



2024 FIS COOP Cross Country World Cup

Stifel Loppet Cup, Minneapolis Watch Guide



loppetcup.com

Why host a watch party for the COOP FIS Cross Country Ski World Cup in Minneapolis, Minnesota?

There are 30-40 World Cup races per season between November through March, and this year Theodore Wirth Park, in Minneapolis, Minnesota will host 2 World Cups, a spring race, and a ten kilometer individual start race. These are the only two World Cup races in the United States. The last time the US hosted a World Cup for XC Skiing was in 2000! This is exciting and if you don't have tickets or can't make the trip to Minnesota, we still want you to participate and get your community fired up to watch the top skiers from around the world competing on American soil!

2023/2024 World Cup Calendar

Period I

Ruka	24-26 Nov	– Sprint – Interval – Mass Start
Gällivare	2-3 Dec.	– Interval – Replay
Östersund	9-10 Dec.	– Sprint – Interval
Trondheim	15-17 Dec.	– Sprint – Skiathlon – Interval

Period II (tour De Ski)

Toblach	30 Dec.-1 Jan.	– Sprint – Interval – Pursuit
Davos	3-4 Jan	– Sprint – Pursuit
Val Di Fiemme	6-7 Jan.	– Mass Start – Final Climb

Period III

Oberhof	19-21 Jan	– Sprint – Mass Start – Relay
Goms	26-28 Jan	– Mixed Relay – Sprint – Mass Start

Period IV

Canmore	9-13 Feb	– Interval – Sprint (2x) – Mass Start
Minneapolis	17-18 Feb	– Sprint – Interval

Period V

Lahti	1-3 Mar	– Team Sprint – Interval – Sprint
Oslo	9-10 Mar	– Mass Start (2x)
Drammen	12 Mar	– Sprint
Falun (Finals)	15-17 Mar	– Sprint – Interval – Mass Start

How to Host a Watch Party

Pick a date and time

Watch the races live! The World Cup races will be held Saturday, February 17th and Sunday, February 18th with the Sprint Races Saturday, and 10km interval start on Sunday. The schedule is tentatively as follows. Stay up to date at loppetcup.com/

Figure out how you will watch it

While World Cup races held outside the United States will be streaming on **Ski & Snowboard Live**, **Outside Watch is where the COOP FIS Cross Country World Cup- Loppet Cup Minneapolis will be streaming.** We will keep this updated with the most current information, but as of now it is our understanding that the full races will be live on **Outside Watch** for free with some coverage on NBC/CNBC and Peacock, but unlikely full coverage. If you want to watch the races replayed, however, a membership to **Outside+** will be required and the races may not be available for at least a week.

Pick a venue

Who is your audience for the watch party? How many people will be showing up? You may want to choose a place where people can watch the races with some quiet, but also could head out to ski or do something fun during slow times. Make sure you can have food and people can move around!

Saturday February 17 2024, Sprint Races

10:00 am
Women's Sprint
Qualification

10:30 am
Men's Sprint
Qualification

12:30pm
Women's
Sprint Final

1:00pm
Men's
Sprint Final

Sunday February 18 2024, Distance Races

10:30 am
Men's 10k
Individual Start

12:45pm
Women's 10k
Individual Start

Check and double check your technology

If you are inviting a large group, make sure you have speakers that work and a large screen television or projector ready to go!

Invite your community

Use the World Cup as an opportunity to bring your organization, team, community, family, friends, etc. together to have some fun and maybe learn something new about cross country skiing. We'd love to know about your watch party and promote it. If you register we will send you some swag to share! [Register here](#).

Plan your menu

Food is what brings together community. Get creative and go with the theme of the day either through decorations, or providing attendees with a variety of the different athletic fuels the skiers are probably downing at the races!

Plan your outfit

Invite attendees to dress up for the watch party in the colors of the country of their favorite skier and have a contest for the best outfit or get [Loppet swag](#) for all your attendees!

