



MCSA American Birkebeiner Report and Midwest Collegiate Cup Results

by Luke Dykowski

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MCSA Midwest Collegiate Cup: American Birkebeiner Seals Final Standings

*UMNTC Women win third consecutive championship; UMD defends Men's title;
Collegiate Cup returns to the Main Street Podium*



Above: The Women's 2023 Collegiate Cup Podium. Photo courtesy of Robin Dzubay.

The 49th American Birkebeiner served as the fifth and final event of the 2023 Midwest Collegiate Cup, with over one hundred college athletes from fourteen teams making the relentless southward trek from Cable to Hayward, WI. As lingering snow flurries yielded to sunny skies, the Birkie offered up its annual bounty of exhilaration and exhaustion, sweetness and suffering, challenge and celebration – culminating in the triumphant conclusion of the MCSA's fourth season, and the coronation of its 2023 champions.

If this publication were to, atypically, limit itself to a single adjective in describing the day's outcomes, "dynastic" would be an apt choice. Having led the Women's Division since the season opener at [Marquette's Half-Noque](#), the **University of Minnesota-Twin Cities Women** secured the 2023 Collegiate Cup title by nearly two hundred points – their third Cup championship in as many years. Meanwhile, the **University of Minnesota-Duluth Men** – Cup champions in 2022 – defended the lead they had held since [the Mt. Ashwabay Summit Skiatlon](#), taking a second consecutive title by over one hundred points.

As the relentless cycle of graduation continues to spit college athletes into the bantering, Gu-tangled beards of true citizen skiing, it remains impossible to speculate on the endurance of a few years' dominance – but neither the impressive, multi-year achievements of the Gopher Women and Bulldog Men, nor the robust development of regional collegiate competition they reflect, should be obscured by this uncertainty. In 2019, the MCSA was a reflection of existing patterns of Midwestern college racing. This Saturday, as skiers and families crowded the famous Main Street Podium after a day – and season – of unpredictable, unforgiving, and inimitable contests, it was clear that this league has



become a genuine driver of athletic development and community involvement; one whose influence will continue to grow, so long as it continues to serve the ambitions of the college athletes who have so passionately dedicated themselves to its expansion.

American Birkebeiner Results

In the **Women's 55k Classic**, CSO's **Lily Hubanks** added yet another MCSA field victory to [her season of impressive results](#). Her 3:31:19 secured her first place in the F18-24 age group, sixth place in the Women's overall results, and tied her for the MCSA record of three consecutive Collegiate Cup victories (alongside Kaia Hilgendorf-Roost, UMNTC, 2023; Peter Carlen and Erica Meyers, CSO, 2022). Hubanks was followed by **Lily Horne** (CC), second for the MCSA (as she was in 2022) in 3:43:45 and 29th in the Women's overall results, and **Madelyn Lawn**, Birkie Classic field winner in 2022, third for the MCSA in 3:52:05 and 45th in the Women's overall results.

In the **Men's 55k Classic**, UMNTC's **Luke MacKinnon** secured one of two Gopher field wins for the day, leading the MCSA in 3:11:33 and placing 32nd overall. Second for the league was **James Schwinghamer** (UMD), whose 3:15:02 put him 50th overall; in third was **Forrest Dorsey** (CSO), returning to Hayward in 3:27:43.

For the **Women's 50k Skate**, UMNTC's **Hadley Jensen** tallied another field win for the Gophers, finishing in 3:14:55. In second was UWEC's **Claire Bussman**, finishing in 3:20:29, ahead of UMD's **Aubrie Ecker**, third for the MCSA in 3:24:29.

For the **Men's 50k Skate**, MTU's **Henry Campbell** concluded a brilliant four-season career in the MCSA with a prestigious Birkie field win, making it to Main Street in a blistering 2:24:11 and placing 40th overall. In second was UMD's **Benjamin Bauer** (third for the MCSA in 2022), 65th overall in 2:28:20; third was fellow Bulldog and 2023 MCSA Regional Champion **Ethan Anderson**, 77th overall in 2:29:26.

