

Lindy Tolar's Home Cookin'

by Susan Green-Lewis

USM athletics supporter Lindy Tolar recently penned a guest editorial accusing USMNEWS.net, and *The Hattiesburg American* for that matter, of disingenuously representing information surrounding USM's use of fees to support the USM athletics department's \$19 million budget. Much of his guest editorial also takes issue with [my recent editorial](#) urging the Martha Saunders administration to consider cutting some of USM's underperforming and low subscription (by USM students) athletics programs, such as women's soccer, track, and men's and women's basketball. To do otherwise, I argue, would be inconsistent with the way that very administration slashed a number of academic programs in an effort to shave \$25 million from its FY 2011 and FY 2012 budgets.

From reading his guest response, Tolar apparently isn't going to allow anyone a monopoly in disingenuousness. His first statement – that he has been a long-time reader of USMNEWS.net who once thought the website was “fair,” but no longer thinks is so – is an age-old trick used to convince readers that his own take on all things USMNEWS.net will be completely objective. He launches from there into a series of statements that seem to confuse what is being said in a number of different reports and editorials here at USMNEWS.net. First, Tolar says that USMNEWS.net recently “suggested that USM should award faculty bonuses from its ‘espn’ fund,” as Mississippi State has recently done. One has to believe that Tolar was referencing the USMNEWS.net report, [From Cowbells to "Lymanese"](#), wherein it is pointed out that *a USM faculty senator* questioned Saunders about the possibility of the USM athletics department doing “something resembling” the MSU student-faculty support program. Nowhere in that report does USMNEWS.net *suggest* anything, and nowhere is there even a suggestion from the faculty senator in question that any “ESPN fund” be used by USM.

Despite a number of other interesting “Tolarisms” that probably deserve someone's attention at some point – such as the priceless “It is football not a liberal arts program that has had our university on national TV 3 out of the last 5 weeks” comment – I'll confine the remainder of my response to Tolar's rather inadequate defense of USM women's basketball program. Tolar says I ignored “simple math” by pointing out that Joye Lee-McNelis' Lady Eagles were a dismal 9-21 last year, and 29-33 over the past two years. Tolar states that “simple math” tells him she was 20-12 *two* years ago, and 21-14 *three* years ago. Of course, my 29-33 includes the 20-12 performance, Lee-McNelis' best ever at USM. It's difficult to imagine, however, that USM athletics director Richard Giannini gives older records more weight than current/recent ones, which is what Tolar would have us do. That is surely not what Saunders and Robert Lyman did when they slashed such academic staples as economics, Greek, Latin, philosophy, and religion. If these units had been able to cite enrollments from back during the Thames or Fleming administrations, then perhaps they would have been spared. Of course, Georgia head coach Mark Richt also understands the way this world works, as his constituents are upset about his

10-9 overall record since the beginning of the 2009 season. Yes, no one is still heavily weighting Georgia's 2008 Sugar Bowl blowout of Hawaii in their analysis of Richt, whose overall record makes Lee-McNelis' pale in comparison.

Lee-McNelis' performance at USM wilts in the face of close scrutiny. Table 1 below lists her year-by-year performance since coming to USM before the 2004-05 season.

Table 1 – Joye Lee-McNelis at USM

Season	Won	Lost	Cumulative Record
2004-05	9	19	9-19
2005-06	14	15	23-34
2006-07	15	15	38-49
2007-08	21	14	59-63
2008-09	20	12	79-75
2009-10	9	21	88-96

The data above aren't pretty. Lee-McNelis' most recent season – her 6th in Hattiesburg – was her worst, going 9-21. That ignominious feat even counts her first year of 9-19. Yet, even with the 41-26 stretch that Tolar wants to give “ginormous” weight, Lee-McNelis is an underwhelming 88-96 overall. By Christmas 2010 she could easily have her 100th loss at the helm of the USM Lady Eagles.

When the fine details are parsed, things look even worse. Table 2 below presents a game-by-game analysis of Lee-McNelis' performance since coming back home to USM.