Prepare a short welcome and activities to do during downtime

Included with this kit are **bingo cards** that participants can use throughout for things they hear or see. Tell them a bit about the World Cup reading from the article included in this kit. Kris Hansen, Jessie Diggins's former coach, shares this advice: My biggest piece of advice for spectators watching the race in Minneapolis is to learn something about a few of the racers, whether it's athletes representing the US or athletes from other countries. Spectating can be a richer experience if you know an athlete's hometown, how they've fared in previous races, or if they prefer freestyle or classic.

Get attendees fired up watching some great moments in cross country ski history. Here are some of our favorites!

- **HERE COMES DIGGINS! Return to PyeongChang**
- **Bill Koch Wins Cross-Country Skiing Silver Innsbruck 1976 Winter Olympics BEST of cross-country skiing at #Beijing2022**

Watch. Learn. Share. Enjoy!

Connect with the World Cup community around by sharing your watch party via photos, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook #loppetcup

Resources

- **Bingo Cards**
- **Order Your World Cup Swag**
- **How To Watch All the World Cup Races**
- **FIS Cross Country Ski Hub**
- **FIS Information Wirth Cross Country World Cup**
- **Navigating a World Cup Sprint Race**
- **Navigating a World Cup Distance Race**
- **Loppet Cup**

Learn More About the Races!

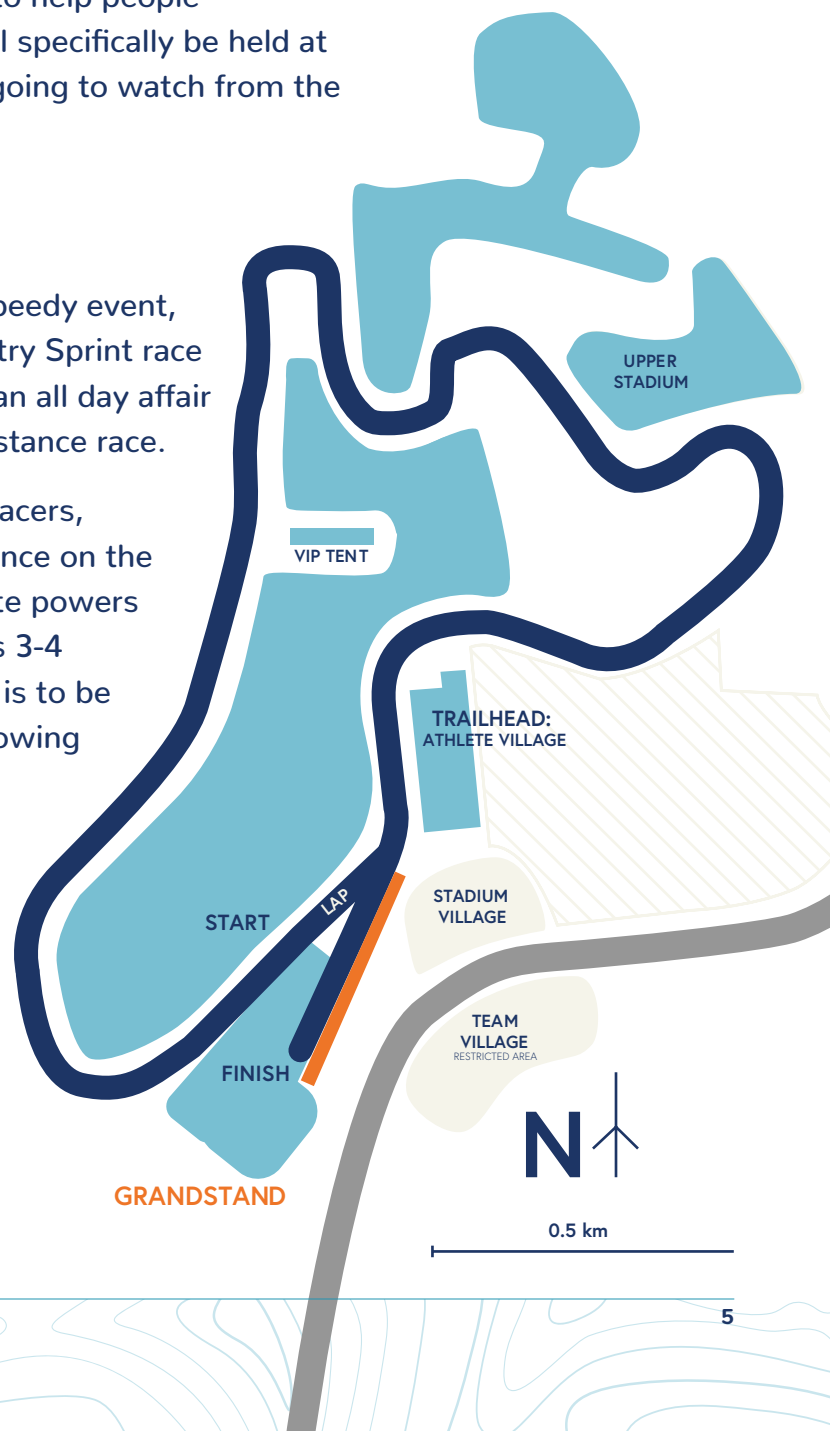
Kris Hansen, former high school coach of our very own Jessie Diggins, wrote a great series of articles for Silent Sports to help people understand the ins and outs of the races that will specifically be held at the Loppet Cup. Learn more about what you're going to watch from the following excerpts.

