

West Division

Concordia University at Austin
 Hardin-Simmons University
 Howard Payne University
 University of Mary Hardin-Baylor
 McMurry University
 Schreiner University
 Sul Ross State University
 Texas Lutheran University

**East Division**

Austin College
 East Texas Baptist University
 LeTourneau University
 Louisiana College
 Mississippi College
 University of the Ozarks
 University of Texas at Dallas
 University of Texas at Tyler

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**Mary Hardin-Baylor Picked to Repeat as American Southwest Conference Football Champions;
 Adam King, Alex Hansen, Scott Verhalen Earn Conference Preseason Player of the Year Nods**

RICHARDSON, Texas—Defending American Southwest Conference football champion University of Mary Hardin-Baylor has been projected to repeat as league champs in 2003, edging Howard Payne University in preseason polling of the conference head coaches, sports information directors and media.

The Crusaders, who are looking to earn a third consecutive berth in the NCAA Division III Football Championship, collected 13 first-place votes and totaled 239 points. Howard Payne trailed UMHB by eight points (231 pts.) while taking six first-place votes. Five-time ASC champion Hardin-Simmons University finished third in the balloting with 217 points.

Upper-division finishes were predicted for East Texas Baptist University (192) and Mississippi College (138) who were picked fourth and fifth, respectively. First-year NCAA-III eligible Louisiana College was slotted at sixth (127), followed by Austin College (109), Texas Lutheran University (75), Sul Ross State University (60) and McMurry University (42) in the seventh through 10th spots.

Three all-conference players were voted to ASC Preseason Player of the Year honors. Quarterback **Adam King** (*Amarillo, Texas*) of Howard Payne was named Preseason Offensive Player of the Year, cornerback **Alex Hansen** (*Southlake, Texas*) of Hardin-Simmons was selected Preseason Defensive Player of the Year and East Texas Baptist punter **Scott Verhalen** (*Marshall, Texas*) Preseason Special Teams Player of the Year. King, the league's 2002 Offensive Player of the Year, set season pass completion percentage record (.646, 245-of-379) a year ago while Hansen holds the season interception record with nine in 2002. Verhalen averaged a league-best 45.2 yards a punt in 2000 and has been the top punter in NCAA-III the past two seasons.

2003 American Southwest Conference Preseason Football Coaches Poll

Rank	Team (first place votes)	Points	2002 Records
1.	Mary Hardin-Baylor (13)	239	10-1, 9-0 ASC
2.	Howard Payne (6)	231	9-1, 8-1 ASC
3.	Hardin-Simmons (4)	217	8-2, 7-2 ASC
4.	East Texas Baptist (3)	192	6-4, 6-3 ASC
5.	Mississippi College	138	4-6, 4-5 ASC
6.	Louisiana College	127	4-6, 3-6 ASC
7.	Austin College	109	4-6, 4-5 ASC
8.	Texas Lutheran	75	2-8, 2-7 ASC
9.	Sul Ross State	60	2-8, 2-7 ASC
10.	McMurry	42	0-10, 0-9 ASC

ASC Preseason Offensive Player of the Year:
 Adam King, QB, Jr., Howard Payne

ASC Preseason Defensive Player of the Year:
 Alex Hansen, CB, Jr., Hardin-Simmons

ASC Preseason Special Teams Player of the Year:
 Scott Verhalen, P, Sr., East Texas Baptist