Reinforcing their preeminence in this year's Collegiate Cup standings, the **University of Minnesota-Twin Cities Women** and **University of Minnesota-Duluth Men** lead the American Birkebeiner team scores, netting 171 points (exclusively in the Women's 50k Skate) and 192 points, respectively. Second for the day in the **Women's Division** was the **University of Wisconsin-Madison**, with 115 points; third was **Carleton College**, with 88 points.

In the **Men's Division**, the **University of Minnesota-Twin Cities** followed MacKinnon to deliver a characteristically-balanced performance across the Skate and Classic fields, taking second in Hayward with 181 points. Led by Campbell, **Michigan Technological University** took third, with 154 points.



Midwest Collegiate Cup Championship Breakdown

In 2022, the breath-steamed trails ‘East of Seeley Town’ played host to [the closest final contest in MCSA history](#). A bare 21 points separated the first- and second-place Men at the Birkebeiner start, and 24 points separated the first- and third-place Women.

The standings were certainly more stratified as the rifle cracked over the corrals of Cable on Saturday, with a change in the Cup leaders essentially a numerical impossibility: the College of St. Olaf, beginning the day in second in both Divisions, rostered only two skiers in the Men’s Division and one in the Women’s. Despite not facing a serious challenge to their overall position, the **University of Minnesota-Twin Cities Women** did not balk from claiming a significant win in Hayward, thereby clinching their 2023 Midwest



Above, from top: The 2023 Men’s Collegiate Cup Podium. UWM skiers throw the W after claiming third place in the 2023 Cup standings. Both photos courtesy of Robin Dzubay.

Minnesota-Twin Cities Women were the only team to win a majority of the season’s events; even en route to their overall Cup victory, the University of Minnesota-Duluth Men won only two events, while the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities Men (second overall) won just a single event. The College of St. Olaf

Collegiate Cup championship title in definitive style. This was their third consecutive Cup victory, having taken the title in 2022 and [2021](#). They finish the season with 734 total points. At 182 points ahead of the **College of St. Olaf**, second in Collegiate Cup standings with 552 total points, the Gophers’ is the largest-ever margin of victory in any chase for the Cup, Men’s or Women’s. In third place, the **University of Wisconsin-Madison** fended off a potential challenge by the University of Minnesota-Duluth, but could not quite close against the Oles, finishing 2023 with 504 total points.

In the **Men’s Division**, the **University of Minnesota-Duluth** went back-to-back at the top of the Cup podium, securing their second consecutive Collegiate Cup championship with 844 total points. After slipping to third at the [Vasaloppet USA](#), **University of Minnesota-Twin Cities** unseated the College of St. Olaf with their performance in Hayward, taking second place with 718 total points. Despite being bumped by the Gophers, the **College of St. Olaf** remained securely in the Cup’s top three, taking third place with 647 total points.

As in previous years, this season’s Collegiate Cup standings reflected a fundamental principle of the MCSA’s scoring system and, indeed, of the league itself: participation matters. The University of



Men and University of Wisconsin-Madison Women, third overall in their Divisions, won one and *no* events, respectively. The Mathie-Halvorson Scoring System rewards consistent efforts to put skiers on snow – and while significant team results are impossible without standout individual skiing, simply showing up can keep teams in contention for podium Cup positions.

However, it should be noted that this scheme does exclude teams which are, at present, unable to achieve full attendance at Cup events. Note the Carleton College Women – fifth in the Cup standings after attending only two events (and taking third place at both) – or the Michigan Technological University Men, fourth in Cup standings after attending four of five events, ahead of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Men, fifth after attending all five events. As observed in 2022, “These are finishing positions which enhance teams’ ability to request funding, resources, and recognition from their schools, and which encourage their increased involvement in league competition. Moreover, these results demonstrate the capacity of the MCSA to deftly balance a staggering range of team sizes and abilities, and to combine the diversity of Midwestern collegiate racing into a unified Cup circuit.”

