



## Midwest Collegiate Cup Returns to Mt. Ashwabay

*UMD Men, St. Olaf Women win first contest of 2025 Season*



*Above: Start of the MCSA Women's 30k Skiathlon. Photo: David Zoll.*

BAYFIELD, WI: Saturday, February 1<sup>st</sup> brought the return of the MCSA to the slopes of Mt. Ashwabay, and the return of racing for the Midwest Collegiate Cup. After suffering a delay to the season start with the cancellation of the [Half-Noquemanon Ski Marathon](#), 82 skiers from 17 teams tackled the technique-testing 30k Skiathlon in pristine trail conditions, and ahead of heavy snow for the Chequamegon Bay Area.

The 2024 Collegiate Cup concluded with the University of Minnesota-Duluth Men and the St. Olaf College Women [on top of the overall podiums](#). In Bayfield, both teams signaled their clear ambition for a repeat (or, in the Bulldogs' case, a Fourpeat—the UMD Men have won every Collegiate Cup since 2022) with victories in the opening contest of 2025. While both teams are familiar presences on Cup podiums, both were led by rookies—with UMD's Henry Brandt and SOC's Lousia Lamarre winning their inaugural league appearances.



In addition to new skiers in the lead, new teams also joined the MCSA at Mt. Ashwabay. After attending [the Stout Conference in 2019](#), the College of St. Benedict & St. John's University made a long-delayed, but most-welcome, debut in the league. Additionally, the Michigan Technological University Women fielded their first MCSA team since 2021.

### *Mt. Ashwabay Summit Skiathlon Breakdown*

In 2024, low snow brought changes to the traditional Mt. Ashwabay format, with volunteers working heroically to pull off [a 12k Skate](#).

Despite dry trails draping noose-like around the neck of many a Midwestern Nordic Center, Bayfield had snow in abundance—enabling a return to one of ski racing's most unique, and technically-demanding, formats. With a 15-kilometer Classic leg immediately preceding a 15-kilometer Skate leg and two ascents of the eponymous massif, the Skiathlon demands mastery of both disciplines—as well as a knack for expeditious ski-, pole-, and even boot-swapping!



*Above: Start of the MCSA Men's 30k Skiathlon. Photo: David Zoll.*

In the **Women's 30k Skiathlon**, Collegiate Cup newcomer **Louisa Lamarre** (SOC) took first place in 1:41:29, ahead of teammate **Elizabeth Weider's** 1:41:42. Completing an Ole sweep of the Women's podium, **Ava Rothe** finished third in 1:44:29.

The **Men's 30k Skiathlon** welcomed another fresh to the front of the pack, with **Henry Brandt** (UMD) carrying the day in 1:22:44. Brandt barely beat Bulldog **Benjamin Bauer** (UMD), 2024 MCSA Regional Champion, who finished in 1:22:45. In third was Badger **Benjamin Martin** (UWM), winner of 2024's 12k Skate at Mt. Ashwabay, finishing in 1:23:11.

With the infamous "Orange Wall" occupying Saturday's podium, **St. Olaf College Women** skied to an early lead in Collegiate Cup standings, with 165 points. With all five of its scorers in the top-20, **Carleton College** took second, with 120 points—a noteworthy improvement from 2024 (where they placed 5<sup>th</sup> at Mt. Ashwabay and 8<sup>th</sup> in the Collegiate Cup), and their best team finish to date. As the Mathie-Halvorson System does not include a tiebreaking procedure, the **University of Minnesota-Duluth** and **University of Minnesota-Twin Cities** tied in Collegiate Cup standings, each with 77 points. Defaulting to the sixth skier to determine the day's standings, UMD took third (7-point tiebreaker E. Grossman), and UMNTC took second (1-point tiebreaker C. McLaren). Note that tiebreaker



points are not included in Collegiate Cup standings.

The **University of Minnesota-Twin Cities** took third, with 64 points.

In the **Men’s Standings**, the **University of Minnesota-Duluth** took first, with Brandt and Bauer leading the Bulldogs to 167 points. The **University of Wisconsin-Madison** followed a mere 8 points behind, with 159.

As the 30k Skiathlon was the first race of the 2025 Midwest Collegiate Cup, Mt. Ashwabay standings are congruent with Collegiate Cup standings at this time

Team Scores: Women (Mt. Ashwabay)							
MCSA Rank:	Team:	Composite Score:					
1	SOC	165	Lamarre (50)	Weider (46)	Rothe (43)	Bergdahl (20)	House (6)
2	CC	120	Coleman (40)	Loescher (28)	Davis (22)	Kyser-Parker (18)	MacLaury (12)
3	UMD	77	Hetchler (26)	Wolf (24)	Schlichting (10)	Carleton (9)	Karel (8) <i>Grossman (7)</i>
4	UMNTC	77	Anderson (32)	Casper (15)	Reineke (14)	Ray (13)	Loppnow (3) <i>McLaren (1)</i>
5	UWM	74	Bennett (37)	Straka (34)	Pudwill (1)	McLaren (1)	Constantineau (1)
6	UWEC	35	Bussman (35)	Robertson (5)			
7	MTU	27	Hanauska (16)	Myhre (11)			
8	NC	1	Bade (1)				
Team Scores: Men (Mt. Ashwabay)							
MCSA Rank:	Team:	Composite Score:					
1	UMD	167	Brandt (50)	Bauer (46)	Urbanowicz (32)	Back (26)	Swanson (13)
2	UWM	159	Martin (43)	Kyes (34)	Hemink (30)	Page (28)	Long (24)
3	UMNTC	64	Bargman (20)	Anderson (16)	Holm (12)	Bleakmore (9)	Collis (7)
4	SOC	54	Myers (37)	Caputo-Sullivan (8)	Stouffis (5)	Larsen (4)	
5	UST	41	Fischer (40)	Amundson (1)			
6	MTU	32	Miller (15)	Zoll (11)	Oldenburg (6)		
7	CSBSJU	16	Rabaey (14)	Karn (1)	Courchane (1)		
8	CC	3	Bartel (1)	Grimlund (1)	Miner (1)		
9	NC	2	Fischer (1)	Youngberg (1)			
Total Teams: 17							
Total Skiers: 82							

