



MCSA Midwest Collegiate Cup: Vasa-Dala Results and Regionals Preview

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MCSA Midwest Collegiate Cup: Vasaloppet USA Coverage

UMD, CSO Men sweep Vasa and Dala league podiums; CSO moves to second in both Cup Divisions; hattrick for Hilgendorf-Roost



Above: CSO skiers Tait Myers and Ian Derauf in the thick of Saturday's Main Street mass-start.

Below: UMNTC skiers Ian Boylan and Connor Preston. Both photos courtesy of Skinnyski.com.



The chase for the Midwest Collegiate Cup continued in Mora, Minnesota this weekend, with the Vasaloppet USA constituting the third contest of the MCSA's rigorous competitive circuit. With both the Dala 34-kilometer and the Vasa 45-kilometer race scored, this was a skaters' event – one whose long flats, relative absence of hills, and mass-start format favor power, consistency, and intelligent pack-skiing.

As 107 MCSA skiers from 12 teams poured off Main Street and onto Mora Lake, ample points were up for grabs – and our college racers wasted no time in booking it back to the Belltower to add to their total scores, and to the intensity of this season's Cup. Indeed, from this flood of college athletes, a flood of significant results. The St. Olaf Men obtained the MCSA's highest ever single-day points haul, sweeping the league's Dala podium to secure 213 total points; the UMD Men retained their Cup lead by sweeping the league's Vasa podium; and UMNTC's Kaia Hilgendorf-Roost won her third consecutive MCSA event, at the head of the Women's Vasa field.

While the UMD Men and UMNTC Women stand serene at the top of the Midwest Collegiate Cup ranks, the lower steps of the podium are now consumed by a bruising melee. The Ole Men lunged ahead from fourth to second place, pushing the UMNTC Men to third. The MTU Men – remaining in Houghton for the weekend – hold fourth place by a bare two points; as the Hawaiian shirt-clad



UWM Men splashed within striking distance of the Huskies. The Ole and Badger Women both clawed their way ahead of the UMD Women; CSO and UWM now sit in second and third, respectively, with the Bulldogs sinking to fourth.

Vasa-Dala Breakdown

Another weekend marked another win for UMNTC's **Kaia Hilgendorf-Roost**, first in the MCSA field for the **Women's Vasa 45k Skate** (and third in the Women's 18-24 age group) with a time of 2:32:00. Hilgendorf-Roost has now won three races over three consecutive weekends – tying the league record jointly held by Erica Meyers and Peter Carlen (CSO; 2022). She was followed by fellow Gopher **Hadley Jensen** (UMNTC), whose 2:33:06 secured her a podium finish in her debut MCSA race. In third was **Jane Straka** (UWM), taking third for the league in 2:37:51.

The MCSA podium for the **Men's Vasa 45k Skate** was a Bulldog bullpen. Led by **Ethan Anderson's** searing 2:00:46 (which earned him 11th overall and first in the Men's 18-24 age group), UMD swept the top three – with **Emmett Donohue** second in 2:04:46 and **Alex Heidorn** third in 2:07:14.

In the **Women's Dala 34k Skate**, CSO's **Lily Hubanks** finished first in the MCSA field and second in the overall Women's field, returning to Main Street in an impressive 1:38:15. **Katie Susong** (UWM) was second for the MCSA, fourth in the overall Women's field and first in the Women's 25-34 age group, with 1:42:54. Taking third for the league, sixth in the overall Women's field and first in the Women's 18-24 age group was **Julia Everest** (CSO), finishing in 1:45:35.

The Oles were even more successful in the **Men's Dala 34k Skate** – taking five of the MCSA's top-six positions. They were led by **Tait Myers**,

winner of [the Half-Noque 24k Skate](#), whose 1:28:37 earned him sixth place overall and first in the Men's 18-24 age group. [No stranger to close finishes](#), Myers was followed by CSO's **Ian Derauf**, seventh overall and second in the Men's 18-24 age group in 1:28:38. Third for the MCSA was **Tor Hanson**, also CSO, in 1:35:03. Felix



Above: After breaking a pole, UMD's Ethan Anderson (far left) fights his way back to the front of the MCSA's Vasa field.