Team Scores: Women (American Birkebeiner)					
MCSA Rank:	Team:	Composite Score:			
1	UMNTC	171 Jensen (50)	Anderson (39)	Eriksson (36)	Casper (26)
2	UWM	115 Straka (33)	Koehler (29)	Klein (24)	VanDenTop (18)
3	CC	88 Horne (35)	Lentfer (31)	Keyser-Parker (22)	Schwartz (11)
4	UMD	77 Ecker (43)	Urbanowicz (16)	Baker (9)	Houts (8)
5	UWEC	70 Bussman (46)	Williams (14)	Johnson (10)	Dolan / Suhr (1)
6	CSO	50 Hubaks (50)			
7	UST	24 Lawn (24)			

Team Scores: Men (American Birkebeiner)					
MCSA Rank:	Team:	Composite Score:			
1	UMD	192 Bauer (46)	Schwinghamer (43)	Anderson (43)	Donohue (34)
2	UMNTC	181 MacKinnon (50)	Hempe (40)	Preston (37)	Heidorn (26)
3	MTU	154 Campbell (50)	Novitch, J. (30)	Struck (32)	Boylan (22)
4	UWM	112 Koob (32)	Branch (27)	Novitch, C. (28)	Hudrik (24)
5	CSO	41 Dorsey (38)	Goetze (3)	Hagedorn (18)	Miller (22)
6	UST	25 Fischer (16)	Hohenhell (9)	Lee (20)	Barnhill (15)
7	CC	5 Tullio (1)	Bartel (1)	Gonzalez (1)	Roslanksy (1)

Total Teams: 14					
Total Skiers: 105					

Above: American Birkebeiner Team Standings, 2/25/2023. Calculated using the Mathie-Halvorson Scoring System.