*Above: Mt. Ashwabay Team Standings, 2/1/2025. Calculated using the Mathie-Halvorson Scoring System. Note: There are no tiebreaking procedures for Mathie-Halvorson scores.*

### *From the Athletes*

League veteran and Men’s runner-up Ben Bauer (UMD) wrote that “this year’s MCSA Skiathlon was the best yet.” Fast snow, fresh grooming, and strong striding conditions set the stage for what Bauer believes “is this strongest MCSA field [he’s] competed in yet.”

A “huge group” dominated the first 5k of the Men’s race, thinning to roughly seven skiers by the Classic-Skate exchange—the point at which “the race really started. We pushed the pace from the beginning of the Skate and kept pushing,” with leads changing, and the pack “steadily dwindling.” With 5k to go, Bauer and Henry Brandt (1<sup>st</sup> place) were all that remained. “It was really fun to be able to push the pace with a teammate and friend and ultimately finish in a sprint down the Ashwabay Hill while dodging citizen racers (sorry to the racers we passed going Mach 2),” Bauer wrote.





Brandt agreed that the pace of the day steadily increased, culminating in he and Bauer “just about sprinting the last 5k.” The two “were just flying and trading off who was leading, but ultimately [Brandt] was able to put down more power right at the end.” Brandt’s inaugural MCSA race “was an incredible experience and probably one of the favorites races [he’s] done. It felt like all [his] training had come together, making it feel fantastic.”



Ole teammates Louisa Lamarre (1<sup>st</sup> place) and Elizabeth Weider (2<sup>nd</sup> place) similarly found that fast paces, friendly competition, and cooperative racing characterized the day. “Lizzy [Weider] and I went into the race planning to stick together and draft off each other,” Lamarre wrote. “We paced the first 15k with a couple other girls. Then in the second half we decided to try to make some distance between us and the competition. It was a friendly environment and everyone had great sportsmanship!”

*Above: Brandt outsprints Bauer after descending Mt. Ashwabay to the finish.*

*Below: St. Olaf podium finishers Lamarre, Weider, and Rothe with Mt. Ashwabay’s new “travelling trophy.” Photos: David Zoll.*



“It was a super fun race, and we both benefitted from having a teammate there!” Weider concurred.

As one of two skiers representing the College of St. Benedict & St. John’s University, A.J. Karn enjoyed CSBSJU’s collegiate debut—as well as Mt. Ashwabay’s challenging format. “It was fun to race against people our same age, and not just some really good citizen skiers! It was also fun to do a skiathlon race”—a relatively rare event he had “never done before.”

For the MTU Women, their team’s return to MCSA racing was cause for celebration, and continued focus on growing their club. “Coming from high school racing it is super fun to continue to be able to race in a strong, supportive Women’s field,” Astrid Myhre wrote of her first MCSA competition. “I am excited to keep racing for Michigan Tech. Hopefully the Women’s side of our Club can continue to grow in the coming seasons!” Fellow Husky Maria Hanauska noted that Houghton’s strong trail network should provide opportunities for future team growth. Although having “the [MTU Men’s team] and having Astrid [Myhre] as a roommate to train with is great, it’s not the same without the



*Above: MTU Women's Team skiers Myhre and Hanauska, at left, with UMNTC athletes.*

camaraderie” of a full Women’s team. “Astrid and I are going to try to get the word out and recruit more girls for next year for sure.”

As a treasured local race, the Mt. Ashwabay Summit Skiathlon is an annual testament to the hospitality of the local outdoor community. MCSA Student Coordinator Emma Reineke (UMN) reported that the league “couldn’t have asked for a better start to the season.” While the Bakers of Bayfield provided their celebrated deluge of post-race pies, Reineke noted that the race organizers introduced a new “traveling trophy”

for the MCSA teams, which the St. Olaf Women and UMD Men will need to return with—and defend!—next year.

### *Looking Ahead*

With its first race completed, traditional rivalries appear likely to dominate this year’s Collegiate Cup chase, with the Duluth Men and St. Olaf Women taking an early lead. However, new power players are already emerging: the Carleton Women’s best-yet team showing reflects a deep and solid roster for 2025. The UW-Madison Men appear eager to build on their successes of the past season, where they recorded their first single-day win since the 2020 Birkebeiner (coincidentally, at Mt. Ashwabay), and the Badger Men finished a best-ever second overall in Cup standings.

The Midwest Collegiate Cup will race its second stage on February 8<sup>th</sup>, returning to the Mora Steppe for the Vasaloppet USA events.

On February 15<sup>th</sup>—16<sup>th</sup>, the MCSA Regional Championships will constitute the third stage of the Collegiate Cup, and qualify teams for the [2025 USCSA National Championships in Bend, Oregon](#), irrespective of Collegiate Cup standings.

The Collegiate Cup will conclude with the American Birkebeiner on February 22<sup>nd</sup>.

**Full MCSA Nordic results from Mt. Ashwabay are available [here](#).**



*Interested in joining or building a USCSA team? [View our 2024-25 Teams Guide.](#)*

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