Saturday, The Sprint Race

The word "sprint" conjures images of a short, speedy event, so if you've never seen a World Cup Cross Country Sprint race before, you might be surprised to learn that it's an all day affair that can be as grueling for the athletes as any distance race.

Sprint races start with a qualification round. All racers, typically 50-80 athletes per gender, get their chance on the sprint course. At 15 second intervals, each athlete powers around the course in an effort that typically takes 3-4 minutes. The first goal for everyone in the event is to be one of the top 30 racers in the Qualifier, thus allowing the finisher to move on to the Quarter Finals.

Following the Qualifier, the 30 athletes progressing to the Quarter Finals are issued a new bib based on the Qualifier finishing spot, #1-30. Athletes will keep these same bibs through the Final. For those qualifiers, race day has just begun.



The Quarter Finals consist of five heats, each with six racers. The first two finishers in each Quarter Final heat qualify for the Semifinals along with the athletes with the next two fastest Quarter Final times, affectionately termed “Lucky Losers.” Quarter Final heat assignment is decided by athlete choice: the athlete finishing 11th in the Qualifier picks their heat first and that choice continues through 10th place up to first. Once the fastest qualifier has selected their heat, the 12th through 30th place qualifiers choose amongst the remaining Quarter Final spots.

Twelve athletes progress from the Quarter Finals to the Semifinals which is comprised of 2 heats of 6 skiers each: the top two racers from each of the 5 quarter final heats and two Lucky Losers. In the Semis, heats are assigned rather than chosen. The top 2 finishers in Heats 1 and 2 of the Quarter Finals are in Semifinal Heat 1; the top 2 finishers in Heats 4 and 5 are in Semifinal Heat 2. The top two finishers in Heat 3, and the two Lucky Losers are split between Semifinal Heats 1 and 2.

Managing the time between the Semis and the Finals is an important activity for the remaining field. Athletes have about 20 minutes between the end of the Semis and the start of the Finals. During this time, athletes moving from the Semis to the Finals may take a few sips of energy and will keep moving, jogging or walking around, keeping their bodies warm and ready. They need to stay focused and positive, perhaps discussing with their coaches key learnings or improvements. Athletes who progress to the Finals from Heat 1 of the Semis have about 5 min more rest than those in Heat 2. It doesn't sound like much, but the difference between 15 and 20min of rest for a World Cup sprinter can be significant.