Below: (From left): Lily Hubanks (CSO), Ziggy Bjurlin (UMNTC), and Liam Caputo (CSO). Both photos courtesy of Skinnyski.com.





Taracena and Forrest Dorsey secured fourth and sixth place in the MCSA for the Oles.

2022 saw the College of St. Olaf erect [an 'Orange Wall' in Mora](#) – locking down the Dala standings to propel both their Men's and Women's teams onto the Collegiate Cup podium. Although some fifty degrees warmer than last year's race, history repeated itself this Saturday, with commanding performances in the Dala again allowing both the **CSO Men and Women** to win the day. Racing only in the Dala, the **Ole Men** captured 213 points – more than any other MCSA team, ever. With strong performances in the Vasa, the **University of Minnesota-Duluth Men** were second for the day, with 198 points. Collecting substantial points from both events were the **University of Minnesota-Twin Cities Men**, taking third with 174 points.



Above: The CSO Men and Women again won the day in Mora. Photo courtesy of Lily Hubanks.

With only four skiers, the **Ole Women** were nevertheless the champions in Mora – taking 164 points from the Dala. Led by Hilgendorf-Roost and Jensen, the **University of Minnesota-Twin Cities Women** were second for the day, with 157 points. In third, a surprise: **Carleton College** made its first Collegiate Cup appearance of 2023, and earned its first-ever team podium with 139 points.

In Collegiate Cup standings, the **University of Minnesota-Twin Cities** continues to lead the **Women's Division**. Unfazed by the Oles' Dala dominance, the Gophers hold first place by a substantial margin, with 449 total points. Weaving through the heavy traffic of the Mora trails, the **College of St. Olaf** have maneuvered themselves into second place, with 353 total points. Also surging ahead were the **University of Wisconsin-Madison**, whose 277 total points put them in third – cracking into Cup's top three for the first time this season. Despite being pushed off the podium, the University of Minnesota-Duluth remains only 28 points behind the Badgers.

In the **Men's Division**, the dogs continue to have their day, with the **University of Minnesota-Duluth's** 486 points keeping them at the top of the Cup standings. The Bulldogs' lead shrunk slightly at Vasaloppet – from 28 to 24 points – but their closest pursuers are no longer their cousins in the Cities. The **College of St. Olaf** has leapt from fourth into second place, with 462 total points. Although displaced to third, a strike at a higher position is not an impossibility for **University of Minnesota-Twin Cities** – they trail the Oles by 28 points and the Bulldogs by 52 points, with 434 total points.

