

MCSA Midwest Collegiate Cup: Mt. Ashwabay Skiathlon Results

by Luke Dykowski

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MCSA Midwest Collegiate Cup: Mt. Ashwabay Summit Skiathlon

St. Olaf makes Cup debut; MTU Men take Cup lead

The Midwestern Collegiate Ski Association (MCSA) conducted its second race of the 2021-22 season this weekend, with a record-breaking field taking to the trails in snowy Bayfield, Wisconsin. Saturday's unique skiathlon format and tumultuous weather marked a sharp departure from the [Half-Noquemanon](#), with athletes braving blizzard-like conditions and a formidable race structure in the chase for the Midwest Collegiate Cup.



Top: The University of Minnesota – Twin Cities team celebrates with Mt. Ashwabay's famous pie awards. Photo courtesy of Lily Den Hartog.

Bottom: The MCSA Women start in the shadow of the Mt. Ashwabay Summit. Photo courtesy of Oliver Tullio.

While many Cup events score skate and classic disciplines separately, allowing skiers to compete in whichever technique best suits them, the Mt. Ashwabay Summit Skiathlon combines both disciplines into a single race. After beginning with approximately 10k of classic skiing, competitors switch equipment mid-race, and finish with roughly 15k of skating. This format therefore requires mastery of both techniques, an efficient transition, and considerable stamina, as both the classic and skate portions include grinding climbs to the eponymous Mt. Ashwabay Summit.

Saturday's conditions only added to the demanding nature of the race. With temperatures hovering around 7°F, driving snow, blustery winds, and a humidity approaching 90%, “cold and wet” were the adjectives of the day – readily attested to by fluctuating wax effectiveness on-course, and a parade of frozen eyelashes, frost-nipped noses, and icicled beards, eyebrows and ears at the finish line.

However, the weather was certainly no bar to an unprecedented MCSA turnout. Fresh off the heels of a landmark showing at the Half-Noque, eighty-seven athletes across eighteen teams (joined by ten skiers from the College of Saint Scholastica, not registered with the USCSA) competed in Saturday's blistering battle in Bayfield. Among them were league debutants Carleton College, Luther College, and the University of Notre Dame, as well as the College of St. Olaf – a longtime member of the USCSA making

its first appearance on the Midwest Collegiate Cup circuit.

New teams and skiers brought a new shape to the Cup chase. While the University of Minnesota - Twin Cities Women narrowly expanded their Cup lead, Michigan Technological University surged to the head of the Men's standings – pushing the University of Minnesota - Twin Cities Men out of the top spot for the first time in league history.¹ Meanwhile, St. Olaf lunged into the top five in both the Men's and Women's standings, as did the University of St. Thomas Women.

Mt. Ashwabay Skiathlon Breakdown

Leading the **Women's 25k Skiathlon** by nearly two minutes, **Erica Meyers** (CSO) made her dramatic Collegiate Cup debut with a finishing time of 1:38:56. She was followed by **Katie Susong** (UWM), whose 1:40:39 secured her first MCSA podium finish, and **Kaia Hilgendorf-Roost** (UMNTC), who finished in 1:44:37, and who was also third in the Half-Noque 24k Skate.

In the **Men's 25k Skiathlon**, the podium was even more similar to the Half-Noque 24k Skate. **Henry Campbell** (MTU) repeated his Superior Dome success with a commanding return to the top spot, crossing the line in 1:22:11. **Ethan Anderson** (UMD), second in Marquette, returned to Campbell's right on Saturday and finished in 1:26:22. He was closely followed by a fresh face on Cup circuit: **Brian Olson** (CSO), with a time of 1:26:56.

Turning to Mt. Ashwabay team standings, it was a beautiful afternoon in Bayfield for the **College of St. Olaf**. Led by Olson, the Oles won the day in the **Men's Division** with 141 points, and were third in the Women's Division with 112 points (despite fielding only three skiers). Close behind the Ole Men came **Michigan Technological University** (128 points) and the **University of Minnesota - Duluth** (100 points). In the **Women's Division**, the **University of Minnesota - Twin Cities** took home another win, scoring 129 points. As in Marquette, the **University of Wisconsin -Madison** took second, with 115 points.

In the Midwest Collegiate Cup standings, the **University of Minnesota - Twin Cities** maintained its position at the top of the **Women's**

Division, with victories at the Half-Noque and Mt. Ashwabay pushing their cumulative score to 254 points. Although the Twin Cities Women slightly expanded their lead on Saturday, **University of Wisconsin - Madison** Women remain in hot pursuit with 227 points. Competition is even tighter in third place: the **University of Minnesota - Duluth** Women (116 points) are only barely ahead of the **College of St. Olaf** Women (112 points), whose strong showing in Bayfield launched them into the thick of the hunt for the Cup.

