

31st & Pearl

Isn't It Time?

USMNEWS.net columnist Susan Green-Lewis did a commendable job in [making the case](#) for replacing current USM head women's basketball coach Joye Lee-McNelis with someone more capable of the task at hand. In doing so, Green-Lewis [dispatched](#) with ease [the arguments from Lindy Tolar](#) in support of Lee-McNelis, and cut right to the chase. Lee-McNelis' 18-34 record over the past two seasons, her *sixth* and *seventh* at the helm, indicate that the Lady Eagles are nowhere near replicating what former head coach Kay James did while in charge of the same program. Now that Green-Lewis is off to writing about *Wikipedia* entries on USM and president Martha Saunders, it's time for others to re-address the Lady Eagles fiasco before things fall so far down that salvaging the program is essentially a lost cause.



Coming off a 9-21 campaign in 2009-10, Lee-McNelis' worst since coming to USM about seven years ago, the Lady Eagles currently stand at only 9-13 on the 2010-11 season. This nine-win total includes *overtime wins* over Louisiana-Lafayette, Tulane, and East Carolina. The first and third of these occurred in Hattiesburg, and against teams respectively ranked 280th and 152nd nationally by Jeff Sagarin. Added to these are a 1-point win against Arkansas-Little Rock and a 3-point win against UAB, both of which occurred in Hattiesburg as well. By contrast, the Lady Eagles' closest loss is a 3-point defeat at home against Tulsa, ranked only

226th nationally. After that, the smallest margin of defeat jumps to 10 points and beyond. In short, USM has gotten just about every break imaginable this season, and that includes getting ahead by having Lee-McNelis commit three NCAA violations for which she was [suspended during this season](#). Clearly, the picture above from the Lady Eagles' recent defeat at home (6-Feb-2011) at the hands of Marshall – only the 254th best team nationally – attests to the sad state of affairs of this particular USM athletics program.

If the calendar turns over to March, and then again to April and May, and the USM community finds itself still hanging on to Lee-McNelis, and her 97-109 (0.471) overall record, faculty will have to begin asking themselves if coaches are being granted tenure now at USM. Case after case is being made that these relatively highly paid members of the family are somehow able to hang on to their jobs within the institution, despite records of poor performance. At the same time, faculty and academic programs are being cast aside, and the protections of academic tenure are being eroded in the process. It's difficult to juxtapose these two realities and not conclude that what the USM coaches have is even better than tenure. Whatever it is they possess, perhaps it's time for USM faculty to look into getting some of it for themselves.

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.