

31st & Pearl

Updated, See Below

Misery

The student athletes on the USM women's basketball team have earned PhDs in heartache and disappointment. Their major professor is [head coach](#) Joye Lee-McNelis. The fan base, a largely older, yet loyal population of Hattiesburg citizens that was cultivated by former head coach Kay James, has long since melted away. Now, [echoes of crickets](#) are all that can be heard inside Reed Green Coliseum on game days. There's [little wonder](#) as to why all of this is occurring. Lee-McNelis began her USM career in 2004-05, going 9-19 (0.321) that first season. The last two years, her sixth and seventh, saw her lady cagers go 9-21 (0.300) and 10-20 (0.333), respectively. Things were supposed to get better, not worse. As it stands, the group of juniors on this year's roster were only 19-41 (0.317) going into their third season, or Lee-McNelis' eighth, in the 'Burg. Heading into the 26-Jan-2012 game against UTEP, the Lady Eagles juniors are only 6-13 (0.316) on the 2011-12 season, and thus 25-54 (0.316) over their USM careers.

There are [many shameful pieces](#) to this chapter in Eagle athletics history. For one, former USM softball coach Howard Dobson was run out of town on a rail in 2011 after going 93-124-2 (0.429) – a mark that is 2.4 percentage points better than Lee-McNelis' most recent four seasons (her fifth- eighth) – after just four seasons in the Hub City. Lee-McNelis has had eight. Even worse, Scott Berry, the head baseball coach who has gone 75-43 (0.636) over his first two seasons in 2010-11 – a mark that is 32 percentage points better than Lee-McNelis' most recent four – is earning a whopping [\\$43,000 less than](#) Lee-McNelis, a troublesome situation [chastised by famed](#) Mississippi sportswriter Rick Cleveland in April-2011. To think that it took a \$22,600 raise to get Berry this close only makes it worse. So much for *winning* the 2010 C-USA baseball title. Finally, to top all this off, Lee-McNelis resorted to [committing NCAA violations in 2010](#), a move that sent the NCAA to town and resulted in [a one-game suspension](#) for the head coach.

It's clearly time for Lee-McNelis to pack her bags and exit the USM athletics department. The details above make more than a sufficient case for such to occur. Oh, by the way, Lee-McNelis' Lady Eagles were just defeated by UTEP, and are now 6-14 (0.300) on the 2011-12 season. Lee-McNelis' tenure already includes the three worst seasons at USM since 1977. Her current 2011-12 record matches the worst of these three. It looks like another record-setting year will be added to Lee-McNelis' resume.

Updated, 31-Jan-2012

Between the time that this column was penned and when it was published, the Lady Eagles lost yet another game – on the road against UAB. That loss dropped the team's record to a dismal 6-15 (0.286). If the 2011-12 season ends with this mark, head coach Joye Lee-McNelis will have produced her worst season in 8 years at USM. Odds are that the record will be even worse by the time that the season ends. The loss to UAB also drops Lee-McNelis record since 2009-10 to 25-56 (0.309). The misery continues.

31st & Pearl is a series housed at usmnews.net that features commentary on aspects of life in the CoB, and at USM, from a variety of columnists.