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2008-09 No Banner Year Either

During the 2007-08 academic year, USMNEWS.net staff followed the progress of USM's athletics teams in order to assess USM president Martha Saunders' Fall 2007 Convocation claim that Golden Eagles sports teams would be producing a "banner year" in 2007-08. The report that ultimately emerged from that assignment, "Aunt Martha's 'Banner Year'," is inserted below. As you can see, the Golden Eagles sports units won only 51.6% of their contests (i.e., 239 wins in 463 contests) during 2007-08, a result representing anything *but* a "banner year."

Aunt Martha's "Banner Year"

USM President, Martha Saunders, stood before USM faculty, staff and students, along with local media, at the University's Fall 2007 Convocation and proclaimed that USM's athletics would be producing a banner year during 2007-08. How did Saunders' proclamation stand up to the test of time? If Table 1 below is any indication, not so well.

Table 1
USM Athletics: 2007-08 Performance

<u>Sport</u>	<u>Wins</u>	<u>Losses</u>	<u>Win. %</u>
Volleyball	13	21	38.2
Soccer	8	11	42.1
Football	7	6	53.8
Women's Basketball	21	14	60.0
Men's Basketball	19	14	57.6
Softball	25	30	45.5
Baseball	42	22	65.6
Women's Tennis	9	6	60.0
Men's Tennis	8	14	36.4
Women's Golf	36	30	54.5
Men's Golf	44	29	60.3
Women's Track	6	16	27.3
Men's Track	1	11	8.3
Totals	239	224	51.6

Source: southernamiss.cstv.com

As the data above indicate, only USM's football and baseball teams finished their seasons after participating in a top-level national format/tournament. Overall, USM's sports programs won only 239 of their 463 outings during the 2007-08 academic year. This is certainly not a "banner year" by any stretch of the imagination.

Saunders' USM blog told the world that she (Saunders) hired the coach who led the University of Wisconsin at Whitewater to the Division 3 national championship in 2007. Maybe USM fans should give her a chance to replace each current USM coach before complaining about the banner year of 2007-08.

As a follow-up to last year's report, and perhaps to serve as a check-up, USMNEWS.net staff has been following Golden Eagles athletics teams during 2008-09. The results, at least thus far, are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1
USM Athletics: 2008-09 Performance

Sport	Wins	Losses	Ties	Win %
Volleyball	17	13	0	56.7
Soccer	5	13	1	28.9
Football	7	6	0	53.8
Women's Basketball	20	12	0	62.5
Men's Basketball	15	17	0	46.9
Softball*	19	19	1	50.0
Baseball*	20	10	0	66.7
Women's Tennis*	7	11	0	38.9
Men's Tennis*	9	7	0	56.3
Women's Golf*	30	25	0	54.5
Men's Golf*	26	32	1	44.9
Women's Track*	4	7	0	36.4
Men's Track*	0	6	0	0.0
Totals	179	178	3	50.1

*Season not yet completed.

Source: southernmiss.cstv.com

Table 1 above indicates that the 2008-09 version (collective) of the Golden Eagles is performing *worse* (thus far) *than* the 2007-08 version did, the first under Saunders. Not only has there not been any noticeable improvement overall, some are saying that Larry Eustachy's job as head men's basketball coach is on the chopping block. Given the obvious lack of performance shown above, the Saunders administration should be thinking hard about how athletics can contribute to USM's budget cuts in 2009-10.