



MCSA Midwest Collegiate Cup: Half-Noquemanon Results

by Luke Dykowski

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MCSA Midwest Collegiate Cup: Record Opener At 2023 Half-Noque

UMNTC Women, Men lead; MCSA athletes take 11 of 12 podium spots

The MCSA's Midwest Collegiate Cup got off to a searing start this weekend in Marquette, MI, with podium-packing performances and narrow margins opening what will doubtless be a captivating competitive season. As in years past, the Noquemanon Ski Marathon's Half-Noque 24k Skate and 24k Classic races constituted the Cup's first contests of 2023, affirming the league's strong connection to the event – and enabling college skiers to benefit yet again from the Noquemanon's enthusiastic volunteers and generous support. Indeed, the Half-Noque proves an increasing draw for collegiate athletes: this was the MCSA's largest season opener to date, with 101 skiers across 16 teams racing (additional skiers competed in the unscored 50k Skate and Classic events).



Above: UWM skiers before the start of Skate Wave 3. Photo courtesy of Katie Susong.

Below (from left) UMNTC scorers Gavin Chow, Ian Boylan and Ziggy Bjurlin.



Since serving as [the MCSA's first-ever race](#) in January of 2020, the Half-Noque has earned a reputation among college skiers for its abundance of fresh snow, its perilous corners, and its breakneck descent from the hills above Marquette to the shore of Lake Superior. While nimble near-misses (or even kerfuffle-causing collisions) on the narrow, winding trails are the norm, so too are standout results. [In 2022](#), MCSA skiers occupied six out of twelve podium spots, winning three out of four races.

This Saturday, MCSA skiers *won* all four races, and occupied *eleven out of twelve* total podium spots – sweeping the Men's and Women's 24k Skate podiums, as well as the Men's 24k Classic podium. Tait Myers and Kaia Hilgendorf-Roost won the Men's and Women's 24k Skate, respectively, with Ethan Anderson and Lily Hubanks winning the Men's and Women's 24k Classic.



From this mad scramble to claim the event's signature cowbells, the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities emerged triumphant in both the Men's and Women's Divisions for the Midwest Collegiate Cup. However, a similar start to the 2021-22 season heralded five weeks of nail-biting competition, with multiple rankings shapeups and razor-thin margins until [the American Birkebeiner finish line](#). With the Gopher Women seeking to defend their third consecutive Collegiate Cup title, and the Gopher Men eager to reclaim a Cup Championship from the UMD Bulldogs, both return to Minneapolis with cause for celebration – but hardly for complacency! – as the 2022-23 season begins.

Half-Noque Breakdown

Winning the **Women's 24k Classic** race, the [2022 USCSA National Champion in the 15k Classic](#) **Lily Hubanks** (CSO) finished in 1:24:40. Second overall and for the MCSA was the 2022 Half-Noque Classic winner **Shelby Suhr** (UMD), who finished in 1:30:13. Suhr was followed by **Madelyn Lawn** (UST), third for the MCSA and fifth overall, in 1:35:56.

In the **Men's 24k Classic**, UMD's **Ethan Anderson** won the day in a brisk 1:10:42. Anderson held off a daring move to double-pole the entire race, sans kick, by UMNTC's **Matt Hempe**, who was second overall and for the MCSA, finishing in 1:11:05. **Alex Heidorn** (UMD) secured another spot on the podium for the Bulldogs, taking third overall and for the MCSA in 1:13:42.

The **Women's 24k Skate** saw close competition between familiar distance powerhouses **Kaia Hilgendorf-Roost** (UMNTC) and **Katie Susong** (UWM). Hilgendorf-Roost, the event's overall winner, crossed the line in 1:12:59, only seven seconds ahead of Susong's second-overall 1:13:06. **Stephanie Lewis** (LC) rounded out the MCSA and overall podiums with her third-place 1:13:56. In doing so, Lewis secured Luther College's first MCSA podium finish – an exciting milestone for the Iowa team as it enters its second-ever season.

Not to be outdone, the **Men's 24k Skate** came to a thrillingly-narrow conclusion, with four

seconds separating the top three skiers. CSO's **Tait Myers** emerged victorious in 1:03:38, a mere two seconds ahead of UMNTC's **Luke MacKinnon**. MacKinnon's 1:03:40 was, in turn, only two seconds ahead of MTU's **Jonathan Hudrlik**, who finished in 1:03:42. Tait's win marks his first scoring appearance on the Collegiate Cup circuit.

