

Ain't Skeered?

More on Eustachy's 'Smoke and Mirrors' Campaign

The USMNEWS.net [sports bureau](#) and USMNEWS.net [contributors](#) have been working overtime in recent days, [covering](#) all of the [news](#) surrounding the USM basketball [programs](#). This work is especially important these days, as USM athletics director Richard Giannini is engaging in a [media blitz](#) extolling the virtues of keeping Eustachy, pictured below, in the USM family. Patrick Magee of *The Hattiesburg American* reported on 17-Mar-2011 that Eustachy's current compensation level is a whopping \$360,000, and that with this year's 22-10 overall finish (19-10 against Division I teams), Eustachy's contract automatically extends an additional year. The tone of Magee's article, which mistakenly refers to Eustachy's overall record at USM as 117-100, instead of 117-104 (and a much worse 93-104 against Division I competition), suggests that the coach is likely to receive a raise during the summer. These extensions and raises are odd, according to sources, given that Eustachy has yet to earn either an NCAA or NIT bid since taking over the program seven seasons ago.



A number of comments have been submitted to Magee's article, and most have been highly critical of both Eustachy and Giannini. This set of comments continues the trend from various USM sports Internet message boards, where many are calling for Eustachy's ouster. One *THA* reader, "jesuitbluejay," even criticizes USM president Martha Saunders for not showing leadership in this situation – one that seems to be heating up more and more each day.

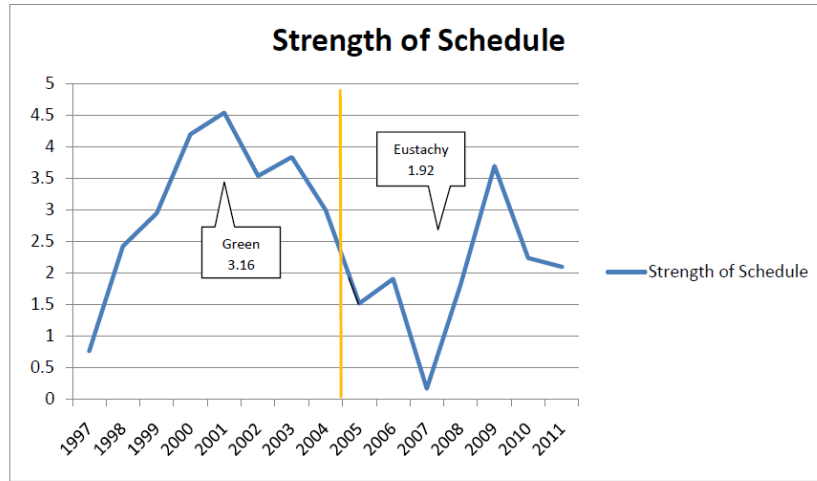
jesuitbluejay

8:07 PM on March 17, 2011

Where is Saunders in this fiasco? She's certainly not showing any type of leadership!Pitiful. I haven't been in over 3 years and won't be back. It's absolutely insulting how this clown has stolen from the University.

This report adds to prior ones by providing some information on the scheduling practices of Eustachy and Giannini. The insert below shows the "strength of schedule" trend for USM men's basketball from 1997, former head coach James Green's first year at USM, through the most recent season, 2011. The data come from www.sports-reference.com, an electronic warehouse of college basketball data that are available by team. The numbers found there for strength of schedule are based on a

scale where 0 equals the average schedule difficulty in a given season, and positive and negative scores indicate schedule difficulties above and below that average, respectively.



As the insert above points out, Green came to Hattiesburg in 1997 and immediately initiated a program to upgrade the USM men's basketball schedules. Over the course of his eight years at the helm, average schedule difficulty was 3.16, while Green's overall record against Division I schools was 119-111 (0.517) over that same period. Eustachy, on the other hand, has produced a 93-104 (0.472) overall record against Division I opponents during a time when average strength of schedule has been 1.92, or only 60% of the score under Green.

These comparisons are remarkable. While Eustachy clearly appears scared to expose his coaching acumen to respectable opposition, Giannini continues to brag about his latest men's basketball hire to anyone who will listen, including *THA's* Magee. Whether or not Saunders will step up to the leadership plate and take some action remains to be seen. Sources say that until she does, Eustachy will continue to orchestrate his *smoke and mirrors* symphony, as he appears to be doing in the photo above.