

SPORTS

The Downfall of the ASC



By Jackson Keenan
Sports Editor

For the past 27 years, the American Southwest Conference has had a consistent membership from Division III schools all across Texas and even into Arkansas, but now faces its biggest challenge as it tries to stay alive as many teams realign with different conferences.

As of Sept. 15, 2023, full ACS members McMurray, University of the Ozarks, Concordia University Texas, Sul Ross State, UT Dallas and football affiliates Austin College, Texas Lutheran and Southwestern have either left the conference or are planning to leave.

The exodus will begin in the fall of 2024 as McMurray, Ozarks, and Concordia Texas will become full time members of the Southern Collegiate Athletic Conference. That same year the SCAC will sponsor a football conference which will see Texas Lutheran, Austin College and South-

western leave as football affiliates. Sul Ross State will move up to Division II joining the Lone Star Conference. Lastly, in the fall of 2025 UT Dallas will move up to Division II.

Schools such as Sul Ross State have stated in their press release that some of the main reasons for going to Division II is because of less travel, and the ability to provide athletic scholarships.

This differs between schools moving from the ASC to the SCAC, like the University of the Ozarks revealed in the following statement:

“The SCAC gives us a stable NCAA Division III conference whose member colleges fit us better in regards to enrollment size and facilities. Our coaches and student-athletes are excited about competing against new D-III programs and traveling to new areas. Another advantage is that we will have three conference schools that will be within a 5 hour drive and we currently don’t

have any that close,” said University of the Ozarks Athletic Director Jimmy Clarke.

While there are a multitude of reasons for the movement, there is another divide brought up by Cory Houge, a writer at Dave Cam-

other denominations want to have the ability to sell alcohol and provide a tailgate atmosphere for their fans,” said Houge.

Another reason for the departure, especially in football, is that either UMHB or

they will lose automatic eligibility to the NCAA tournament.

The ASC will need to either add teams into their conference or align themselves with another conference to secure an automatic bid. According to Houge, conference alignment is the only option.

“The only way to keep their automatic bid would be in alignment with other conferences. There’s been a couple of mentions of the coast to coast conferences, and there’s another one in California that’s been mentioned. The problem is you’re not operating from a position of strength,” Houge said.

An example alignment in the NCAA would be the Great Northwest Athletic Conference aligned with the Lone Star Conference allowing Simon Frazier, Central Washington, and Western Oregon eligibility to win LSC championships and weekly awards in football. While there is some hope for the ASC

to align with another conference there is still a legitimate threat of the ASC shutting down operations completely.

“It is a very unstable ground the ASC is on and it could go either way. Right now it’s UT Dallas leaving and moving up to Division II in basketball. That was a blow. I think it’s good news for the ASC that no one else has jumped ship since it’s kind of calmed down,” said Houge

With so much uncertainty, both ASC commissioner David Flores and the remaining schools will need to work together and find a way to keep some semblance of a future for the ASC. While there has been no announcement of realignment or adding new programs, the remaining schools will stay committed to the ASC through the 2024-2025 season.

“We are working through the process and are committed to our current ASC schedule for the 2023-24 and 2024-25 seasons,” said UMHB.



bell’s Texas Football.

“The current American Southwest Conference alcohol policy has always been no alcohol at sporting events. This is where you start to see the separate denominations are involved. The baptist schools want to keep it that way, while some of the other schools with

Hardin-Simmons have won the ASC Conference Championship for 26 out of the 27 years the ASC has sponsored football.

While the reason for leaving the ASC may vary, the fact still remains that the ASC in the current state will be down to only five teams, meaning that

Cru Football Coach Hopeful for Team’s Future

By Bradley Melchor
Sports Editor

The University of Mary Hardin-Baylor Crusaders football team, hoping to build upon a successful 2022-2023 campaign and semi-finals appearance in the NCAA Division III National tournament, have somewhat stumbled out of the gate.

The Cru had three official preseason games scheduled for the month of September, all against nationally ranked Division III opponents. The Crusaders dropped their first two games on the road to then ranked No.23 University of Wisconsin-River Falls and No.5 Trinity University before dropping their home opener

against No.4 University of Wisconsin-Whitewater.

Despite their 0-3 start to the season, it is not all doom and gloom for Harmon and his team. After getting routed by River Falls, the Cru have put in competitive efforts against two of the top teams in Division III, with the Crusaders falling short to Whitewater by a mere field goal.

Sophomore quarterback Isaac Phe has been thrust into a starting role due to injuries, and both he and his team have shown tremendous growth through the first three games. In his first two starts Phe has thrown a total of 423 yards, two touchdowns, and completed 60% of his

passes.

Despite their rough start, Coach Harmon says the mindset of the team and his message to them has not changed.

“The only guaranteed way to make it to the National tournament is to win your conference, and regardless of our record in the pre-season, we need to focus on these next seven games and focus on winning our conference,” Harmon stated at a press conference.

The Crusaders will hope to turn their progress into victory when they start conference play at 6 p.m Saturday as they host McMurry University at Crusader Stadium for Homecoming Weekend.



Photo by Jackson Keenan/TheBells

Kenneth Cormier Jr. senior running back stiff arms UW Whitewater linebacker as he runs towards the endzone

UMHB WOMEN’S SOCCER RESULTS



W, 1-0



W, 3-0



W, 1-0



W, 2-1



Women’s Soccer Dominates

By Bradley Melchor
Sports Editor

The Crusaders Women’s Soccer team have enjoyed a perfect start to their 2023 campaign.

The Cru started their season off with a long away trip to Duluth, Minn. where they defeated both the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater and The College of St.Scholastica in shut-out fashion. The Cru-

saders then hosted their home opener against Ohio Northern University, keeping another shutout in a sound 1-0 victory. They then traveled to Georgetown to take on the Southwestern University Pirates in their most recent contest, winning the match 2-1 and improving their record to an impressive 4-0 this season.

Sophomore midfielder Jayme Dowell and senior forward Mackenzie Worthy led

the Crusaders with two goals a piece, while junior goalkeepers Ainsley Westlake and Raegen Williams have combined to keep three clean sheets in the opening four games, with only one goal conceded on the season.

The Cru will hope to extend their winning streak and continue their undefeated start to the season as they host Texas Lutheran University at 7 p.m. Friday, Sept. 22.