National Championships

*St. Olaf Women win third consecutive National Title;
University of Wisconsin-Madison Women runners-up;
MCSA strong in largest field to date*



*Above, from top: Start of the Women's Mass-Start 15k Classic.
UMD's Ben Bauer finishes 5th place in the Men's Mass-Start 15k Classic.
Photos courtesy of John DiGiacomo.*

LAKE PLACID, NY: Rising from the weathered faces of the Adirondack Mountains, Mt. Van Hoevenberg welcomed some 140 Nordic skiers from across North America to the 45th annual United States Collegiate Ski & Snowboard Association National Championships, held March 4th – 9th. With a further total of some 600 wintersports athletes competing across Alpine Skiing and Snowboard disciplines, the 2024 National Championships were the USCSA's largest on record – and the Nordic field, too, was the largest to date.

Four MCSA institutions – St. Olaf College, the University of Minnesota-Duluth, the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison – fielded Men's and Women's Nordic teams this year, with the Bulldogs competing in their first-ever National Championships, and the Badger Women fielding their first full-scoring (three-member) National Championship team. From

a dense forest of skilled competitors, our MCSA skiers hacked a path to their most accomplished Nationals

showing yet. Twelve Midwestern skiers finished in the overall top-twenty, and no fewer than ten finished as All-Americans each day. At the team level, the St. Olaf Women defended their [third](#)



Celebrating 5 Years of MCSA Nordic

[consecutive National Championship title](#), while the University of Wisconsin-Madison Women made history as the first Midwestern team on record to join the Oles on the overall podium, finishing second for the week. Trampled by their determined ski-strides, the perception that MCSA Nordic is a provincial oddity within the USCSA lies buried in the mud and manmade snow somewhere on the slopes of Mt. Van Hoevenberg. A full exploration of the week's results – including athlete commentary and photos – continues below.

March 5th: 7.5k Skate Breakdown

In a season largely defined by training – and racing – on manmade snow, our MCSA athletes may well have felt some degree of familiarity on the icy 5-kilometer loop that draped itself across the steep slopes of Mt. Van Hoevenberg this week. However, much of Tuesday's field was doubtlessly pushed beyond its comfort zone by the relentless climbs and treacherous downhill that place Van Hoevenberg among the most challenging courses in the USCSA. Deviating slightly from its homologated path, the 7.5k course consisted of two laps, together totaling some 240m of climbing, with death-defying descents and tightly-coiled corners sending many a skier skittering across the night-frozen snow surface.



Above: Lily Hubanks (SOC) on her way to the 7.5k Skate National title. Photo courtesy of the USCSA.

Undeterred, MCSA Nordic delivered solid performances in the first event of the 2024 National Championships. Aidan Ripp (Paul Smith's College), the event National Champion in 2023 and 2022, led the **Men's 7.5k Interval Start Skate** in a commanding 20:29.4. Colorado Mesa University's Iver Skaarseth followed nearly one minute behind, in 21:13.7; Conner Roberts (Clarkson University) took third in 21:54.0. Despite being absent from the podium, four Midwestern skiers made All-American, including [Half-Noquemanon winners Benjamin Bauer](#) (UMD: 7th place, Second Team All-American) and **Wes Sumner** (SOC: 9th place, Second Team All-American); [Mt. Ashwabay winner Ben Martin](#) (UWM: 10th place, Second Team All-American); and **Tait Myers** (SOC: 12th place, Second Team All-American). Additional notable finishes included Connor Preston (UMNTC: 18th place). In team results, the St. Olaf Men were 4th for the day, with 42 points. Despite skiing with a ghost scorer (awarded last-place points) for the week, the University of Minnesota-Duluth took 8th place, with 83 points; the University of Wisconsin-Madison was 9th, with 85 points; the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities was 10th, with 90 points.

