

Breaking News

USM's Bower Out After Almost 20 Years

HATTIESBURG – The Internet is abuzz this afternoon (26-Nov-07) about USM football coach, Jeff Bower, departing the University after almost two decades. While ESPN is reporting that Bower has resigned as USM's head football coach, both *The Clarion Ledger* and *The Hattiesburg American* are reporting that Bower was fired. Insiders are reporting on Internet message boards like EagleTalk.net and eaglepost.net that Bower was provided with a nice financial package and asked to resign during a morning meeting with USM's Athletics Director, but Bower refused the settlement and was consequently fired.

The decision to fire Bower landed, at some point, on the desk of new USM President Martha Saunders. Such a decision would require Saunders' signature, which has apparently been granted given the many news reports now circulating. The decision by Saunders and others to terminate Bower's contract is sure to be a controversial one. After a 16-10 victory over Arkansas State University on 24-Nov-07, Bower clinched his 14th straight winning season at USM. That victory and the resulting 7-5 regular season record also secured an invitation from the PapaJohns.com bowl in Birmingham. There, USM will play an opponent from the Big East Conference. Though that opponent is unnamed as of yet, it is likely to be a team from a group including Cincinnati, Connecticut, Rutgers, and South Florida. Former C-USA member Louisville is also a possibility.

A check of Bower's bio shows just how controversial today's decision will be in the college football world. Below is a list of bowl games that Bower has guided USM football teams to since 1996.

Year	Bowl Game	Location
2007	PapaJohns.com Bowl	Birmingham, AL
2006	GMAC Bowl	Mobile, AL
2005	New Orleans Bowl	Lafayette, LA
2004	New Orleans Bowl	New Orleans, LA
2003	Liberty Bowl	Memphis, TN
2002	Houston Bowl	Houston, TX
2001		
2000	GMAC Bowl	Mobile, AL
1999	Liberty Bowl	Memphis, TN
1998	Humanitarian Bowl	Boise, ID
1997	Liberty Bowl	Memphis, TN

Before the 1997 Liberty Bowl, USM hadn't participated in a bowl game since the 2000 All American Bowl in Birmingham. That was Bower's first game as USM's head coach. Over the course of Bower's career as USM's head coach, he has tallied 15 wins against a

group of teams currently ranked in the BCS Poll. This group includes Georgia (4th), Virginia Tech (6th), LSU (7th), Illinois (15th), South Florida (21st), Cincinnati (23rd), and Auburn (24th).