As in 2022, the **University of Minnesota-Twin Cities** leaves Marquette at the head of both the Men's and Women's Divisions. Lead from second place by MacKinnon and Hempe, the **UMNTC Men** scored 173 points on Saturday. Thanks to a win and a podium from Anderson and Heidorn, the **University of Minnesota-Duluth** stands in second, and well within striking distance of the Gophers, with 144 points; with only three skiers scoring, the **College of St. Olaf** still secured 111 points and third place for the weekend. Michigan Technological University, third overall in the 2022 Collegiate Cup and the [2022 MCSA Regional Champions](#), sits only 3 points out of the podium, with 108.

While the **UMNTC Women** lead their division with 146 points, the **College of St. Olaf** is in comfortable pursuit with 117. A robust performance from the **University of Minnesota-Duluth** puts them in third, with 109 points – a single point of the University of Wisconsin-Madison's 108.



MCSA Rank:	Team:	Composite Score:					
1	UMNTC	146	Hilgendorf-Roost (50)	Reineke (30)	Loppnow (24)	Anderson (22)	Casper/Ellenbecker (20)
2	CSO	117	Hubanks (50)	Wyland (34)	Tomton (32)	Nguyen (1)	
3	UMD	109	Ecker (40)	Suhr (38)	Martin (12)	Houts (10)	Urbanowicz (9)
4	UWM	108	Susong (46)	Straka (28)	Koehler (15)	Wulff (11)	Klein (8)
5	UWEC	55	Bussman (37)	Williams (13)	Johnson (5)		
6	LC	54	Lewis (43)	Skogen (11)			
7	NMU	29	Raske (26)	Raby (3)			
7	UST	29	Lawn (29)				
Team Scores: Men (Half-Noque)							
MCSA Rank:	Team:	Composite Score:					
1	UMNTC	173	MacKinnon (46)	Hempe (41)	Boylan (32)	Chow (28)	Bjurlin (26)
2	UMD	144	Anderson (50)	Heidorn (34)	Bauer (37)	Hanson (12)	Halverson (11)
3	CSO	111	Myers (50)	Hanson (34)	Johnson (27)		
4	MTU	108	Hudrlik (43)	Miller (40)	Jensen (24)	Wallis (1)	
5	UWM	89	Wenz (22)	Koob (20)	Jaeger (18)	Page (15)	Finlay (14)
6	LC	31	Binsfeld (30)	Thompson (1)			
7	NMU	4	Hart (4)				
8	UWEC	1	Huber (1)				
Total Teams: 16							
Total Skiers: 101							

Above: Half-Noque Team Standings, 1/28/2023. Calculated using the Mathie-Halvorson Scoring System. Note: Team Standings for the Half-Noque are currently congruent with those for the Midwest Collegiate Cup.

From the Athletes

Never ones to shrink from an open mic, MCSA athletes had ample exploits to celebrate when reached for comment. Of the close standings in the Men's 24k Skate, UMNTC's Luke MacKinnon (second in that event) described "a very close race all the way down to the line," with a pack of four skiers "breathing down [his] neck" and escalating the race into a sprint in the final half-kilometer. "It was fun to put a fight against some really quick guys," MacKinnon wrote. CSO's Tait Myers wrote that he "felt very strong" during his winning 24k Skate. Indeed, finishing sprints aside, "some very rough patches where people had snowplowed on the downhill" made "finding the right line to ski on in order not to fall" the "toughest part" of Tait's dash to the Superior Dome. Ethan Anderson (UMD), winner of the Men's 24k Classic, also noted that getting "out front, throw[ing] down the hammer and [trying] to not fall on any of the sketchy downhill" was an essential part of his race strategy. Kaia Hilgendorf-Roost (UMNTC), winner of the Women's 24k Skate, agreed that "going out fast and sticking with the first pack of girls was the way to go" on the course's serpentine trails, adding that she enjoyed no shortage of "competitive leapfrogging with Katie Susong" (UWM, second in the Women's 24k Skate).

Jonathan Hudrlik (MTU; third in the Men's 24k Skate) observed that the course presented some unique considerations, including the narrow finishing stretch, which was "very challenging to pass in." Hudrlik wrote, "You really have to time your move right, especially when you still have a pack going into the finish." Especially in light of the close lead group which remained together until the final seconds of the race, Hudrlik is "looking forward to doing it again next year."



Above: UMD skiers celebrate in the Superior Dome. Photo courtesy of Ethan Anderson.

Below: UMNTC skiers make their customary post-race refuel at Jilbert's Dairy.



CSO's Lily Hubanks, winner of the Women's 24k Classic, agreed: "I've never done the Noque before, but after doing it once, I know I'll be back!" She praised the "beautiful course and great atmosphere," an assessment which Shelby Suhr (UMD; second in the Women's 24k Classic) echoed. "The beautiful snowy trees and sun of Saturday made it a fabulous day of skiing," Suhr wrote. Far from slowing to enjoy the scenery, she "focused on keeping [her] double-poling tempo fast and powerful during the flatter sections and enjoyed the many downhill."