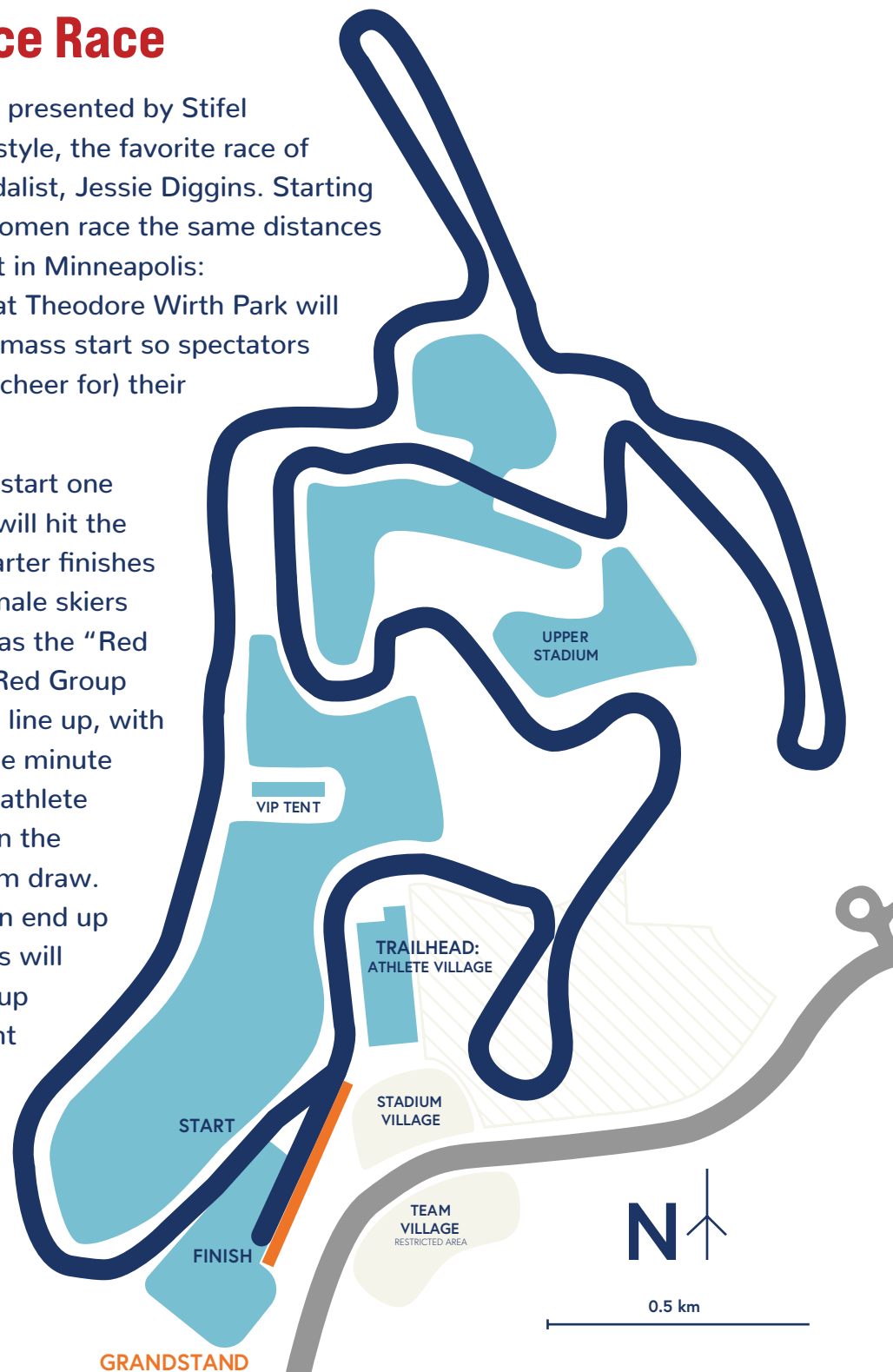
By the time a Sprint Champion is crowned at the end of the day, six athletes will have raced four times and managed nearly 5 hours of race emotion and engagement. With that in mind, it's obvious why Sprinters need quickness, power and endurance!

