



A Superior Dome Sweep: Midwest Collegiate Cup Half-Noque Results

*MCSA take 12/12 podium spots;
St. Olaf Women seize early lead; Duluth Men claim win by single point*



Above, from left: Kaia Hilgendorf-Roost (3rd), Hadley Jensen (1st), and Katie Milligan-Susong (2nd), top three in the Women's Half-Noque Skate. Photo courtesy of Katie Milligan-Susong.

MARQUETTE, MI: Rising temperatures and a snap course change were insufficient to deter 101 college athletes representing 15 teams from competing in the Half-Noquemanon on Saturday, January 27th. Jockeying for position on one of the last patches of snow in the bleak and balmy North, they delivered a triumphant overture for the league's fifth season: After capturing [11 podium spots in the 2023 event](#), MCSA skiers secured a full sweep of the 2024 Half-Noque, with all 12 cowbells clanking home around college necks.

With roughly 500 total feet of descent its opening kilometers, the Half-Noque is rightly regarded as a test wherein agility may well trump endurance. However, this year's modifications replaced the conventional, concluding cruise to the Superior Dome with a climb back over the Forestville Plateau – adding elevation to legs already trembling from the trails' tortuously-tight turns. Due to low snow, both the 50k Full Noquemanon and 24k Half Noquemanon skiers completed the same 23-kilometer route.¹ Joe Thuente, whose University of Notre Dame team competed in the Full, described the “new, unfamiliar course and icy conditions in

¹ In a round of midnight voting, the Midwest Nordic Assembly voted against scoring skiers registered for the Full Noquemanon, voicing concerns potentially-substantial course deterioration between the Full and Half-Noque starts. Carleton College, the University of Michigan, and the University of Notre Dame fielded MCSA athletes exclusively in the Full Noquemanon.



Celebrating 5 Years of MCSA Nordic

the morning” as making “for fast and furious racing filled with broken poles and crashes.” As the day wore on, and as skis (and bodies) pulverized the deck, volunteers worked diligently to keep the course navigable by shoveling snow onto bare spots. While MCSA athletes reached for a range of euphemisms to describe the conditions – including “special, no doubt,” “really interesting,” “unique,” “interesting, to say the least,” “*Interesting*” (emphasis in original) and “spring-like” – they frequently agreed that the trails were “better than expected” – exceptional praise in a winter of exceptional difficulty for race organizers, and a credit to the valiant efforts of the event hosts.

Half-Noque Breakdown

While this paragon of balanced, reserved sports journalism [never tires of predicting record results](#) and claustrophobically-close competition, Saturday’s races exceeded even lofty expectations. MCSA skiers took 1st, 2nd, and 3rd in all Half-Noque events (as well as 4th in the Men’s and Women’s Skate), and nail-bitingly narrow margins separate the Men’s and Women’s Collegiate Cup standings: The St. Olaf Women bested the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities by only 14 points, while the University of Minnesota-Duluth Men outscored St. Olaf by a *single* point. With only four races on this year’s Cup circuit, and the Mt. Ashwabay Summit Skiathlon’s propensity to dramatically [rearrange team rankings](#), close contests are on the horizon. Let’s hope some snow is, too!

In the **Women’s Half-Noque Classic**, St. Olaf’s **Amae Kam-Magruder** delivered a jaw-dropping performance in her first MCSA race: Kam-Magruder’s winning time – 1:31:03 – was nearly thirteen minutes ahead of runner-up **Eleanor Bennett** (UWM), who secured her inaugural collegiate podium in 1:43:00. Moreover, Kam-Magruder was second *overall* – finishing only behind the winner of the Men’s 24k Classic (see below). Kam-Magruder and Bennett were followed by **Claire Bussman** (UWEC), finishing in 1:43:37.

In the **Men’s Half-Noque Classic**, another Ole rookie, **Wes Sumner** (SOC), won the day, crossing the line in 1:27:20. Teammate **Felix Taracena** (SOC) followed in 1:32:22, with **Elliott Swanson** (UMD) taking third in 1:32:59.