True to predictions, Saturday brought an exciting shakeup of the **Men's Division**. After the Half-Noque, a mere 25 points separated first and third place. Now, that spread has shrunk to 13 points – and, for the first time in three years, the **University of Minnesota - Twin Cities** Men (283 points) have slipped from the top spot. Hard-charging races from H. Campbell and J. Hudrlik pushed **Michigan Technological University** Men (290 points) from third place into the lead by only 6 points; the **University of Minnesota - Duluth** Men (277 points) fell to third place and remain behind the Twin Cities. However, led by E. Anderson and E. Donohue, the Bulldogs have narrowed their gap from the Gophers to only 7 points. Meanwhile, the **College of St. Olaf** Men (141 points) rocketed into fourth place, pushing the **University of Wisconsin - Madison** Men (121 points) into fifth. Although far from the podium at present, a further leap from St. Olaf is hardly out of the question: three out of five Midwest Collegiate Cup events remain, and Saturday demonstrated the Oles' capacity to put substantial margins on the Cup's current leaders.

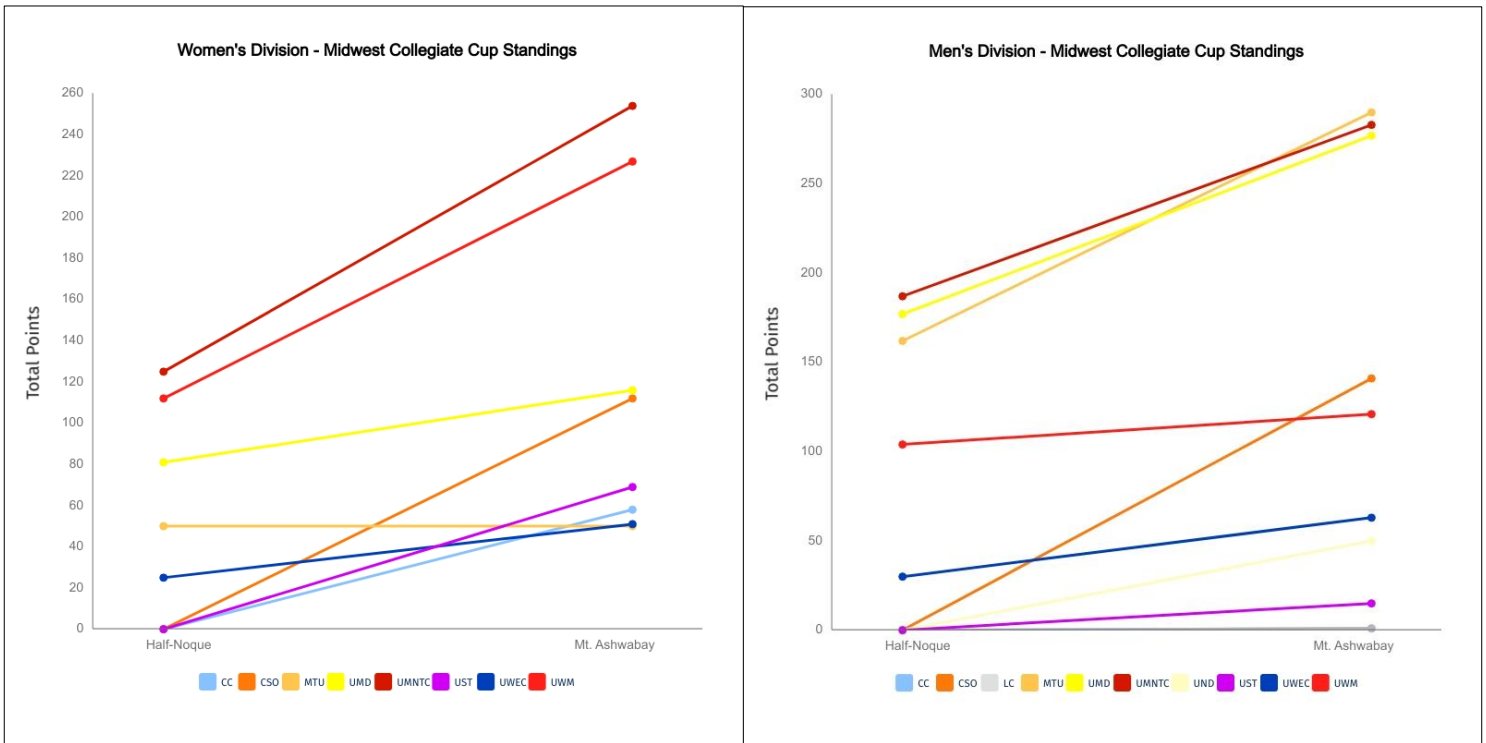
¹ See p.4 of the [2019-20 Northern Division recap](#) and p.5-6 of the [2020-21 MCNL recap](#).