Making a confident debut to their remarkable week ahead, results were undeniably stronger for MCSA Nordic in the **Women's 7.5k Interval Start Skate**. With characteristic focus, **Lily Hubanks** (SOC) – the defending Individual National Champion – secured yet one more National title in 23:58.8. Dolcie Tanguay (Paul Smith's College) was second in 24:07.4; Hubanks' fellow Ole, **Amaeli Kam-Magruder** (SOC), landed her first (but not final!) USCSA National podium, taking third in 24:31.6. Other top-fifteen finishes for MCSA Nordic included **Katie Milligan-Susong**



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(UWM: 6th place, Second Team All-American), **Hadley Jensen** (UMNTC: 7th place, Second Team All-American), **Ava Rothe** (SOC: 11th place, Second Team All-American), **Kaia-Hilgendorf Roost** (UMNTC: 13th place, Second Team All-American), and **Julia Everest** (SOC: 14th place, Second Team All-American). Collectively, seven of fifteen All-American spots went to MCSA Women on Tuesday. Additional notable performances included Badgers Eleanor Bennett (17th place) and Sylvia Meza (19th place).



Above: UMNTC's Peter de Ruiter was one of many skiers to suffer an unfortunate, but survivable, fall during the 7.5k Skate. Photo courtesy of Kaia Hilgendorf-Roost.

Led by Hubanks and Kam-Magruder, the St. Olaf Women retained their team title in the 7.5k Individual Start, taking first place with 15 total points. The University of Wisconsin-Madison was 4th for the day, with 42 points; the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities followed a mere point behind, in 5th place with 43 points. As with their Men's Team, the University of Minnesota-Duluth skied the week with a ghost scorer, taking 14th place with 133 total points.

For Connor Preston, the “very technically challenging course” presented both an opportunity – leveraging his strengths as a climber – and a degree of wariness on the downhills, which “require[d] excellent balance and quick feet.” The opening race at Mt. Van Hoevenberg tasked skiers with striking an appropriate middle ground between caution and confidence, with Preston noting that, although he “was careful on the downhills” at first, “gain[ing] confidence on the second lap [...] might have contributed to [his] fall on the last slope.

Lily Hubanks – no stranger to the volatility of the course or conditions at Mt. Van Hoevenberg – stated she felt more trepidation about the field than the trail. “I was really excited, but also a little nervous going into the races because I wasn’t sure what I was going to be capable of this year compared to last year.” With a starting list packed with ambitious women – including four first-time Nationals skiers for the Oles, their largest and deepest Nationals bench yet – Hubanks’ goal “was to



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finish on the podium and to give the race everything [she] had.” She credited pushing herself “to ski the downhill tactically and ski the uphill with strength” with her victory on the day and, beyond racing, was thrilled by the opportunity to introduce a young team of Ole Women to the USCSA National Championships experience and “see what our team was capable of!”

March 6th: Classic Sprint Breakdown

If Tuesday had tested skiers’ ability to navigate ice, Wednesday dragged them through the mist and slush of a rain-soaked 1.5k Classic Sprint. While the low mist which initially muddled the course’s contours lifted shortly after Qualifying, a persistent – and, at times, insistent – drizzle did its best to drown the dedicated efforts of the Mt. Van Hoevenberg volunteers, who could do little to abate the formation of perilous puddles and disintegration of striding tracks.



Above: Gophers, an Ole, and a Badger tackle the Women’s Sprint Quarterfinals. Photo courtesy of Lydia Anderson.

Below: All-Americans and medalists of the Women’s Classic Sprints.



The rain, however, did little to dampen performances in the **Women’s Classic Sprint**, where 12 MCSA Women – four Oles, four Gophers, all three Badgers, and one Bulldog – clearing Qualifying. With Dolcie Tanguay (Paul Smith’s College) and Anne Miller (University of Wyoming) taking first and second, **Katie Milligan-Susong** (UWM) took third place and First Team All-American, claiming her long-awaited Nationals podium spot. St. Olaf College’s **Amaeli Kam-Magruder** (4th place, First Team All-American) and **Lily Hubanks** (5th place, First Team All-American) rounded out the Women’s A Final, while **Sylvia Meza** (UWM: 10th place overall, Second Team All-American), **Eleanor Bennett** (UWM: 11th place overall, Second Team All-American), and **Hadley Jensen** (UMNTC: 12th place overall, Second Team All-American) competed in the B Final. Other notable finishes included **Julia Everest** (SOC: 13th place overall, Second Team All-American), **Hjelle Personius** (SOC: 15th place overall, Second Team All-American), and Kaia Hilgendorf-Roost (UMNTC: 18th place overall).



