

Underwood Praises Johnson, Trashes Fedora

HATTIESBURG – USM’s dismal 0-8 start to the 2012 college football season has left frayed nerves and testy attitudes among the USM faithful. Following a 12-2 season in 2011, former president Martha Saunders’ selection of Ellis Johnson, the former defensive coordinator of the South Carolina Gamecocks, to lead the USM football team is causing all sorts of divisions within the USM community. Salt was once again spread across the open emotional wounds on 31-Oct-2012 when former USM football coach P.W. Underwood [told a weekly radio show audience to remain united](#) behind Johnson for the good of the USM football program. According to Underwood,

“I played out there at the University of Southern Mississippi, and I coached out there for 10 years, and I coached at Auburn. Do you know what their record is right now? They’ve won one game and lost the rest of them, and they were the national champs two years ago. Football is football, and [former USM head football coach Larry] Fedora was a dang cheerleader. He wasn’t a coach. He didn’t have any discipline, and we’ve played as many top 20 teams (this year) as he played in four years. He played two SEC games. When I came here in 1969, I played 14 SEC games and then (most) of them on the road, because we were building that stadium and all that.”

Underwood’s main concern appeared to be the negative effect that fan angst over the 0-8 start to the 2012 season would have on USM’s recruiting and Johnson’s chance at ultimate success. He admonished USM fans to not criticize Johnson and the program within earshot of potential future players or their family members, saying,

“I’m just telling you, if we’re in the stands and our people don’t be one and be for the team, and be for each other, we’ve got to have unity. If we don’t do it and other folks hear you talking about (negativity), some of the kids’ parents hear it, and that kills your recruiting. How are you going to recruit with everyone talking like that? Men, we’ve got to have unity and oneness and be a team. We bleed black and gold.”

Sources tell USMNEWS.net that Underwood’s comments likely did more harm than good when it comes to public relations surrounding USM’s floundering football program. Evidence of this possibility has come from various reactions, via Twitter feeds, by USM fans to Underwood’s sentiments. Examples of those are inserted below.

