

USM Fans Furious Over Bowl Situation

HATTIESBURG – At the end of the 2011 C-USA Championship Game on 3-Dec-2011, the scoreboard read USM 49, Houston 28. With that result, USM had defeated 6th-ranked Houston, who was 12-0 on the season, and shut down UH's Heisman Trophy candidate Case Keenum in the process. USM's win, its first ever in the C-USA title game, elevated its record to an unprecedented 11-2. It was arguably the Golden Eagles' finest moment in terms of football.



Head coach Larry Fedora and the Golden Eagles celebrate USM's finest moment.

Almost all of the thrill associated with USM's C-USA championship fizzled away on 4-Dec-2011, when USM was selected to play in the Sheraton Hawai'i Bowl on 24-Dec-2011 against Nevada Wolfpack, a 7-5 team that shared second place in the Western Athletic Conference. The Sheraton Hawai'i Bowl pays participating teams only \$750,000, which is just a little more than half the amount of money that participating teams were awarded in the 1997 and 1999 Liberty Bowls that USM won under Jeff Bower, and that is not accounting for inflation over the past 15 years. Not only that, the estimated cost of attending the Sheraton Hawai'i Bowl has many USM fans planning to skip this year's bowl festivities. (Sources tell USMNEWS.net that the team will likely even lose a substantial amount of money financing this trip.)

The ire of Eagles fans has been so great that the bowl announcement on USM Athletics' Facebook page had to be removed when the page's wall became cluttered with negative comments. Since the 8:00pm announcement, the BigGoldNation message board has been inundated with negative comments, explosive rants, and assignment of blame to various officials, including USM president Martha Saunders, USM athletics director Richard Giannini, and C-USA [commissioner](#) Britton Banowsky. Heat over the bowl selection was so great on 4-Dec-2011 that Giannini felt compelled to release [a statement](#) to the media regarding the decision process. According to Giannini, it was *Fedora* who made the decision to accept the Sheraton Hawai'i Bowl so that, according to Giannini, the coaches and players would receive a nice reward – visiting Hawai'i – for having such a successful season. USM fans, however, see the decision as one that clearly ignores the team's thousands of dedicated and loyal fans, very few of whom will have the

economic capacity to make the trip. Some are saying that Giannini is clearly “passing the buck” and laying the blame at Fedora’s feet. Others are even angry at Fedora, who supporters of Texas A&M University are now saying will become that school’s next head football coach, for selecting a paradise getaway on his way out of USM. The BigGoldNation message board thread below typifies many of the feelings described above, and also issues a stern warning to Saunders over this particularly disheartening situation.

Eagle
...uburbs
Key Reserve
Post #

Statement from Richard Giannini - Fedora Playing Patsy for AD

Reply

AD failed at his job to do what is best for the University, not the players. Fedora is gone within the next two weeks. This is a spin to protect Richard only and the university leadership. RG should be fired as soon as Fedora resigns.

Posted on 12/4 10:00 PM | IP: Logged

Coast Trash
Post #32

Re: Statement from Richard Giannini - Fedora Playing Patsy for AD

Reply

You are spot on. RG FAILED, and is the biggest wuss for not taking the blame. President Saunders you are on the hook as well.

Sources tell USMNEWS.net that speculation about how much money a USM win over Houston would cost C-USA schools has also played out. The five bowls that are hosting C-USA schools this bowl season will be paying out an estimated \$4,050,000, the lowest take for the conference in years. Had Houston (12-1) defeated USM, C-USA institutions would have received a total payout of approximately \$20,550,000. The largest payout for C-USA, \$1.1 million, will come from Houston’s participation in the TicketCity Bowl in Dallas. Houston is matched against Penn State. SMU (7-5) and Tulsa (8-4) will bring an estimated \$600,000 each back to C-USA for their invitations to the Compass Bowl (Birmingham) and Armed Forces Bowl (Fort Worth), respectively. SMU and Tulsa will play Pittsburgh and Brigham Young, respectively. Lastly, Marshall (6-6) will bring C-USA \$500,000 for its participation in the Beef ‘O’ Brady’s Bowl (Tampa) against Florida International.

As pointed out above, Fedora appears to be on the short list at Texas A&M, and there are reports that he is a finalist for the open position at North Carolina. (There are also reports that Fedora was Ole Miss’ first choice, though he turned down their offer.) One way or another, it appears as though USM will lose its head coach in the next several days. Depending on the timing and other particulars, it could be *without* a permanent coaching staff heading into 24-Dec-2011. With its motivation to perform well leaking out into the atmosphere by the hour, going to Honolulu with an interim, skeleton coaching staff could be a disaster.