Celebrating 5 Years of MCSA Nordic

In team results, it was another win for the St. Olaf Women, with Hubanks, Kam-Magruder, and Everest once again scoring the Oles' points (22, to be precise). Perhaps equally notable, however, was the University of Wisconsin-Madison's second-place finish – with the Badgers' 24 points netting their first-ever single-day podium at the USCSA National Championships.



In the **Men's Classic Sprint**, Aidan Ripp (Paul Smith's College) won his second victory in as many days after leading Qualifying by a full ten seconds; he was followed by Iver Skaarseth (Colorado Mesa University) and Conner Roberts (Clarkson University) in second and third. Our Men's MCSA skiers appeared unfortunately flummoxed by the day's conditions. After a



thrilling boot-throw into third place in his Semifinal, **Benjamin Bauer** (UMD) finished 7th overall and won the Men's B Final (making Second Team All-American). Bauer was the only MCSA Nordic skier to make either of the Men's Finals; he did so after opting to double-pole the entirety of Wednesday's races – frequently leading to the base of the course's decisive "Grindhouse" A Climb, fading to the back of the pack by its summit, and then

Above, from top: According to race officials, UMD's Ben Bauer (background) outthrew Paul Smith's Griffin Smith to advance to the B Finals.

Below: Kick testing (with mixed results) for the UMNTC Men. Photos courtesy of the USCSA.

regaining his position in the remaining 300m. **Wes Sumner** (SOC: 15th place, Second Team All-American) was eliminated in the

Quarterfinals, as was Ben Martin (UWM: 16th place), who was one of many skiers to suffer a frustrating fall.



Celebrating 5 Years of MCSA Nordic

In Team Results, the St. Olaf Men were 7th with a tiebroken 78 points, ahead of the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 8th (also with 78 points), the University of Minnesota-Duluth in 9th, and the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities in 10th.

Fresh off her triumphant arrival on a Nationals podium, Katie Milligan-Susong described her course strategy: With deteriorating tracks and inconsequential opening rollers, she was content to hang back in the second or third starting lanes, and take the outside of the race's opening, lefthand, uphill corner. Her outside position on Corner 1 would leave her *inside* of Corner 2, and off the steepest part of the Corner 1 climb – allowing her to power to the head of the pack in time for the, in her opinion, decisive A Climb. Although she conserved her energy on the A Climb through her Quarter- and Semifinals – allowing other racers to narrow the gap, before re-opening her lead on the final downhill and double-pole, she admitted that she was out of energy in final meters of the Final – fading significantly, but clinging valiantly to her bronze for the day.

For Benjamin Bauer, Wednesday's Sprint strategy may have been the precise opposite from Milligan-Susong: Without klister, he was forced to do damage control on the A Climb, while deciding each of his races in the opening and closing flats with a devastatingly-powerful double-pole. Despite training on the climbs of Duluth, Bauer found that Mt. Van Hoevenberg nevertheless “managed to surpass any course [he'd] skied before. It was an awesome course to truly test a skier's abilities.”

Elaborating on his technique decision, Bauer wrote: “In the morning our four UMD skiers got to the course early and I was out testing a few different klisters. However, the more I skied up Grindhouse, the more convinced I became that, given the fast snow but random slushy spots, I would be better suited to double-pole the course. I had kick with what I tried, but not bomb-proof without dragging a bit. By scraping off all kick I was guaranteed fast skis on the downhill, plus no chance of my kick catching and leading to a fall” – the precise scenario which befell many a skier. Bauer continued: “Overall, I'm confident I made the right decision for me. I got a few comments about double-poling the entire [A Climb] and all I can say is that Midwest marathons and a lot of specific strength training sure came in handy on Wednesday.”



Above: Unconventional warmups for the UWM Women. Photo courtesy of the USCSA.



Celebrating 5 Years of MCSA Nordic



*Above: Wes Sumner (SOC) navigates the 15k Mass-Start Classic course.
Photo courtesy of John DiGiacomo.*

March 8th: 15k Classic Breakdown

After a Wednesday evening of tacos and team bonding, and a Thursday divided amongst such diverse activities as hiking, a s'more social hosted by Lake Placid's High Peaks Cyclery, and (presumably) mental preparation for the coming meatgrinder, our MCSA Nordic athletes returned to Mt. Van Hoevenberg for the final individual event of the week: The infamous 15k Mass-Start Classic. With three 5-kilometer loops, collectively punishing athletes with over 500m of total climbing, the challenge of the National

Championships' longest event was compounded by temperatures decidedly inconducive to striding. Although the day began in the frosty aftermath of an overnight freeze, clear skies allowed the sun to pummel the course, with the thermometer rising to nearly 50F and the heroic 200,000 pounds of surface snow trucked in on Thursday night falling to pieces by the second lap of the day.