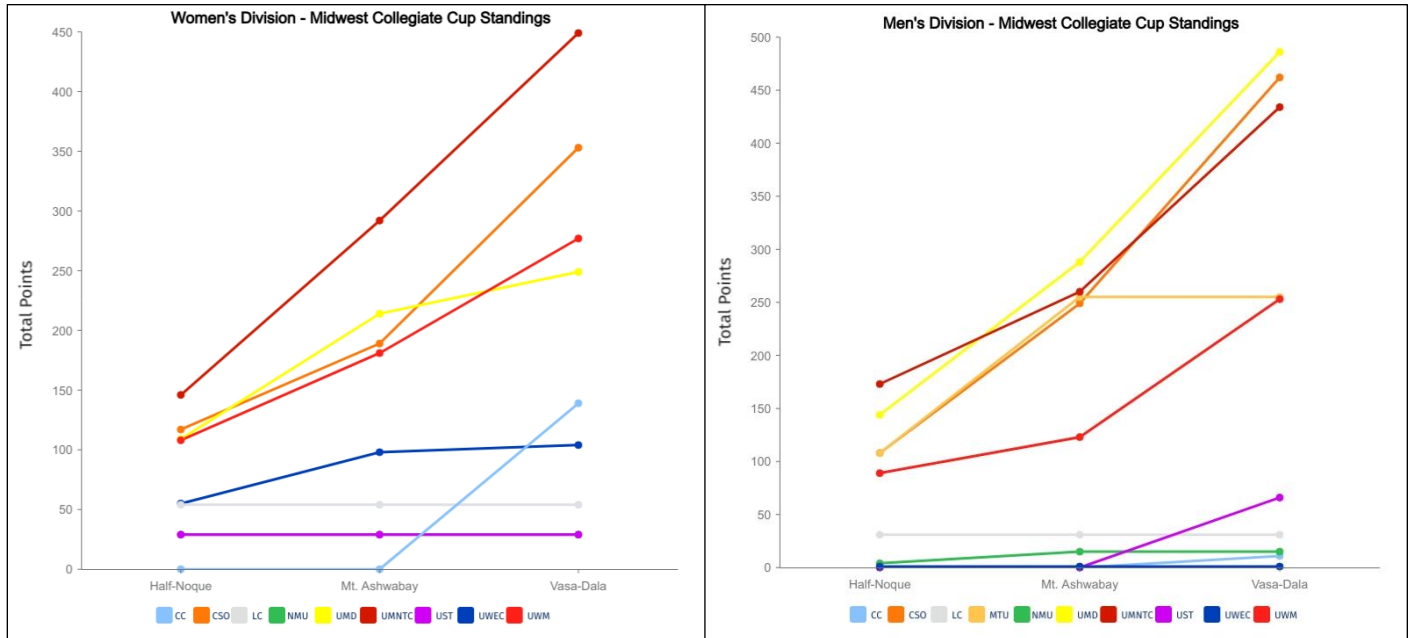


Team Scores: Women (Vasa-Dala)						
MCSA Rank:	Team:	Composite Score:				
1	CSO	164	Hubanks (50)	Everest (43)	Wyland (37)	Tomten (34)
2	UMNTC	157	Hilgendorf-Roost (50)	Jensen (35)	Reineke (28)	Green (24) Ellenbecker (20)
3	CC	139	Loescher (40)	Lenfer (32)	Keyser-Parker (30)	Horne (28) Davis (9)
4	UWM	96	Susong (46)	Straka (24)	Vandentop (14)	Vanden Heuvel (7) Schwartz (5)
5	UMD	35	Martin (22)	Houts (8)	Neeser (3)	Urbanowicz (1) Baker (1)
6	UWEC	6	Williams (6)			
Team Scores: Men (Vasa-Dala)						
MCSA Rank:	Team:	Composite Score:				
1	CSO	213	Myers (50)	Derauf (46)	Hanson (43)	Taracena (40) Dorsey (34)
2	UMD	198	Anderson (50)	Donohue (46)	Heidorn (43)	Schwinghamer (37) Hanson (22)
3	UMNTC	174	Preston (40)	Berg (37)	Boylan (34)	Bjurlin (32) MacKinnon (32)
4	UWM	130	Hemink (30)	Page (28)	Branch (26)	Jaeger/Lee (24) Smith (22)
5	UST	66	Fischer (30)	Burkum (20)	Hohenshell (16)	
6	CC	11	Bartel (7)	Holcomb (1)	Mutschler (1)	Roslansky (1) Tullio (1)
Total Teams: 12						
Total Skiers: 107						

Above: Vasa-Dala Team Standings, 2/11/2023. Calculated using the Mathie-Halvorson Scoring System.

Midwest Collegiate Cup Standings: Women					
MCSA Rank:	Team:	Composite Score:	Half-Noque	Mt. Ashwabay	Vasa-Dala
1	UMNTC	449	146	146	157
2	CSO	353	117	72	164
3	UWM	277	108	73	96
4	UMD	249	109	105	35
5	CC	139	0	0	139
6	UWEC	104	55	43	6
7	LC	54	54	0	0
9	NMU	29	29	0	0
9	UST	29	29	0	0
Midwest Collegiate Cup Standings: Men					
MCSA Rank:	Team:	Composite Score:	Half-Noque	Mt. Ashwabay	Vasa-Dala
1	UMD	486	144	144	198
2	CSO	462	111	138	213
3	UMNTC	434	173	87	174
4	MTU	255	108	147	0
5	UWM	253	89	34	130
6	UST	66	0	0	66
7	LC	31	31	0	0
8	NMU	15	4	11	0
9	CC	11	0	0	11
10	UWEC	1	1	0	0
Total Teams: 19					

Above: Midwest Collegiate Cup Standings, 2/11/2023. Calculated using the Mathie-Halvorson Scoring System.