In the **Women’s Half-Noque Skate**, a trio of familiar powerhouses occupied the podium, with **Hadley Jensen** (UMNTC) leading the way in 1:23:06. **Katie Milligan-Susong** (UWM) took second in 1:26:41. **Kaia Hilgendorf-Roost** (UMNTC) was third, with a 1:29:54 finish narrowly ahead of Julia Everest (SOC), fourth in both MCSA and Women’s Skate standings, with 1:29:55.

MCSA athletes were again four-deep at the head of the **Men’s Half-Noque Skate**, with the University of Minnesota-Duluth’s longtime scorer **Benjamin Bauer** clinching his first MCSA victory [since the 2022 Vasa](#) in 1:16:58. Freshman **Hayden Zoll** (MTU) took second in 1:17:37, ahead of **Connor Preston** (UMNTC), who finished in 1:17:41. Alex Heidorn (UMD) was fourth in both MCSA and Men’s Skate standings, with 1:18:11.



Celebrating 5 Years of MCSA Nordic

Buoyed by podium finishes from Bauer and Swanson, and substantial Skate points from Heidorn, the **University of Minnesota-Duluth Men** – the [Collegiate Cup Champions in 2022](#) and [2023](#), and [MCSA Regional Champions in 2023](#) – seized a narrow victory in Marquette, with 178 points. **St. Olaf College** follows less than a bulldog-hairsbreadth behind, with 177 points. The **University of Minnesota-Twin Cities** – until Saturday, the winners of each Half-Noque [since 2020](#) – took third, with 145 points.

In the **Women’s Division**, Kam-Magruder’s Classic win was supplemented by impressive points totals from her teammates in the Skate event, enabling **St. Olaf College** ([MCSA Regional Champions in 2022](#) and 2023) to take the day with 189 points. Relying entirely on Skate points, the **University of Minnesota-Twin Cities** ([Collegiate Cup Champions in 2021](#), 2022, and 2023) sits in a close second, with 175 points. In third was the **University of Wisconsin-Madison**, with 126 points – a mere 9 points ahead of the University of Minnesota-Duluth’s 117.

Team Scores: Women (Half-Noque)							
MCSA Rank:	Team:	Composite Score:					
1	SOC	189	Kam-Magruder (50)	Everest (40)	Chandler (37)	Rothe (32)	Vanderwilde (30)
2	UMNTC	175	Jensen (50)	Hilgendorf-Roost (43)	Anderson (34)	Reineke (28)	Casper (20)
3	UWM	126	Milligan-Susong (46)	Bennett (44)	Licha (15)	Pudwill (12)	McLaren (9)
4	UMD	117	Ecker (34)	Wolf (24)	Hetchler (22)	Suhr (22)	Dolan (15)
5	UWEC	96	Bussmann (39)	Williams (25)	Johnson (18)	Robertson (13)	Moen (1)
6	NC	13	Nobles (6)	Keffer (3)	Fine (2)	Birkett (1)	Westgard (1)
7	NMU	10	Raby (10)				
Team Scores: Men (Half-Noque)							
MCSA Rank:	Team:	Composite Score:					
1	UMD	178	Bauer (50)	Heidorn (40)	Swanson (37)	Pittleko (30)	Livingston (20)
2	SOC	177	Sumner (50)	Taracena (43)	Myers (37)	Rozell (26)	Bosworth (22)
3	UMNTC	145	Preston (43)	Bjurlin (34)	Lidahl (26)	Anderson (24)	Han (18)
4	UWM	115	Long (32)	Finlay (31)	Martin (20)	Baker (16)	Koob (16)
5	MTU	89	Zoll (46)	Miller (28)	Oldenburg (10)	Janowski (5)	
6	NC	19	Fischer (9)	Youngberg (8)	Uehling (1)	Dietrich (1)	
7	NMU	15	LaPlante (15)				
8	UWEC	2	Urban (1)	Otto (1)			
Total Teams: 15							
Total Skiers: 101							

Above: Half-Noque Team Standings, 1/27/2024. Calculated using the Mathie-Halvorson Scoring System. Note: Team Standings for the Half-Noque are currently congruent with those for the Midwest Collegiate Cup.

