

31st & Pearl

How much does Saunders Hate USM Faculty *Now*?

As *The Hattiesburg American's* USM sports beat reporter Patrick Magee reported on 1-June-2011 (via [his blog](#)), USM head baseball coach Scott Berry got the word that one of his top starting pitchers, Geoffrey Thomas, has been ruled *academically* ineligible for the rest of the 2011 season. Thomas, who missed the 2011 C-USA Tournament in Jackson last week due to academic shortcomings, had been hoping to have his 2011 eligibility restored. Now he, *and* another frontline pitcher, Jonathan Thompson, will both be missing the upcoming NCAA Regional in Atlanta due to academic issues.

The Eagles were 36-11 heading into the end of the 2011 season. They have since gone 3-6, bringing their record to 39-17 on the season. This run includes a pool-play record of only 1-2 in the C-USA championships, a tournament that USM president Martha Saunders and other USM fans had been looking forward to for a year now. USM's quick elimination last week not only led to the current run of 3-6 in the last nine games, it also cost Hattiesburg the opportunity to host an NCAA Regional. Saunders, USM athletics director Richard Giannini, and thousands of USM baseball fans must be foaming at the mouth right about now. A quick departure from Jackson, no home regional, and now sans Thomas, who is 10-3 on the season, and Thompson – how could things have gone worse over the last 14 days or so?

With these events, you can bet that the sports-centric Saunders is livid at the USM faculty ranks, particularly those professors who taught the spring 2011 courses that gave Thomas and Thompson enough difficulty that they now have to forfeit the end of their 2011 season. Pitching is not one of USM's strongest elements, so the absence of these two will be felt over the next few days. If things take the turn that looks to be coming, one wonders what under-their-breath remarks that USM sports supporters will soon be making about the USM professorate. If anything is said in earshot of Saunders, you can also bet she'll affirm, rather than refute, whatever she hears.

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.