Above: Midwest Collegiate Cup Standings, 2/11/2023. Calculated using the Mathie-Halvorson Scoring System.

From the Athletes

Results aside, Saturday’s events may have been most memorable for what they did *not* include – that is, the bitter cold which has left enduring marks on the cheeks, noses, and psyches of skiers at Vasaloppets past. Hadley Jensen, second scorer for the UMNTC Women, wrote that she “enjoyed the sunny weather and the fast course” – focusing on staying “mentally engaged” throughout the race. CSO’s Lily Hubanks, field winner in the Women’s Dala, also emphasized the importance of mentality on the predominantly flat trails. The lack of hills “meant less rest time,” and prevented “much variety in techniques” – with 34 kilometers of V2 and open-field creating “a challenge, especially towards the end as it began to feel repetitive.” Pack skiing – as much a feature of Mora as its long, gentle grades – “really helped a lot” for Hubanks’ decisive Dala performance.

Kaia Hilgendorf-Roost (UMNTC), field winner in the Women’s Vasa, was even more emphatic in designating her 45-kilometer ski as “the hardest race yet this season” – although this was perhaps less due to the course, and more the fault of “back-to-back weekend races and general fatigue” for the hattrick winner. Thankfully for Hilgendorf-Roost, the Vasaloppet’s signature “blueberry soup and cheering on [her] teammates boosted [her] energy” – pushing her to the pleasant surprise of an age-group horse, and leaving her ready for “a chill recovery week before Regionals.”



Above: UWM's Katie Susong finishes the 34k Dala. Photo courtesy of SkinnySki.com.

Below: Mora or Margaritaville for Susong's fellow badgers?



scorers Ian Boylan and Luke MacKinnon – skiing with “many different teammates throughout the course” before ultimately finishing in “a strange ‘no-man’s-land’ between packs.”

For the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the weekend brought even more to celebrate than top-three finishes for Jane Straka and Katie Susong. MCSA Liaison Sam Hagedorn noted that he was “really excited about [UWM’s] showing” in Mora. “The team has grown significantly since last year, which is a great bounce-back to see since Covid.” Key to this resurgence has been “having some fun along the way,” which included a “Hawaiian week.” Given the warm temperatures, the Badgers swapped traditional athletic gear for a more Buffett-esque wardrobe – sporting the fashionable florals during the Vasa and Dala. Katie Susong concurred that “overall the UWM team had a great time and managed to escape frostbite this year!”

Nathan Hohenshell, President of the UST Nordic Team, wrote that “the Vasa is a favorite of the St. Thomas team, and this year didn’t disappoint.” The balmy temperatures, “fast snow, sunny skies and the return of the blueberry soup” made the 2023 event “particularly special” for the Tommies. Ethan Anderson, field leader in the Men’s Vasa, agreed that “the Vasaloppet is [his] favorite race” – which motivated him to charge the chaotic mass start in search of “a spot just off the leaders.” While breaking a pole on the notorious first turn put Anderson “pretty far back” in the crucial first kilometer of the race, he was able to find a replacement on Mora Lake “with the goal to grind it out and find a pack.” He did so “at the end of the first lap, and was able to pull on the final stretch to get 11th” – having “a blast” with a race that was, snapped pole aside, “super solid.”