In the **Men's 15k Mass-Start Classic**, Aidan Ripp (Paul Smith's College) completed a hatrick of untouchable performances, taking his third gold of the week and breaking the 40-minute mark in 39:21.8. Kaj Taylor (University of Wyoming) was a lonely second place, finishing some 96 seconds behind Ripp in 40:58.1, and 30 seconds ahead of third-place finisher Conner Roberts (Clarkson University), who crossed the line in 41:28.7. **Benjamin Bauer** (UMD: 5th Place) secured the Bulldogs' first First Team All-American finish on record; **Ben Martin** (UWM: 10th place), **Wes Sumner** (SOC: 11th place), and **Alex Heidorn** (UMD: 15th place) were all Second Team All-Americans, with Heidorn outthrowing Cornell University's Zachary Johnson by 0.03 seconds. Tait Myers (SOC) was 18th for the day.

In Team Results, the St. Olaf Men were 5th for the day, with 53 points; the University of Minnesota-Duluth took 7th, with 66 points. The University of Wisconsin-Madison followed in 8th place, with 79 points; the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities trailed in 11th, with 115 points.



Celebrating 5 Years of MCSA Nordic

In the **Women's 15k Mass-Start Classic**, a remarkable first in the history of the reformed MCSA: A Midwestern podium sweep. While a shock to Friday's skiers and spectators, readers of this bulletin could have been all but assured that the day's Women's title would go to **Amaeli Kam-Magruder** (SOC) after her near-incomprehensible performance in the Half-Noquemanon Classic – and Kam-Magruder delivered. The freshman phenom earned her first National Championship title in 52:04.7, leading teammate **Lily Hubanks** (SOC), who crossed the line in 53:53.6, by nearly two minutes. In third was **Katie Milligan-Susong** (UWM), finishing in



Above: The Women's 15k Mass-Start Classic Podium (from left: Katie Milligan-Susong (UWM), Amae Kam-Magruder (SOC), and Lily Hubanks (SOC)) is all MCSA and all smiles! Photo courtesy of John DiGiacomo.

54:17. Other top-fifteen finishers included **Julia Everest** (SOC: 8th place, Second Team All-American), **Sylvia Meza** (UWM: 9th place, Second Team All-American), and **Eleanor Bennett** (UWM: 11th place, Second Team All-American). Additional notable performances included Hadley Jensen (UMNTC: 18th place) and Kaia Hilgendorf-Roost (UMNTC: 20th place).

With three familiar women in the top ten, St. Olaf College once again led the Women's Team Results, with 11 points. They were followed by the University of Wisconsin-Madison, whose three All-American finishers brought home second place for the day, with 23 points. The University of Minnesota-Twin Cities was 6th, with 55 points; the University of Minnesota-Duluth was 13th, with 120 points.

Asked about his race, Ben Martin wrote he was “amazed by the conditions the groomers were able to put together after a day of rain and skiing over standing water” – and surprised by the pace of the 15k Classic. “Going in, I was expecting it to start off slow and packed up before people started making moves. This was not the case, and it just started off roaring.” After the quick start, Martin “decided to just pace [himself] at an effort [he] knew [he] could be consistent with,” and pushed the entire race – maintaining solid striding technique, even on the relentless climbs at the beginning of each lap, which were undoubtedly “the hardest part” of the day. As a first-time Nationals attendee and a freshmen on the breakout Badger Men's team, Martin expressed excitement for the coming years. “I really enjoyed the level of competition and it really motivated me to train hard this next year because I want to be able to fight at the very front.”



Celebrating 5 Years of MCSA Nordic

For another freshman, this race certainly played out at the very front – although, at least by the race clock, any “fight” may have been over by the 5-kilometer mark. Amaeli Kam-Magruder wrote that she approached the day by “focusing on remembering to have fun and to not stress too much.” Although she noted that “longer classic races are easy for [her] to lose concentration and slip into a bit of a spiral during,” Kam-Magruder credited “the hype cheering from [her] team on the back loop and the great sunny weather” for getting her through. She was also quick to heap praise on St. Olaf Coaches Kevin Brochman and Tor Hanson for their “support and super speedy wax,” and thanked “Lily [Hubanks] for being the best Captain and role model ever this season.” “Being a National Champion is something I never could have dreamed of,” and it was “only made possible” through the camaraderie and energy of the St. Olaf team leadership.