Table 2 – Joye Lee-McNelis, Game-by-Game

Game	Opponent	Outcome	Cumulative Season	Cumulative Career
1	LSU	L	0-1	0-1
2	Arkansas – Little Rock	W	1-1	1-1
3	Central Florida	W	2-1	2-1
4	Columbia	L	2-2	2-2
5	American	L	2-3	2-3
6	Louisiana – Monroe	L	2-4	2-4
7	Southern Illinois	W	3-4	3-4
8	Arkansas – Pine Bluff	W	4-4	4-4
9	South Alabama	L	4-5	4-5
10	Virginia Tech	L	4-6	4-6
11	Davidson	L	4-7	4-7
12	Southeastern Louisiana	W	5-7	5-7
13	TCU	L	5-8	5-8
14	Houston	L	5-9	5-9
15	Saint Louis	W	6-10	6-10
16	Memphis	L	6-11	6-11
17	Marquette	L	6-11	6-11
18	DePaul	L	6-12	6-12
19	East Carolina	L	6-13	6-13
20	North Carolina – Charlotte	L	6-14	6-14
21	New Orleans	W	7-14	7-14
22	Tulane	W	8-14	8-14

23	UAB	W	9-14	9-14
24	South Florida	L	9-15	9-15
25	Louisville	L	9-16	9-16
26	Cincinnati	L	9-17	9-17
27	Tulane	L	9-18	9-18
28	South Florida	L	9-19	9-19
29	Southern Utah	L	0-1	9-20
30	South Alabama	L	0-2	9-21
31	Florida A&M	W	1-2	10-21
32	Northwestern State Louisiana	L	1-3	10-22
33	Mississippi State	W	2-3	11-22
34	Liberty	L	2-4	11-23
35	Elon	L	2-5	11-24
36	Jackson State	W	3-5	12-24
37	Mercer	L	3-6	12-25
38	Arkansas – Little Rock	L	3-7	12-26
39	Louisiana – Monroe	L	3-8	12-27
40	Central Florida	W	4-8	13-27
41	Rice	L	4-9	13-28
42	Houston	L	4-10	13-29
43	UTEP	W	5-10	14-29
44	Tulane	W	6-10	15-29
45	East Carolina	W	7-10	16-29
46	Marshall	W	8-10	17-29
47	UAB	L	8-11	17-30
48	Memphis	W	9-11	18-30
49	Central Florida	W	10-11	19-30
50	SMU	L	10-12	19-31
51	Tulsa	L	10-13	19-32
52	Memphis	W	11-13	20-32
53	UAB	W	12-13	21-32
54	East Carolina	W	13-13	22-32
55	Marshall	L	13-14	22-33
56	Marshall	W	14-14	23-33
57	Tulsa	L	14-15	23-34
58	Birmingham Southern	L	0-1	23-35
59	Stephen F. Austin State	L	0-2	23-36
60	Jacksonville State	W	1-2	24-36
61	Jackson State	L	1-3	24-37
62	Grambling State	W	2-3	25-37
63	Eastern Kentucky	W	3-3	26-37
64	Louisiana – Monroe	L	3-4	26-38
65	Wisconsin	L	3-5	26-39
66	Arkansas – Little Rock	L	3-6	26-40
67	Mississippi State	W	4-6	27-40
68	California Poly	W	5-6	28-40
69	Texas A&M – Corpus Christi	L	5-7	28-41
70	Centenary	W	6-7	29-41
71	Central Florida	W	7-7	30-41
72	East Carolina	W	8-7	31-41
73	Marshall	L	8-8	31-42
74	Memphis	W	9-8	32-42
75	UAB	W	10-8	33-42
76	Central Florida	W	11-8	34-42
77	Tulane	L	11-9	34-43