Pack skiing also proved essential for Connor Preston – leading scorer for the UMNTC Men in his second Collegiate Cup appearance. As Preston was “pretty unfamiliar with a race of this length,” he started out “fairly cautious and trying to follow the pacing of [his] teammates.” As his confidence improved, he leapt from Gopher suit to Gopher suit, including fellow



Looking Ahead: The MCSA Regional Championships

With three weekends and nearly 100 kilometers of racing behind them, the MCSA skiers will navigate a dramatic change of pace on Saturday and Sunday, February 18th and 19th. Northwood Nordic Ski Club – hosts of [the 2020](#) and [2022 Regional Championships](#) – will again welcome college teams to the treacherous kettles and mettle-testing climbs of Rhinelander, Wisconsin's Cedric A. Vig Outdoor Classroom. With a 5-kilometer, individual-start classic race on Saturday, and a 10-kilometer, mass-start skate race on Sunday, these will be the shortest – and fastest! – events of the 2023 Collegiate Cup circuit.

Observers should note that the races in Rhinelander will be scored on two separate tracks. On one hand, skiers' cumulative times from Saturday and Sunday will be scored as the fourth of five events on the Midwest Collegiate Cup circuit – using the same Mathie-Halvorson System under which all races this season, and of Cup races in previous seasons, have been scored.

On the other hand, the upcoming hullabaloo in Hodag Country will simultaneously serve as the standalone Regional Championships for the MCSA. Winners of Saturday's classic and Sunday's skate races will be eligible for league medals and trophies, and team scores will be calculated using the USCSA's National Scoring System (in which *lowest*, rather than *highest*, score wins, and in which three skiers per team receive points, with skiers four and five displacing). New in 2023, the top *five* Men's and Women's teams, as ranked under the USCSA National System, will qualify to represent the Midwest at [the 2023 USCSA National Championships in Mammoth, California](#). This two-track scoring system is reflective of the dual nature of the Regional Championships: they serve as both an important test within the Midwest Collegiate Cup, and the pipeline towards USCSA Nationals. For these distinct purposes, distinct scoring.

In [the rich tradition of Wisconsinite Nordic commentators](#), this publication will tender a few predictions on the outcome of the 2023 MCSA Regional Championships. Two factors are paramount in these considerations. Firstly – which skiers have the striding turnover, and solo-skiing ability, to open a substantial margin in the 5-kilometer, interval-start classic? One that they can defend during 10 kilometers of mass-start skating on Sunday? And secondly – which skiers can shift gears from three weeks of marathon distances to succeed in 'collegiate-style' (5-kilometer to 15-kilometer) racing?

On Saturday, both factors should play to the strengths of the St. Olaf Men and Women. With enduring ties to the CCSA and a record of stellar performances at the USCSA National Championships, collegiate-style racing is very much in the Oles' DNA. Moreover, their skiers can stride – and they can do it quickly. Lily Hubanks won the Women's 10k Classic at the 2022 Regional Championships by nearly a minute, and went on to win the Women's 15k Classic at [the 2022 USCSA National Championships](#) by over a minute. She won the 2023 Half-Noque Classic by over five minutes, and demonstrated in Mora that she remains in top form. It is difficult to envision a clearer winner for the Women's 5k Classic in Rhinelander.



This is not to say, however, that we can write Hubanks off as the weekend's unchallenged champion. CSO's Julia Everest and UWM's Katie Susong were rarely far behind Hubanks in either skate or classic disciplines in 2022, and have continued to nip at her heels in 2023; the same was true of UMD's Shelby Suhr in the Half-Noque Classic. Moreover, Hubanks and Kaia Hilgendorf-Roost have yet to race directly against one another in 2023, and Hilgendorf-Roost's rally at Mt. Ashwabay proved her ability to keep the tempo up and close gaps while skiing alone. While Hubanks may be the clear favorite for the 5k Classic, she will have only a single lap at Rhinelander to build a large enough margin from which to hold off these four potential challengers on Sunday – and would lead the 10k Skate mass-start with a clear target on her back.