Above: The St. Olaf Men and Coach Kevin Brochman at Saturday’s Uphill Trial. Photo courtesy of Kevin Brochman.

March 9th: Team Uphill Trial Breakdown

As wave-like clouds undulated over the Adirondacks, and bursts of cyclonic wind lashed the slopes of Mt. Van Hoevenberg, Saturday’s anxious anticipation turned first to confusion and, then, to resolute adaptation. While a Team Sprint, consisting of a 3-skiers-by-3-legs (of 1.5k each) relay, conventionally concludes the USCSA National Championships – and determines the winner of the prestigious Team Championship title – the event, recently plagued by precipitation (see the deluge of

snow in 2023) and literal plague (the 2020 Team Sprint was scheduled for March 14th of that year), has only been held twice since 2019. With rising concern over the gusting wind and multiple near-injuries during warmups, the Mt. Van Hoevenberg racing crew initially declared the Team Sprint cancelled entirely, before reconsidering in favor of a less-risky ‘Uphill Trial.’ Accordingly, skiers navigated a roughly 1-kilometer, entirely uphill course; starting individually at 30-second intervals, their times were aggregated with those of their designated relay team members to determine the day’s winning teams.

In the **Men’s Team Uphill Trial**, Paul Smith’s College (1) won the day with a cumulative time of 8:02; Western Colorado University (1) followed in second, with a time of 8:21, and Clarkson



Celebrating 5 Years of MCSA Nordic

University (1) took third, in 8:25. The St. Olaf (1) Men were 7th in 8:53; the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities (1) was 11th in 9:14, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison (1) was 12th in 9:20. A combined SOC-Cornell-Clarkson team was 14th in 9:42, and a combined UMNTC-UWM team was 17th in 10:21. Notable individual performances included **Ben Bauer** (UMD), who posted the second-fastest time of the day (2:38), **Tait Myers** (SOC), whose 2:52 was the 16th fastest time of the day, and **Ben Martin** (UWM), who tied for the 17th fastest time of the day in 2:53.

In the **Women's Team Uphill Trial**, the snap format change – without an accompanying adjustment of relay teams permitted – may have been responsible for a surprising upset. The Paul Smith's (1) Women were the day's leaders, with a total time of 10:40; they were only two seconds ahead of **St. Olaf College (1)**, recording their first second-place team finish in two National Championships with a time of 10:42. The **University of Wisconsin-Madison (1)** was third, in 11:02. St. Olaf College (2) took 5th, in 11:07; the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities (1) took 7th, in 11:41, while UMNTC (2) took 15th in 13:20, and a combined UMD-Clarkson team took 19th in 15:05. Notable individual performances included **Lily Hubanks** (SOC), second for the day in 3:25; **Katie Milligan Susong** (UWM), 4th-fastest of the day in 3:29; **Ava Rothe** (SOC), 5th-fastest in 3:31; **Amaeli Kam-Magruder** (SOC), 7th-fastest in 3:35; **Hadley Jensen** (UMNTC) and **Julia Everest** (SOC), tied for 14th-fastest in 3:42; Hjelle Personius (SOC), 16th in 3:43, and Sylvia Meza (UWM), 20th in 3:45.



Above: Gophers and Bulldogs at the conclusion of the Team Uphill Trial. Photo courtesy of Emma Reineke.

Tait Myers noted that “the conditions were not too bad for the Team Sprint,” and while “it was a little windy,” compared to “rollerskiing in Northfield all the time it was nothing.” Although Myers had planned to “start fast” in the relay, the course change – and shortening – mandated “going as hard as [he] could” for the entire race.

Hadley Jensen agreed that this was an all-out push – although changing course conditions presented an added challenge for



Saturday's Women's field. "The snow was pretty thick by the time the girls went, which made the climb harder on the legs." For Jensen, going hard also meant "maintain[ing] a quick tempo the whole time and not get[ting] bogged down" by the deepening skate deck.

Individual times are viewable [here](#).