Team Scores: Women (Mt. Ashwabay)							
MCSA Rank:	Team:	Composite Score:					
1	UMNTC	129	Hilgendorf-Roost (43)	Den Hartog (32)	Middelstadt (24)	Anderson (16)	Reineke (14)
2	UWM	115	Susong (46)	Koehler (30)	Reinemann (18)	Klein (12)	Gould (9)
3	CSO	112	Meyers (50)	Everest (40)	Vanderwilde (22)		
4	UST	69	Bovitz (37)	Baker (20)	Lawn (12)		
5	CC	58	Horne (34)	Lentfer (15)	Bregou (5)	Strike (4)	
6	UMD	35	Suhr (28)	Houts (7)			
7	UWEC	26	Bussman (26)				
Team Scores: Men (Mt. Ashwabay)							
MCSA Rank:	Team:	Composite Score:					
1	CSO	141	Olson (43)	Mullen (34)	Carlen (30)	Hanson (20)	Dorsey (14)
2	MTU	128	Campbell (50)	Hudrlík (32)	Novitch (22)	Miller (18)	Jensen (6)
3	UMD	100	Anderson (46)	Donohue (28)	Grabow (16)	Miller (9)	Lockner (1)
4	UMNTC	96	Bich (40)	MacKinnon (26)	Ryan (12)	Walsh (11)	Maruyama (7)
5	UND	50	Thuente (37)	Novitch (13)			
6	UWEC	33	Brown (24)	Swenson (8)	Ernst (1)		
7	UWM	17	Jaeger (10)	Lee (3)	Koob (2)	Wenz (1)	Dicke (1)
8	UST	15	Hohenshell (15)				
9	CC	1	Hoene-Langdon (1)				
9	LC	1	Heidorn (1)				
Total Teams: 17							
Total Skiers: 87							

Above: Mt. Ashwabay Team Standings, 2/5/2022. Calculated using the Mathie-Halvorson Scoring System.

Midwest Collegiate Cup Scores: Women							
NOTE: Noquemanon scoring error corrected 1/25/2022: Eleanor Dolan moved ahead of Isabelle Mittelstadt. Team scores corrected: UMNTC 125, UMD 81							
Collegiate Cup Rank:	Team:	Collegiate Cup Score:	Half-Noque	Mt. Ashwabay	Vasa-Dala	MCSA Regional Championships	American Birkebeiner
1	UMNTC	254	125	129			
2	UWM	227	112	115			
3	UMD	116	81	35			
4	CSO	112	0	112			
5	UST	69	0	69			
6	CC	58	0	58			
7	UWEC	51	25	26			
8	MTU	50	50	0			
Midwest Collegiate Cup Scores: Men							
Collegiate Cup Rank:	Team:	Collegiate Cup Score:	Half-Noque	Mt. Ashwabay	Vasa-Dala	MCSA Regional Championships	American Birkebeiner
1	MTU	290	162	128			
2	UMNTC	283	187	96			
3	UMD	277	177	100			
4	CSO	141	0	141			
5	UWM	121	104	17			
6	UWEC	63	30	33			
7	UND	50	0	50			
8	UST	15	0	15			
9	CC	1	0	1			
9	LC	1	0	1			
Total Teams: 18							

Above: Midwest Collegiate Cup Standings, 2/5/2022. Calculated using the Mathie-Halvorson Scoring System. Note the Half-Noquemanon scoring error correction.



Above: Midwest Collegiate Cup Standings, 2/5/2022. Calculated using the Mathie-Halvorson Scoring System.

From the Athletes

A robust college field, fierce competition, and especially Mt. Ashwabay’s famous home-baked *pies* seemed to define Saturday’s race in the frozen eyes of the MCSA skiers. Nathan Bich (4th place, leading scorer for the UMNTC Men) offered a succinct summary of the event, noting that although it was “a wild experience racing in a blizzard,” he had “a great time competing [...] especially with free pies to look forward to at the finish.” UMD President Ethan Anderson (2nd place, leading scorer for the UMD Men) agreed, writing that the combination of the skiathlon format, the designated college start wave, and the pie awards makes Mt. Ashwabay one of his favorite races. The UMD Men’s performance certainly added to Anderson’s satisfaction: he reported that “It was really cool to see our team find success in edging out UMNTC with only five of our skiers after a close loss at the Noque,” and that UMD is “really looking forward” to another round of racing at the Vasaloppet USA.



