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Aunt Martha's Coaches

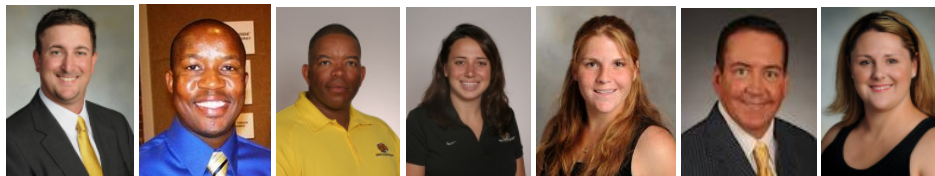
Did Saunders Lose the Magic Touch? Or, Did She Ever Have It?

After the University of Wisconsin at Whitewater won the Division III national championship in 2007, former USM President Martha Saunders blogged that during the 2006-07 academic year while Chancellor at UW-W she had hired the first-year coach who led UW-W to the title. Apparently, Saunders believed that much of credit for the UW-W national championship was due to her special talents at selecting coaches. Assuming Saunders had such a “magic touch” when it comes to selecting head coaches, this essay examines whether or not Saunders’ talent translated to the Division I level. During her 2007-2012 tenure as USM president, Saunders hired 12 head coaches. These are:

- Scott Berry, baseball
- Howard Dobson, softball
- Scott Ebke, women’s soccer
- Larry Fedora, football
- Ellis Johnson, football
- Ki Kroll, men’s tennis
- Dominic Modise, women’s tennis
- Kevin Stephen, men’s and women’s track
- Abbey Sutherland, women’s volleyball
- Raynie Theis, women’s tennis
- Donnie Tyndall, men’s basketball
- Kirsten Voak/Jon Malgradi, softball



Berry Dobson Ebke Fedora Johnson Kroll



Malgradi Modise Stephen Sutherland Theis Tyndall Voak

USM baseball coach Scott Berry was hired by Saunders in May of 2009, and began his tenure with the 2010 season, while softball coach, Howard Dobson, began his tenure at USM during spring semester 2008, Saunders’ third full semester at USM. Women’s soccer coach, Scott Ebke, and football coach, Larry Fedora, began their respective tenures at USM during fall semester 2008, Saunders’ fifth full semester at USM. Kevin Stephen, head of USM’s track

programs, was one of Saunders' first hires back in 2007. Raynie Theis began her tenure as USM's women's tennis coach during fall semester 2009, while Abbey Sutherland began her tenure as the women's volleyball coach in fall 2010. Ki Kroll took charge of the USM men's tennis program in the spring of 2011. In 2011 Saunders brought in both Kirsten Voak and Jon Malgradi to serve as co-head coaches for softball. Head football coach Ellis Johnson began his tenure at USM in 2011, but was released in 2012 after just one season. Donnie Tyndall was hired during the spring of 2012 to replace the outgoing Larry Eustachy in men's basketball. Finally, Dominic Modise was hired in 2012 to lead women's tennis. Table 1 below contains information on how successful Saunders' 12 choices for head coaches have been since coming to USM to lead their respective sports programs.

Table 1
USM Career Records of Aunt Martha's Coaches

Name	Sport	Wins	Losses	Ties	Win%
Berry, Scott	Baseball	169	117	0	59.1%
Dobson, Howard*	Softball	93	124	2	42.9%
Ebke, Scott*	Women's Soccer	20	65	7	25.5%
Fedora, Larry*	Football	34	19	0	64.2%
Johnson, Ellis*	Football	0	12	0	0.0%
Kroll, Ki*	Men's Tennis	27	43	0	38.6%
Modise, Dominic	Women's Tennis	12	33	0	26.7%
Stephen, Kevin	Track & Field	54	185	2	22.6%
Sutherland, Abbey*	Women's Volleyball	44	47	0	48.4%
Theis, Raynie*	Women's Tennis	24	43	0	35.8%
Tyndall, Donnie*	Men's Basketball	56	17	0	76.7%
Voak, Kirsten & Malgradi, Jon#	Softball	<u>49</u>	<u>105</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>31.8%</u>
		580	809	11	41.8%

* No longer affiliated with USM

Hired as co-head coaches in 2011

As the data in Table 1 above indicate, most of Saunders' 12 choices to lead various USM athletics teams have been less than stellar. Dobson's inaugural softball season (2008) produced 30 losses, while his fourth produced 38. He was not retained as head coach after the 2011 season. Ebke's winning clip indicates that Saunders failed to turn USM's floundering women's soccer program around. Kroll's first season (in 2011) at them helm of men's tennis was a dismal 3-19. As is now well known, Saunders' choice to replace Larry Fedora at the top of the football program was an epic fail – there, Ellis Johnson was 0-12 in only one season. When it comes to sports, it appears that Saunders brought back the days of Mississippi Southern.