Strong double-poling was certainly top of mind for Matt Hempe (UMNTC; second in the Men's 24k Classic), who opted for skate skis – using the "extra time [he] saved from not kick waxing to get advice from former Gopher classic legends Nathan Bich and Alex Gude about what the course was like." Hempe described their sage counsel: "They said the beginning would be tough double poling with the hills. They were right! After the hills, the race was a lot more enjoyable." As to whether he will once again eschew kick in 2024, Hempe replied that this reporter will "have to find out next year."

Saturday's event held particular significance for the Northern Michigan University Nordic Ski Club. While Club Co-President Emmarie Raby wrote that "It was definitely a cool experience to be skiing on

our home trails and to finish the race on the NMU campus," this was also NMU's first competition with the MCSA. Raby, part of an ambitious team of college freshmen who reinvigorated the NMU Club this October, wrote that the Wildcats are "really excited to be part of the MCSA this year and to have access to these competitions and racing opportunities." The record turnout from veteran MCSA teams was an encouraging indicator of "what [NMU's] Club could potentially turn into in a few years."

It was also a banner day for Iowa's Luther College, with Steph Lewis' third-place finish in the Women's 24k Skate marking Luther's first MCSA podium. Between enjoying the Noque buzz and racing alongside Luther teammates, Lewis found it "so exciting to be back in the ski atmosphere and to bust some rust," having not raced since high school. Alum Ryan Rogers – who founded Luther Nordic in 2022 – wrote that it "has been amazing to watch the Club continue to grow," and that seeing college athletes "compete – be it their first race in years, or their first ski race ever" – is what "our sport is all about."



Looking Ahead

The 2022-23 Midwest Collegiate Cup will put our intrepid athletes through a rigorous test of endurance, adaptability, and highway navigation. The Half-Noque marked the first of five consecutive weekends of racing, which advances next to the storied [Mt. Ashwabay Summit Skiathlon](#). At this event, all MCSA athletes will compete in both disciplines in a continuous pursuit – skiing approximately 10k on classic skis, followed by 15k on skate skis.

The Golden Gophers will arrive in Bayfield, WI, with leads of less than 50 points in both the Men’s and Women’s Divisions. Reflecting on his teams’ successful Cup opener in Marquette, UMNTC Co-President Ian Boylan wrote: “It’s fantastic to come home with strong races from all of our skiers. We know the season is a whirlwind, so we try to focus on just one race at a time.” While confident in UMNTC’s training regimen, which has expanded significantly this season, Boylan noted that the team is eager to put this conditioning “to use as we look towards Mt. Ashwabay.”

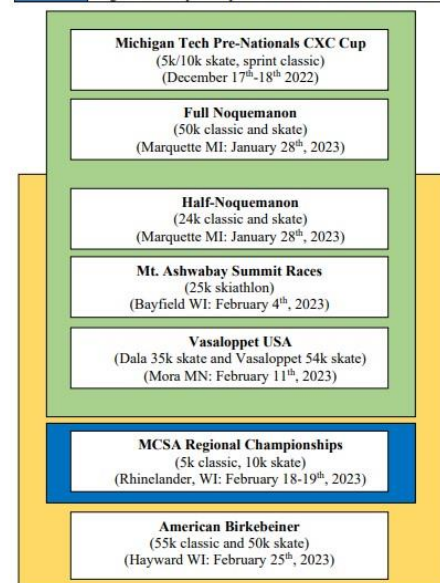
Katie Susong and the Badgers are also eager to tackle the challenging schedule ahead. “Overall the UW Madison team had great performances this weekend, and I’m excited for what we do over the next couple weeks,” Susong wrote. This weekend’s blizzard in Madison, remedying a hitherto snowless winter, will hopefully provide opportunity for more on-ski training for the Badgers.

Emma Reineke, Nordic Student Coordinator for the MCSA, took note of these forward-looking attitudes in Marquette. With the assembled skiers “in good spirits,” it “seems like there should be some good competition between all of the schools this year,” said Reineke. Indeed, it should not be lost on readers that this is due, in no small part, to Reineke’s own work as Student Coordinator. By continuing to guide compromise and collaboration between the MCSA’s student-led teams in her capacity as President of the Midwestern Nordic Assembly, Reineke has secured a vigorous start to the 2022-23 season – and laid the groundwork for a winter of close contests and expanding, inclusive competition.

The Midwest Collegiate Cup will race its next stage on Saturday, February 4th, at the Mt. Ashwabay Summit Skiathlon.

Full MCSA Nordic results from the Half-Noque are available [here](#).

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 FIVE Men’s and Women’s teams at the MCSA Regional Championships advance to USCSA Nationals





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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