Above: Katie Susong poses proudly with a post-race pie. Photo courtesy of Sam Hagedorn.

Saturday’s weather and double-summit course weighed heavily on athletes’ assessment of their races. Katie Susong (2nd place, leading scorer for the UWM Women) found that “conditions were a bit challenging but coming from Madison it was exciting to see some fresh falling snow.” Having previewed the course the day before, Susong knew that the terrain would “require a steady sustained effort,” particularly with “very few places to rest in the first half of the loop.” Focusing on “keeping [her] technique smooth and getting the most out of each stride” was the key to Susong’s first MCSA podium, who wrote that she had “a great race [...] frozen

eyebrows and all.” In contrast, Erica Meyers (1st place, leading scorer for the CSO Women) broke away from the Women’s start “without any detailed knowledge of the course,” which made her “a little nervous to attack those unknowns alone.” Catching the Men’s field, and briefly being caught by Susong during the classic leg, made it “easier to see where [she] was going and figure out [her] pacing” – and Meyers enjoyed racing, talking, and transitioning with her UWM counterpart before breaking away during the skate. Although “the pouring snow made the transition and skate portions a bit of a slog, and the chilly temps” left everyone with “icicles on their faces and sunglasses,” Meyers said that she “tend[s] to enjoy adverse conditions” and that “it was a super fun race and experience.”

Micah Strike, scoring for the Carleton College Women, assessed the race’s layout and weather as a demanding but rewarding debut for Carleton’s team. “For many of our skiers it was our first 25k, and a challenging one at that due to the very snowy conditions,” Micah wrote – “but [it was] also a great success in that we all survived, and I’m excited for the next one!” Racing his first MCSA event, UMNTC scorer Isaac Maruyama also found that returning to competitive skiing, as well as the skiathlon format, made Saturday “a blast.” Although “the new snow made for slower-than-normal conditions,” he was “more than happy” to “rely more on endurance than my skate technique,” and was pleased to finish “neck-and-neck with another friend [Eric Wurst] from the team.”

The University of Notre Dame also made their first appearance on the Collegiate Cup Circuit at Mt. Ashwabay, with the day’s challenges well-balanced by camaraderie. UND Co-President Jacob Novitch reported that “the cold and snow certainly made conditions tough, but we enjoyed skiing at a new venue and against other club skiers, many of whom we knew from high school racing.” Even given the long haul from South Bend, Novitch found the event was “definitely worth the drive.” MTU President and Men’s winner Henry Campbell was also struck by the breadth of Saturday’s club field. “It was awesome to see all of the club collegiate skiers lined up at the start area,” Campbell said. “Every person from our club knew at least one other skier from a different team.” Mt. Ashwabay was a powerful demonstration of the MCSA’s unique ability to enable “students continue to ski competitively against former teammates, siblings, and friends made through the league itself.”

Indeed, the sight and significance of nearly a hundred college uniforms charging off the start line was not lost on Race Director Scott Nesvold, who hosted the MCSA during its inaugural 2019-20 season and enabled the league’s return to Mt. Ashwabay after dangerous cold canceled the 2021 race. Via email, Nesvold extended his thanks to the colleges for their participation. “We had by far our biggest group of [skiathlon] skiers ever, and probably one of our biggest



Above: University of Notre Dame skiers Joe Theunte and Jacob Novitch, alongside brother Caleb Novitch (Michigan Technological University). Photo courtesy of Jacob Novitch.

Below: The University of Minnesota – Duluth Men’s team and their tasty award.