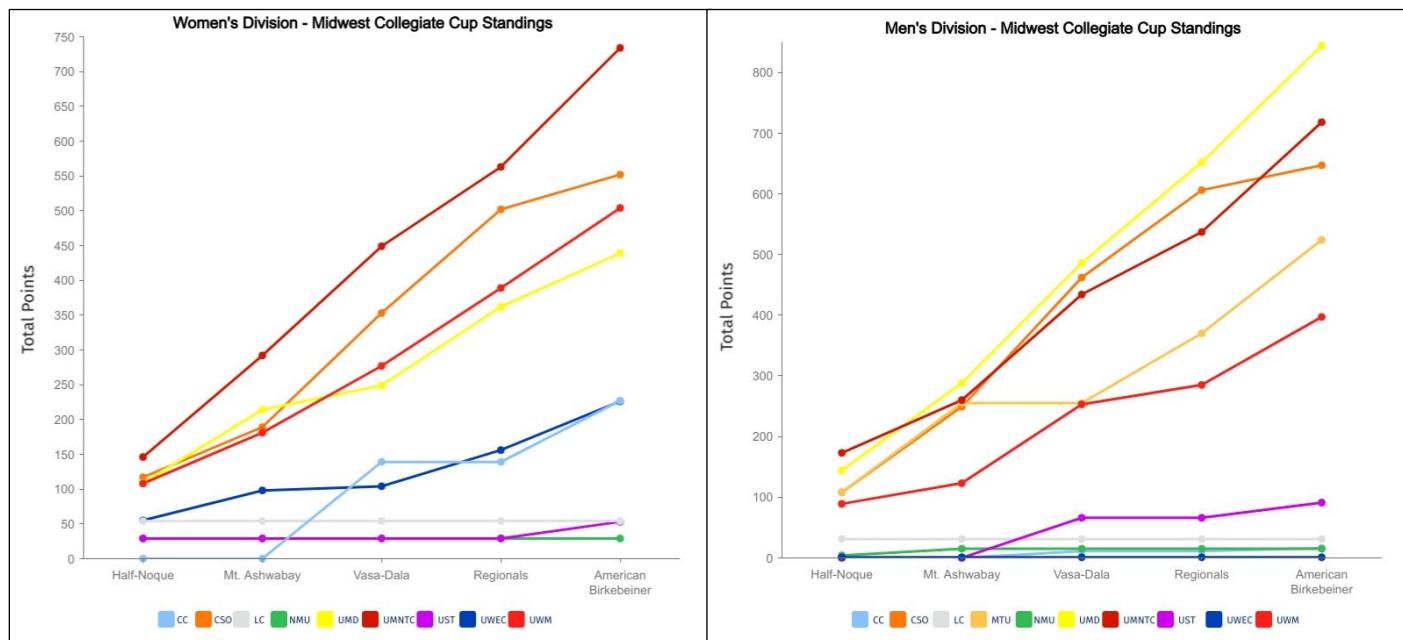


Midwest Collegiate Cup Standings: Women						
MCSA Rank:	Team:	Composite Score:	Half-Noque	Mt. Ashwabay	Vasa-Dala	MCSA Regional Championships
1	UMNTC	734	146	146	157	114
2	CSO	552	117	72	164	149
3	UWM	504	108	73	96	112
4	UMD	439	109	105	35	113
5	CC	227	0	0	139	0
6	UWEC	226	55	43	6	52
7	LC	54	54	0	0	0
8	UST	53	29	0	0	0
9	NMU	29	29	0	0	0

Midwest Collegiate Cup Standings: Men						
MCSA Rank:	Team:	Composite Score:	Half-Noque	Mt. Ashwabay	Vasa-Dala	MCSA Regional Championships
1	UMD	844	144	144	198	166
2	UMNTC	718	173	87	174	103
3	CSO	647	111	138	213	144
4	MTU	524	108	147	0	115
5	UWM	397	89	34	130	32
6	UST	91	0	0	66	0
7	LC	31	31	0	0	0
8	CC	16	0	0	11	0
9	NMU	15	4	11	0	0
10	UWEC	1	1	0	0	0

Total Teams: 19

Above: Midwest Collegiate Cup Standings, 2/26/2023. Calculated using the Mathie-Halvorson Scoring System.



Above: Midwest Collegiate Cup Standings, 2/25/2023. Calculated using the Mathie-Halvorson Scoring System.



From the Athletes

MTU President Henry Campbell, MCSA winner of the Men's 50k Skate, doubtless spoke for athletes in and beyond the ranks of the league in writing that the Birkie is a "highlight of the season." The event's unparalleled size and depth of field serves a double purpose – on one hand, "it's possible to see how you stack up against pros, citizens, college skiers, friends, family, etc.," while on the other, it presents a unique opportunity to "connect with lots of people throughout the weekend – at the Expo, on the bus to the start, in the starting pen, on the race course, and in the food tent." As for the race itself, with the fresh powder and high-strung energy of the day leaving a trail of broken poles up and over Powerlines, Campbell reported that he "just tried to get with a pack and keep all [his] equipment together for the first 10 or so kilometers, then skied with a huge pack for the next 25k." Despite starting to run out of energy on the seemingly-endless climbs out of Mosquito Brook, Campbell was "able to ski with some other people who were in the same boat and make it to the finish without losing too many spots."



Above: Campbell at the finish of the 50k Skate. Photo courtesy of the ABSF.



Above: UST's Madelyn Lawn with father Chris Lawn at the start of the 55k Classic. Photo courtesy of Madelyn Lawn.

Company on the racecourse also played no small role in a successful day for Madelyn Lawn (UST), third in the MCSA Women's 55k Classic. Her race was "especially great this year because [she] did it with [her] dad, Chris Lawn, who skied his 27th Birkie!" Not only will Lawn look back on racing with her father as one of her "favorite memories," she wrote: "He really pushed me to go faster than I thought I could out there. I reached all the goals I had and overall was super happy with my results."

Claire Bussman (UWEC) was also extremely satisfied with her hustle to Hayward, in which she placed second in the MCSA Women's 50k Skate. After learning from her first Birkie in 2022, "mostly the hard way, about what pacing and fueling for a 50k race should look and feel like," Bussman combined "a season of consistent training" with a concentrated effort to "pace in the middle portion of the race to avoid bonking at the end." Despite being "physically and mentally wiped" in the last 10 kilometers, Bussman "just kept repeating... that everyone else was hurting just as much at that point," and rallied enough energy to "put in a small kick and pass a large stretch of skiers on the lake."