Sunday, The Distance Race

The second race at the Loppet Cup presented by Stifel will be a 10km individual start freestyle, the favorite race of Minnesota native and Olympic medalist, Jessie Diggins. Starting in the 2022-23 season, men and women race the same distances and thus both will do a 10km event in Minneapolis: 3 laps on a 3.37km loop. The race at Theodore Wirth Park will be an individual start rather than a mass start so spectators will get a chance to really see (and cheer for) their favorite athletes.

In an individual start race, athletes start one every 30 seconds. The last starter will hit the course around the time the first starter finishes their race. The top 15 male and female skiers going into the race are designated as the “Red Group”. The start position for the Red Group tends to be towards the end of the line up, with each Red Group athlete starting one minute apart with a single non-Red Group athlete in between. Starting position within the Red Group is determined by random draw. Although any athlete in the race can end up on the podium, often the top places will come from athletes in the Red Group who have been finishing at the front of the field in the current season.

Unlike a mass start, in individual start race, the athlete skiing their own race. Although athletes may get information



about how they are racing relative to competitors (coaches call this information “splits”), in a race as short as 10km, that information may not be particularly useful; athletes are already skiing as fast as they can and they can’t afford to let up.

Because the athletes have more room in an individual start race, they can race with their best technique and choose the fastest line without making concessions to avoid clashing with other racers. And there’s no lack of suspense in an individual start race: the race leader will almost certainly change many times as athletes cross the line and the race progresses. In a 10km freestyle race, you can expect that several finishing times will be separated by a fraction of a second. For this reason, you’ll see athletes lunge across the finish line even if they are alone on the final stretch, working for every last toe length: a tenth of a second can mean the difference between finishing on or off the podium.

Additional Information

How Does the Minneapolis World Cup Fit into the Full World Cup Season?

We're all looking forward to the Loppet Cup World Cup races at Theodore Wirth Park in Minneapolis - the first XC Ski World Cup to be hosted by the US in over twenty years. We'll ring in the Freestyle Sprint with cowbells on Feb 17th and then return, Feb 18th, with flags and fresh face paint, ready to cheer for the athletes in a 10km freestyle race. Given the rarity of a US-hosted FIS COOP Cross Country Ski World Cup, the weekend will definitely be a season highlight for many American fans and for US Ski Team members as well.

In addition to being a rare and exciting weekend of racing, the Loppet Cup is important in the context of the full World Cup racing season. Let's take a look at why.

As is traditional, during the 2023-24 season, the first World Cup is in late November in Ruka, Finland, where the mid-afternoon race will be run under lights to push back the darkness of late autumn in the northern latitudes. From there, athletes travel through eight different countries (some of them more than once), 2 continents, and five race "periods," before the season ends in the spring sunshine of Falun, Sweden in the middle of March. Barring horrible weather anomalies or global pandemics, World Cup athletes will have 35-40 races this season, a mix of sprints (generally about 1.5K), distance events (10-50K), team sprint relays (2 skiers alternating for 6 relay legs) and mixed relays (4 skiers, racing 5-10K each). Every race is an opportunity to achieve a World Cup podium (1st-gold; 2nd-silver; 3rd-bronze), and is also an opportunity to earn World Cup points. We won't go into the nuances of World Cup

scoring here except to say that in an individual event, first place typically earns 100 points and 50th place earns 1 point. All the finishers between 1st and 50th earn points along that spectrum; there are no points for finishing behind 50th place.

While striving for a podium finish in every World Cup race, many of the top athletes are also working toward the season-long, Overall World Cup awards: The Crystal Globes. FIS awards Crystal Globes to the male and female with the most points in Sprints, in Distance racing, and in the Overall category: three Crystal Globes for each gender.

