

Fun with Ellis

by Duane Cobb

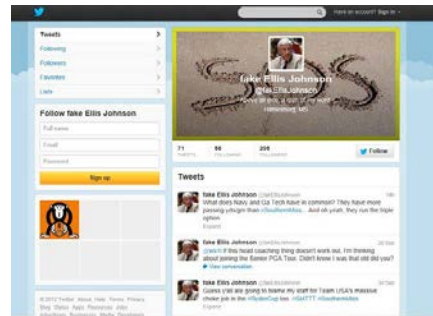
With his disastrous 0-4 start as the new head football coach at USM, disgruntled USM fans are seriously upset with Ellis Johnson. Like anything that is a source of pain, however, many are now turning to humor in order to deal with what they believe is only the beginning of a nightmare in terms of USM's football future, at least for the near term. One [source of comedy](#) that has recently appeared is [@fakeEllisJohnson](#), a Twitter handle created by an anonymous USM sports supporter.



The fake Tweets that are found from this handle are beyond funny. Some are flat out side splitting. A recent one reports that EJ is watching a replay on CBS Sports of USM's loss to Louisville. In that Tweet, EJ notes that USM had 0 passing yards and 0 third down conversions in the first half. To that he asks – "That can't be a coincidence, can it?" One of the better ones from Sept-2012 is, "Just want to thank all the fans who came to the game, especially the ones who left at halftime. I know you guys weren't the ones booing me."

Of course, taking solace in the humor of it all is only good for so long. USM fans are coming to realize that they may be saddled with Johnson and his boss, Jeff Hammond, for years to come. And they have former USM president Martha Saunders to thank for it all. It was Saunders who insisted on

Hammond to fill the athletics director position in 2012. It was Saunders who also supported the hiring of Johnson to replace Larry Fedora as USM's head football coach.



Hammond's reaction to all of this mess has also been less-than-comforting, particularly the fireside chat-like videos that he has been posting to USM's website in recent weeks. In one, Hammond speaks to the camera about how he relishes coming to work each day so that he can do his part to fix what is currently ailing the football program. In another, Hammond pulls in head baseball coach Scott Berry and newly-hired men's basketball coach Donnie Tyndall to help spark some support from the troops (i.e., the fans), particularly those who are waving white flags at the moment. In doing this, Hammond forgets that Tyndall has yet to even coach his first game at USM, while the baseball program appears to be slipping majorly under Berry's leadership.

The sports program at USM is a hot mess at the moment. USM fans are currently mulling over whether or not a lengthy military career is appropriate preparation for leading a \$20 million per year sports enterprise. The number of concerns seems to be growing exponentially, while the solutions to them seem as elusive as ever.