Regional Championship Standings

In past years, the MCSA Regional Championships have been determined by a standalone weekend of racing at the Cedric A. Vig Outdoor Classroom in Rhinelander, WI. Due to scheduling overlaps with the Minneapolis World Cup, the MCSA [opted to forego a designated Regionals event](#) for the 2023-24 season. Instead, the 2024 MCSA Regional Championships will be determined by Collegiate Cup points, for both teams and individuals, through the Vasaloppet USA events (the American Birkebeiner will continue to conclude the Midwest Collegiate Cup).



Celebrating 5 Years of MCSA Nordic

Individuals, but not teams, will have their single lowest-points finish (or DNS/DNF) excluded from their points total. Any ties will be broken by the excluded points. Current Men's and Women's Individual Regional Championships standings are viewable [here](#).

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



Above: The SOC team in Marquette.

Below: The Men's Skate Podium (from left): Hayden Zoll (2nd), Benjamin Bauer (1st), Connor Preston (3rd). Photos courtesy of Tor Hanson, Emma Reineke.



From the Athletes

While a range of familiar faces graced the Half-Noque podiums, five of Saturday's top finishers were freshmen (Bennett, Kam-Magruder, Sumner, Swanson, and Zoll) – a commanding Collegiate Cup debut for the Class of 2028. Reached for comment, Amae Kam-Magruder (SOC, 1st in the Women's Classic) expressed her initial caution about the Half-Noque distance, noting that she had “raced up to 15k [before], but this was super new,” and that she didn't want to “bonk on her first 24k.” Despite “go[ing] out pretty chill,” she “kept up with the boys on the first downhills and “ended up skiing in a nice little pack for a bit,” before deciding to “push the pace and separate” once the climbing began. “From there [she] just kept looking over [her] shoulder and pushing faster and faster.” Reflecting on her training and race preparations, she thanked St. Olaf's captains, Assistant Coach Tor Hanson, and Head Coach Kevin Brochman for “super speedy skis” and “for making this season possible.” “My racing is exceeding all my expectations, and I couldn't have reached any of it without them,” Kam-Magruder concluded.

Kam-Magruder's comrade in orange, and fellow rookie winner of the Half-Noque Classic, Wes Sumner, echoed her observations on the course's varied pacing demands – and her gratitude to coaches and race organizers. Sumner and the top men “tried to get out fast to be in a good position



Celebrating 5 Years of MCSA Nordic

going down the hills,” although “once [they] all made it to the bottom, the pace slowed down and it seemed like no one got to take the lead.” Noting the wet snow and warm temperatures, some athletes in the Men’s Classic had opted for skate skis. Elliott Swanson (UMD, 3rd in the Men’s Classic) wrote that, given the “not-ideal classic conditions,” he “elected to double pole the race on skate skis [so as] not to risk having bad kick and/or dragging.” With this in mind, Sumner and teammate Felix Taracena (2nd in the Men’s Classic) launched their attack “once we reached the first hill,” relying on strong kick and glide “thanks to the coaches!” The two continued to pace together before Sumner concluded he “had a lot of energy left,” and broke away – trying “to ski even and fast the rest of the race.” Although “there were definitely some weird spots [including] dirt and slush, there was nothing that was bad enough [he] couldn’t avoid,” and Sumner expressed his thanks “to the volunteers and race officials for making it happen!”

Writing on his first MCSA podium in his first collegiate race, Hayden Zoll (MTU, 2nd in the Men’s Skate) agreed: While he “was worried about the conditions before the race,” the snow remained “wet, but icy rather than slushy,” and the trails were “about as good as could be expected in the low snow year.” After fighting through the pack in the initial descent, Zoll and Connor Preston (UMNTC, 3rd in the Men’s Skate) “made it to the top three” at “about 11k in [...] with one skier [Benjamin Bauer, UMD, 1st in the Men’s Skate] a ways ahead of us.” For Bauer’s part, he had broken from the main group after its “aggressive and fast” start “slowed a little and the groups solidified more,” which led to him “skiing much of the race alone” in a “true freestyle” – double-poling in the tracks “to conserve energy



Above, from top: UWEC skiers at the finish; the UWM team in the Superior Dome; the UMNTC team at Jilbert’s Dairy. Photos courtesy of Emma Reineke.



Celebrating 5 Years of MCSA Nordic

on the gradual downs and flats, where it was just as fast as skating.” “I never thought I’d see myself leading a skate race while occasionally double-poling, but this year’s Noque was an interesting one,” Bauer noted.