Before we get into the minutia, let's take a minute to just appreciate the actual *Crystal Globes.* The name isn't just a fancy moniker, but an apt description of the trophy: a spectacular, beautiful clear and etched glass globe balanced on a similarly stunning crystal pillar. Each Crystal Globe is about 17 inches tall and weighs in at approximately 5.2 kg (11.5 lbs)...a trophy worthy of a stout case! If you've been to one of the community events celebrating US Ski Team star, Jessie Diggins, you may have seen hers. Jessie was the first American woman to win the Overall Crystal Globe, a feat she accomplished in 2021. Bill Koch, the only other American to claim an Overall title, did so in 1982. In the 2022-2023 season, Jessie finished 2nd in the Overall competition, behind Norwegian Tiril Weng. Jessie's US teammates Rosie Brennan and Julia Kern had spectacular race seasons, too, finishing 4th and 14th, respectively in the race for the Overall Crystal Globe. On the men's side, Vermont native Ben Ogden also had a very strong season finishing 8th in the Overall.

Although only Sprint races count in the quest for the Sprint Crystal Globe and only distance races for the Distance Crystal Globe, all individual races incur points towards the Overall Crystal Globe. If you want to win the Overall Crystal Globe, you have to be on or near the podium during sprint events (about 3 minutes long) and on or near the podium during 10K, 15K, 30K and 50K distance races (about 2 hours long). Oh, and you

have to be equally competitive in both classic and freestyle techniques. The best Overall XC skiers in the world have the strength, versatility and skill to meet that huge spectrum of racing skills, but it's staggering to think about what's involved. For comparison, imagine the world's best runners contending for the win in a World Cup 800 meter race and the same runners racing an Olympic marathon in the same weekend.

In addition to being an incredible athlete with a strong support team, there's one well known trick to winning the Overall Crystal Globe. Don't get sick. Especially not during the Tour de Ski (TDS). Modeled after the Tour de France bike race, the TDS is a grueling stage race immediately following the December holidays. The TDS includes 7 races over 9 days weaving between Italy and Switzerland and finishing with a mass start freestyle race up Alpe Cermis in Italy. After a rolling 5.5km start, that particular race course climbs 425 meters (nearly 1400 feet) in 3.5K with an average grade of 12% and some slopes approaching 30%.

It is a truly grueling event, but that's not the point.

The point is the points. In the TDS, there are over 600 points on the line for those who finish the whole event. If you are sick and can't race on Day 1 of the TDS, you miss out on the entire event and on the opportunity to earn 7 races worth of podiums and points (plus bonuses). Norway's Weng won the women's Overall Crystal Globe last season with 2029 points, over 530 of which she earned during the TDS. While missing any race weekend for illness can be a challenge if you are pursuing the Overall Crystal Globe, missing the TDS makes it virtually impossible to contend for the top spot.

As for the significance of OUR World Cup on Feb 17 & 18, the winner of each event in Minneapolis will earn 100 points. Will 200 points be meaningful to the top contenders by the time they finish racing in Falun, Sweden in mid-March? Maybe, maybe not, but probably in mid-February, it won't be clear. Couple those 200 points at the Loppet Cup with the fact that there is a 4-race World Cup series in Canada the weekend

before the athletes come to Minneapolis and the number of points to be contested in North America this season grows high enough that no one who is seriously pursuing the Overall Crystal Globe will want to miss out. Doing so would be nearly as significant as missing the TDS.

As a side note, Kikkan Randall, the US Ski Team member who paired up with Jessie Diggins to win the US's first Olympic Gold medal in XC skiing (freestyle sprint relay, Pyeongchang, South Korea), earned the Sprint Crystal Globe in three consecutive seasons between 2012 and 2014. Randall retired from ski racing in 2018, but will undoubtedly be part of the excitement at the Minneapolis World Cup, calling the race for those watching on TV.

The Loppet Cup will be a special race weekend for American fans and American skiers alike. If not a once in a lifetime opportunity, then the races in Minneapolis will be at least a once in a generation chance to experience a FIS COOP Cross Country World Cup ski race in our own country. We can revel in the excitement of having our own race and take pride in the fact that the races in Minneapolis are also an important part of the full 2023-24 World Cup race season. Go for the Globe!

By Kris Hansen