Saturday was a mental and physical battle for Hadley Jensen (UMNTC) as well, winner of the MCSA Women's 50k Skate. She "did not feel like [herself] for the first 35k," and even "had a hard time staying upright as [she] was constantly dizzy." Thankfully, "something clicked, and [she] felt amazing in the last



Above: Lily Hubanks (CSO) makes for the International Bridge after crossing Lake Hayward. Photo courtesy of Robin Dzubay.
Below: Forrest Dorsey (CSO) navigates heavy traffic in the 55k Classic. Photo courtesy of Skinnyski.com.

15k and was able to finish really strong!” Jensen credited “the fans cheering... throughout the course and across the lake” with providing much-needed “mini energy boosts each time” – a sentiment MTU Vice President Erik Jensen seemed to share. “The conditions were tough this year, but the awesome volunteers and my fellow skiers were able to pull me through to the finish,” he reported.

Indeed, it is the exuberant and communal atmosphere which pervades the American Birkebeiner festivities, and from which so many of our college athletes drew strength and encouragement as they descended from Cable, that was on full display as scores of skiers and their families assembled at the Main Street Podium on Saturday. Skiers were quick to praise their teams – and competitors – for creating another year of robust racing and camaraderie, whose conclusion they gathered to celebrate. Hannah Delker, UMNTC Co-President, described herself as “incredibly proud to be part of such a committed and driven group of women.” The Gophers’ “tenacity is not only reflected in our consecutive titles,” she continued, “but also in our ability to continuously field a dense group of talented athletes.” Luke MacKinnon, UMNTC Training Coordinator and MCSA winner in the Men’s 50k Classic, agreed that he was “really happy with how the team did as a whole on the day and in the Collegiate Cup” – although he and his fellow Gophers may be “looking forward to some much shorter races at Nationals.”



Ethan Anderson, UMD President and third in the MCSA Men’s 50k Skate, may have been a bit modest in writing he was “really happy for the team this season,” with the Bulldogs’ second Men’s Cup title in as many years. “We were able to get almost all of our skiers to every race this year, which really made a difference compared to last year.” With “a lot of really strong Birkies” and “all the hard work that the team has put into racing throughout the season” in the rearview mirror, the Bulldogs are “excited” to return to competition in 2024 – hopefully with “a great UMD racing squad!”

UWEC’s Bussman agreed that reaching Main Street was a time to look forward and back – one that was “bittersweet, as it marked the end of what was a really fantastic season, both for the MCSA and the UWEC team. The MCSA field is only getting deeper with every season, and this season I enjoyed having to put the work in every weekend to try and keep up with the fast folks that I am lucky to toe the line with for a short month in the winter!”



That short month – five consecutive weekends of events, totaling over 150 kilometers of racing – has indeed concluded, as have the tenures of host of college athletes and student leaders whose insight and examples have invigorated and sustained MCSA Nordic through the eager days after Stout, the confusion of Covid, and the irrepressible energy of the league's explosive post-pandemic growth. The league is poorer for their graduation – but undeniably richer for their friendship, and for dedication to this unique form of collegiate competition. We wish them speedy wax and happy trails – and we will look forward to seeing them on the racecourse when MCSA Nordic returns in 2024.

In the meantime, we look ahead to the dizzying altitude and daredevilish dispy-doodles of the Tamarack Cross-Country Ski Center in Mammoth, California, where our MCSA athletes will compete in the 2023 USCSA National Championships.

We encourage you to support those MCSA teams who are fundraising to attend Nationals, and to watch the 2023 live broadcast of all Nationals events [here](#).

Full MCSA Nordic results from the Midwest Collegiate Cup Circuit are available [here](#).

We would like to extend special thanks to Kristy Maki (ABSF), Sean Gavigan (PT Timing), and Bob Schwartz (WNSL) for their assistance with day-of timing, scoring, and podium coordination, without which MCSA Nordic's unique Collegiate Cup awards ceremony would not be possible.



*Above: UMD's Luke Pittelko crosses the International Bridge.
Below: MTU's Cal McNabb at the finish line. Both photos courtesy of the ABSF.*



Above: MCSA skiers Erica Meyers (CSO), Julia Everest (CSO), and Katie Susong (UWM) at the finish of the 2022 USCSA Classic Sprint Championships. Photo courtesy of the USCSA.



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>.