Overall Results

With snow finally beginning to fall outside and the week's competitors gathering at the Lake Placid Convention Center, there were ample grounds for celebration for MCSA Nordic skiers. Eleven of our Midwestern athletes claimed overall positions in the top-twenty, six of whom finished in the top-ten.



Above: The Men's 7.5k Skate. Photo courtesy of the USCSA.

In the **Men's Overall Results**, Aidan Ripp (Paul Smith's College) – untouchable through four rounds

of racing – took home his second National Championship (having also won his first in Lake Placid, in 2022), with a perfect 450 points. Conner Roberts (Clarkson University) took second, with 415 points; Kaj Taylor (University of Wyoming) was third, with 397 points. Notable MCSA finishes included **Benjamin Bauer** (UMD: 6th place), **Wes Sumner** (SOC: 10th place), **Ben Martin** (UWM: 11th place), and Tait Myers (SOC: 17th place).

In team standings, Clarkson University surprised much of the field throughout the week, and took home a darkhorse National title with 68 points. Paul Smith's College took second place with 70 points – the closest gap in Nordic National Championship history. Defending Men's National Champions, Western Colorado University, took third, with 113 points. The St. Olaf College Men were 5th overall; the University of Wisconsin Madison, University of Minnesota-Duluth, and University of Minnesota-Twin Cities occupied 8th-10th places, respectively. Full Men's results are available [here](#).

In the **Women's Overall Results**, Dolcie Tanguay (Paul Smith's College) took home her first overall National Championship, with 430 total points. Tanguay was narrowly ahead of **Lily Hubanks** (SOC), who took second overall, with 425 total points. Teammate **Amaeli Kam-Magrunder** (SOC)



followed in third, also with 425 total points.¹ Additional top finishers for the week included **Katie Milligan-Susong** (UWM: 5th place), **Julia Everest** (SOC: 9th place), **Sylvia Meza** (UWM: 11th place), **Hadley Jensen** (UMNTC: 12th place), **Eleanor Bennett** (UWM: 13th place), and Kaia Hilgendorf-Roost (UMNTC: 17th place).

In team standings, having won every day excluding Saturday, the 2024 National Champions could be none other than the **St. Olaf College Women**, with 58 total points. As the National Champions in 2022 and 2023, this is the Oles' third consecutive National title. In another significant milestone for the MCSA, the **University of Wisconsin-Madison Women** were second overall in the Team National Championship standings – making them the first Midwestern team to join St. Olaf on the podium over thirty years, with 104 points. Paul Smith's College took third, with 117 points. The University of Minnesota-Twin Cities was 5th for the week; the University of Minnesota-Duluth took 13th. Full Women's results are available [here](#).

The St. Olaf College Women, in conjunction with their Freeski, Slalom, and Giant Slalom peers, were also the winners of the prestigious President's Award, which combines a school's Nordic and Alpine scores.

Remarking on her final Nationals appearance, Katie Milligan-Susong wrote that this year was "special." "It has been a personal project of mine to see the UW Madison Nationals program grow, so it is amazing to leave knowing the club's future is looking so strong." With fast, dedicated underclassmen waiting in the wings, the Milligan-Susong is confident the team will continue to develop – and is "so proud to see the Midwest (and a student-led program) so strongly represented" this year.

Asked about the Oles' consistent success, St. Olaf Assistant Coach Tor Hanson had nothing to say about wax testing, interval blocks, or the latest nutrition fads. Instead, he described an attitude which many of our Midwestern readers will find salient in this most befuddling and, at times, beleaguering year.

"The theme of this season has truly been the athletes' perseverance," Hanson wrote. "Whether it be rollerskiing in the heart of winter, driving hours to find snow, or staying positive (where our Women's Team excels) while races were doggedly fought for, our athletes persevered. The secret to our Nationals success is their inimitable love of Nordic." As a former Ole skier himself, Hanson found the most rewarding part of the week in Lake Placid to be watching as the black-and-orange suits "whipped by [him] out of the Mass-Start Classic [...] because the opportunity to race as a team should always be cherished."

¹ Per the USCSA Competition and Rules Manual, ties are broken by FIS Rule 3.1.