In the Men's 5k Classic, we should expect a close contest between CSO's Tait Myers and UMD's Ben Bauer. Winning the Half-Noque Skate and the Dala Skate, and narrowly second at the Mt. Ashwabay Skiathlon, Myers has already thrown down a blistering rookie season, and a mere 5 kilometers will not reward any of his more seasoned challengers for intelligent pacing. While I suspect Bauer – overall winner of the 2023 Sisu Ski Fest 30k Classic and sixth in the 2023 Vasaloppet USA 41k Classic – might prefer a marathon, he proved he is capable of hanging with Myers at Mt. Ashwabay, although neither can expect the advantage of being able to see the other in this interval-start format. Behind some ordering of Myers and Bauer, MTU's Nick Petersen (second in 2022's 10k Classic and fourth at Mt. Ashwabay in 2023), UMNTC's Luke MacKinnon (fifth in 2022's 10k Classic and eighth in the Classic Sprint at 2022 Nationals), UMNTC's Matt Hemepe (second in the 2023 Half-Noque Classic), or UMD's Ethan Anderson (first in the 2023 Half-Noque Classic) could jockey each other for a podium finish and a shot at a Sunday skate surge.

Speaking of skate surges – we would be remiss not to mention MTU's Henry Campbell. A true veteran of the league, Campbell has been on the MCSA podium of every race he has entered since the 2020 Regional Championships; he was second in the 10k Skate and third in the 10k Classic at Rhinelander in 2022. While this year's 5k Classic does not seem to favor Campbell, he has twice demonstrated his



*Above: Start of the Men's 10k Skate at the 2022 Regional Championships. Photo courtesy of Kaia Hilgendorf-Roost.
Below: Henry Campbell (MTU) and Peter Carlen (CSO) at the 2022 Regional Championships. Photo courtesy of Sophia Hicks.*





ability to maintain a highly-competitive pace while completely alone (at the 2023 Full-Noquemanon and 2023 Mt. Ashwabay Skiathlon) – which could keep him in the mix during the interval start. Moreover, he skated to a sub-second victory after facing an enormous classic deficit at Mt. Ashwabay. He is certainly, over distance, the league’s strongest skater – as in the case of the Women’s field, the question will likely be whether he has sufficient space on Sunday to overcome any striding margin gained by Bauer and/or Myers.

Turning briefly to teams, I predict an orange weekend in Rhinelander, with the CSO Men and Women both taking the Regional titles. Collegiate Cup standings be damned, the Oles have the top-gear speed and collegiate-style experience that matters this weekend – and the strategic depth of teams like the UMNTC Women and UMD Men will not be relevant in National System scoring. For the Men, MTU – the Regional Champions in 2022 – could take second place if Campbell puts himself in the overall top three, Petersen delivers in the 5k Classic and Jonathan Hudrlik makes a move in the 10k Skate, although between Bulldogs Bauer, Anderson, as well as Alex Heidorn and Emmett Donohue, the Huskies will be hard-pressed to stay ahead of UMD. A balanced showing across the classic and skate days could allow the UMNTC Men to nab a podium spot if any of MTU or UMD’s top scorers falter in no-man’s-land on Saturday, or end up pack-skied on Sunday.

Behind the Ole Women, it should be close between UMNTC and UWM. The Gophers will not be able to count on their depth advantage, and UWM’s Katie Susong and Jane Straka have both proven their ability to defend narrow margins on collegiate-style courses. While UMNTC’s Hilgendorf-Roost has shown no signs of slowing down, she will need backup from her teammates – likely Emma Reineke, Lydia Anderson, or Ainsley Casper – to box the Badgers out of second place.

I am confident you, gentle readers, have competing theories on what to expect from Rhinelander’s rugged terrain. Let the speculation swirl, and let our skiers get plenty of recovery time – we will put predictions to rest, and crown the MCSA’s 2023 Regional Championships, in just a few short days.

The MCSA will hold its Nordic Regional Championships on Saturday and Sunday, February 18th and 19th, at the Cedric A. Vig Outdoor Classroom in Rhinelander, WI.

These races will also constitute the fourth stage of the Midwest Collegiate Cup.

Full MCSA Nordic results from the Vasaloppet USA are available [here](#).





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