To his rear, Zoll and Preston “took turns leading” to separate their two-man chase group from the remainder of the pack. In the last kilometer, with Preston in front, Zoll “stuck right on his tail, and chose [his] moment to sprint ahead of [Preston] to the line” – besting the Gopher by a close four seconds. “I felt strong through the race – better than I have in a ski race in the past two years [...] and it feels great to have my training pay off,” Zoll wrote.

Our MCSA athletes were far from the only folks in Marquette whose hard work yielded dividends. MCSA Student Coordinator Emma Reineke (UMNTC) praised the Noquemanon’s dedicated event organizers, who “put on something amazing for having so little to work with. Their enthusiasm was contagious, [and] competitors couldn’t help but feel excited about the opportunity to race and the chance to be on snow.” In the commotion of the starting grid, Reineke “was thrilled to see such a large amount of college racers, and the pods of teammates huddled together to have a hype-up.” The perseverance of student racers and their generous hosts combined to maintain “an amazing atmosphere for a unique race, [and] a great time altogether!”

Looking Ahead

The Midwest Collegiate Cup will tackle its second of four stages on Saturday, February 3rd, at the deliciously-demanding Mt. Ashwabay Summit Skiathlon. Originally expected to entail 30 kilometers of racing – 15k on classic skis, followed by 15k on skate skis – in 2024, this week’s warmth has prompted race organizers to reduce the course to 12k per lap (to a total of 24 kilometers). While further modifications may be necessary, Race Director Kate Ullman assured registrants that the Mt. Ashwabay community will adapt, improvise, and overcome. “We are committed to holding a timed race for the college skiers if at all possible (and we think it will be),” Ullman wrote in an email on Friday. “The format or distance may change. This is one of only three [Regional Championship-scored] races for

NOTE	There are no Participation Races for the 2023-24 Competitive Season
NOTE	ALL scores are calculated using the Mathie-Halvorson System for the 2023-24 Competitive Season.
	These FOUR events are cumulatively scored as the Midwest Collegiate Cup
	The first THREE races of the 2023-24 Competitive Season constitute the MCSA Regional Championships.
	The top FIVE Men’s and Women’s teams at the MCSA Regional Championships advance to USCSA Nationals

<p>Half-Noquemanon (24k classic and skate) (Marquette MI: January 27th, 2024)</p>
<p>Mt. Ashwabay Summit Skiathlon (25k skiathlon) (Bayfield WI: February 3rd, 2024)</p>
<p>Vasaloppet USA (Dala 34k skate and Vasaloppet 48k skate) (Mora MN: February 10th, 2024)</p>
<p>American Birkebeiner (53k classic and 50k skate) (Hayward WI: February 24th, 2024)</p>



Celebrating 5 Years of MCSA Nordic

the college league, and the only race this year where they have a dedicated start. We're excited to support the growth of the MCSA league, and to welcome their newest member, the Northland College Nordic Team!"

With their hunger for points – and pies – whetted, teams will be eager to improve their positions on the shores of the Chequamegon. While the Bulldogs were “stoked to win the day” in Marquette, Bauer and his team are “looking forward to a very close race with St. Olaf” in the Men’s Collegiate Cup standings. Whether UMD can defend its one-point lead remains to be seen; meanwhile, the Bulldog Women are only narrowly out of third position, behind UWM.

If the St. Olaf Men have their eyes on UMD, we can be sure that the UMNTC Women are tracking their Ole counterparts just as closely. Returning to their riparian redoubt just 14 points behind the Oles, and with a fourth-consecutive Collegiate Cup title hardly out of the question, the Gophers are doubtless hoping they can sally forth to land a decisive counterstrike at Mt. Ashwabay. Hadley Jensen (UMNTC, 1st in the Women’s Skate) reported that she and her team are “grateful for the manmade snow in the Twin Cities” during an otherwise “very frustrating” winter drought, and we should expect the Minneapolis skiers to take full advantage of their local trails – however well-traveled – as they continue to prepare for the races ahead.

The Midwest Collegiate Cup will race its next stage on Saturday, February 3rd, at the Mt. Ashwabay Summit Skiathlon.

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



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.

###

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