Celebrating 5 Years of MCSA Nordic

For Head Coach Kevin Brochman, it was that team racing that made the difference this year. With “a core group of women training regularly all fall,” young talents – developing one another – “lifted the Women’s Team with depth they hadn’t had in years.” Looking ahead, Brochman seemed to predict – if perhaps not conceding outright – more success for the Oles. “Next year’s team should have even more depth with the recruits. Their technique is very good and if they can make gains from now until September, they should be faster next year.”

The passion and collective improvement to which Coaches Hanson and Brochman spoke seems a fitting note on which to conclude this final dispatch of the 2024 season. While this outlet has consistently celebrated MCSA Nordic as an emergent force in the USCSA,² these proclamations were originally aspirational, and elevated the Midwest as an exemplar of student participation and governance – if not of competitive strength. Indeed, with the evident exception of St. Olaf College, there were serious doubts as to whether MCSA Nordic could – or would even aim to – assert itself as a meaningful player in nationwide USCSA competition. I will confess: This league was built on the protectionist assumption that exposing student-led clubs to varsity-level racing would be neither desirable nor beneficial, and that robust regional competition was – and would remain – the ultimate goal of MCSA Nordic.

I will not disclaim the guiding principle that this league was created to, and will continue to serve, broader, deeper, and more sustainable *Midwestern* intercollegiate skiing. Nor will I disavow the doctrine of [Nordic Particularism](#) which has, thus far, succeeded in advancing precisely that purpose. But I am pleased to declare that the burgeoning, and once only dimly-glimpsed, dreams of this league have become a tangible reality. No longer is the Midwest a vacant wound between the Appalachians and the Rockies – it is ruddy artery from which fresh lifeblood of the USCSA flows richly. Invigorated by [the earliest taste of national-level competition](#), and each year accelerated by new skiers, new teams, and new challenges at the regional level, we have not shrunk from faster racing, but built stronger clubs, harder training, and wider networks to prepare ourselves for it.

² See, among others:

“We are alive, we are strong, and we are eager to continue growing [...] tell your colleges, tell your competitors, tell your teammates: the MCSA will be back next season. We hope you’ll be there with us.” [2020 Regional Championships Coverage](#);

“This year was a defiant testament to the strength of Midwestern club collegiate skiing, and irrefutable proof that there is not only the desire, but the determination to make a league work in [the Midwest].” [2021 Great Bear Chase Coverage](#);

“As St. Olaf’s Coach Kevin Brochman remarked on this week’s races, there are some new teams, coaches, and faces that are really making it happen.’ While a big season lies behind us, it seems inevitable that even bigger things lie ahead.” [2022 USCSA National Championships Coverage](#);

“In conjunction with [...] the improvisational diligence of Midwestern volunteers, these results reflect an indisputable fact: a mere four years after its resurrection, MCSA Nordic is a growing center of gravity for the whole of the USCSA.” [2023 USCSA National Championships Coverage](#);

etc.



Celebrating 5 Years of MCSA Nordic



Above: The University of Minnesota-Duluth fielded its first teams at the 2024 USCSA National Championships. Photo courtesy of the USCSA.

With no fewer than ten All-American finishers in each day of racing, six Individual and seven Team single-day podiums, and two Individual and Team overall podiums, MCSA Nordic is a force on the racecourse with which seasoned teams must reckon; with MCSA Nordic volunteers helping orchestrate the National Championships for the second consecutive year, it is a source of hands and hearts on which the organization increasingly relies. As Emma Reineke, President of the Midwest Nordic Assembly summarized, although she most enjoyed watching the MCSA teams become “close friends throughout the week, cheering each other on getting dinners together, and hanging out after races,” it remains undeniable that “the MCSA is a truly formidable opponent in the USCSA, and [she is] sure we’ll be here to stay for many years to come!”

Important work remains. Many regional teams still lie beyond our orbit or knowledge; even for our established members, full and meaningful competition remains hindered by lack of funding, resources, and institutional support. These are the curable ills to which we, as MCSA Nordic, will dedicate ourselves in the coming

years, and in which we ask you, dear readers, for your continued assistance. You have helped us go far. We will ask you to propel us further.

But, as we conclude our Fifth Season, let East and West unfurl their Nordic maps across their weathered wax-benches, produce a dust-dulled pen, and – knowing full well what lies therein! – scrawl across our sprawling region the apocryphal warning: Here Be Dragons!



Celebrating 5 Years of MCSA Nordic

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 www.uscsa.org