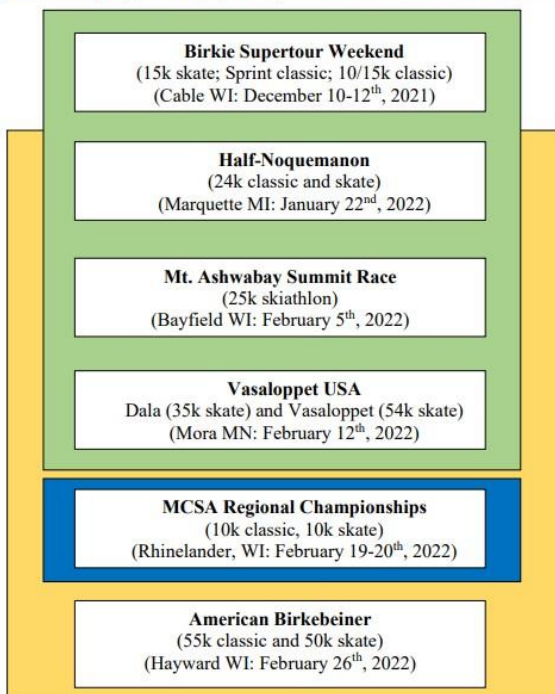
turnouts for the race!” he wrote. “It was great to see so many skiers enjoying the good snow (well, it might have been pushing too much – but as a skier I won’t admit that) and beautiful trails. Hopefully they enjoyed the baked goods as well.” If the above comments are any indication, it appears those hopes were certainly well-founded.

Looking Ahead

Three events in as many weekends lie ahead for the MCSA, and the current Cup standings promise intense competition between old rivals and ambitious newcomers. While the Vasaloppet USA (February 12th), MCSA Regional Championships (February 19th-20th), and American Birkebeiner (February 26th) will all score towards the Midwest Collegiate Cup, the MCSA Regional Championships alone will determine which teams attend the [USCSA National Championships](#) in Lake Placid, New York.

Reflecting on the Men’s standings shakeup, MTU’s Campbell wrote that the Huskies “have done more training as a group this year than any year in the past,” including under the direction of “local legend Tom Wood,” and that this structure “generates some enthusiasm for being competitive in races!” With the strong results thus far, Campbell is hopeful that MTU’s “first trip to Nationals as a team” could be in the cards this spring. Undeterred by the Men’s spill, UMNTC Co-President Lily Den Hartog reported that she believes the Gophers’ “strong squad [...] can keep performing at the level we have been” to retain the Women’s lead and regain the Men’s. With “great competition so far,” the team is “super excited for next weekend’s Vasaloppet.”

	Individuals must participate in TWO of these events to score at the MCSA Regional Championships
	These five events are cumulatively scored as the Midwest Collegiate Cup
	The top TWO Men’s and Women’s teams at the MCSA Regional Championships advance to USCSA Nationals



UMNTC will continue to face a determined challenge from the UWM in the Women’s Division. UWM Co-Director Sam Hagedorn wrote that the Badger Women are “performing exceptionally and it’s a lot of fun cheering them on.” Beyond scores, however, Hagedorn noted that Madison’s participation this year has been an important victory for the club. “One of the big question marks after not having a season due to Covid was numbers and whether or not we’d be able to bounce back. We have, and it’s been a ton of fun.”

The MCSA will return to competition on Saturday, February 12th, with the Vasaloppet USA’s Vasa and Dala events. The American Birkebeiner (February 26th) will conclude the Midwest Collegiate Cup – with the winners being crowned on the storied Main Street podium. The MCSA’s full schedule is listed at left.

Full MCSA Nordic results can be found [here](#).

A Brief Note on Scoring

The 2021-22 season has categories of scored competition – a cumulative, World-Cup style racing circuit (the Midwest Collegiate Cup) and the MCSA Regional Championships.

The Midwest Collegiate Cup scores teams against one another at popular citizen races; much like the International Biathlon Union World Cup, the Collegiate Cup includes the MCSA Regional Championships in its cumulative scoring totals. Meanwhile, Regionals is an MCSA-only race which will determine which MCSA Clubs qualify to attend the USCSA National Championships in Lake Placid, New York.

The Midwest Collegiate Cup uses the Mathie-Halvorson Scoring System, which it has since the 2019-20 season. This system uniquely balances the size and variety of regional teams by allowing teams of any size to score, and enabling scoring across multiple disciplines.

The winner of any race receives fifty points. Points back from fifty are determined by the size of the MCSA field at an event (so that, for example, second place in a field of twenty skiers is worth more than second place in a field of two skiers). For a field of thirty or more skiers, a fixed FIS points scale is used. All finishers receive at least one point, incentivizing large team participation.

At a given event, the top five racer scores from each team are added to calculate the Team Score. Teams can score with as few as a single skier. Team Scores from all five Collegiate Cup events are added to determine final standings. The MCSA will provide awards for the top three Men's and Women's teams.

The determining equation of the Mathie-Halvorson Scoring System can be found in Appendix I of the [MCSA Nordic Charter](#). You can see a working example of the system, and use the field size adjuster in the yellow column of the “Mathie-Halvorson System” sheet, [here](#).