78	UTEP	L	11-10	34-44
79	Tulsa	L	11-11	34-45
80	SMU	L	11-12	34-46
81	Rice	L	11-13	34-47
82	Houston	W	12-13	35-47
83	Memphis	W	13-13	36-47
84	UAB	W	14-13	37-47
85	East Carolina	L	14-14	37-48
86	Marshall	W	15-14	38-48
87	Tulsa	L	15-15	38-49
88	Sam Houston State	W	1-0	39-49
89	McNeese State	W	2-0	40-49
90	Mercer	W	3-0	41-49
91	Louisiana – Monroe	W	4-0	42-49
92	North Florida	W	5-0	43-49
93	Austin Peay State	W	6-0	44-49
94	Mississippi State	L	6-1	44-50
95	Jacksonville State	L	6-2	44-51
96	South Alabama	L	6-3	44-52
97	Louisiana Tech	W	7-3	45-52
98	Birmingham Southern	W	8-3	46-52
99	Miami	L	8-4	46-53
100	Illinois – Chicago	W	9-4	47-53
101	Central Florida	W	10-4	48-53
102	Tulsa	L	10-5	48-54
103	SMU	L	10-6	48-55
104	Rice	L	10-7	48-56
105	Houston	L	10-8	48-57
106	Central Florida	W	11-8	49-57
107	East Carolina	L	11-9	49-58
108	Marshall	W	12-9	50-58
109	Memphis	W	13-9	51-58
110	UAB	W	14-9	52-58
111	East Carolina	L	14-10	52-59
112	Marshall	W	15-10	53-59
113	UTEP	L	15-11	53-60
114	Tulane	W	16-11	54-60
115	Memphis	L	16-12	54-61
116	UAB	W	17-12	55-61
117	Central Florida	W	18-12	56-61
118	Houston	W	19-12	57-61
119	UTEP	L	19-13	57-62
120	Arkansas – Little Rock	W	20-13	58-62
121	Mississippi State	W	21-13	59-62
122	Michigan	L	21-14	59-63
123	Sam Houston State	W	1-0	60-63
124	Tennessee State	W	2-0	61-63
125	South Alabama	L	2-1	61-64
126	Louisiana – Monroe	L	2-2	61-65
127	Alcorn State	W	3-2	62-65
128	Michigan	L	3-3	62-66
129	Arkansas – Little Rock	L	3-4	62-67
130	William Carey	W	4-4	63-67
131	Southeast Missouri State	W	5-4	64-67
132	Mississippi State	L	5-5	64-68

133	Oklahoma State	L	5-6	64-69
134	California State – Northridge	W	6-6	65-69
135	Nicholls State	W	7-6	66-69
136	Central Florida	L	7-7	66-70
137	UAB	W	8-7	67-70
138	Memphis	W	9-7	68-70
139	Central Florida	W	10-7	69-70
140	Houston	W	11-7	70-70
141	Rice	W	12-7	71-70
142	Marshall	W	13-7	72-70
143	East Carolina	W	14-7	73-70
144	SMU	W	15-7	74-70
145	Tulsa	W	16-7	75-70
146	East Carolina	L	16-8	75-71
147	Marshall	W	17-8	76-71
148	Tulane	L	17-9	76-72
149	UTEP	L	17-10	76-73
150	UAB	W	18-10	77-73
151	Memphis	L	18-11	77-74
152	Tulane	W	19-11	78-74
153	Marshall	W	20-11	79-74
154	Central Florida	L	20-12	79-75
155	South Alabama	W	1-0	80-75
156	Southeast Missouri State	L	1-1	80-76
157	Michigan	L	1-2	80-77
158	William Carey	W	2-2	81-77
159	Jackson State	W	3-2	82-77
160	Georgia	L	3-3	82-78
161	Mississippi State	L	3-4	82-79
162	Alcorn State	W	4-4	83-79
163	North Carolina – Charlotte	L	4-5	83-80
164	Belmont	L	4-6	83-81
165	Arkansas – Little Rock	L	4-7	83-82
166	Alabama	L	4-8	83-83
167	Louisiana Tech	L	4-9	83-84
168	East Carolina	L	4-10	83-85
169	Marshall	L	4-11	83-86
170	UAB	L	4-12	83-87
171	Memphis	L	4-13	83-88
172	Central Florida	L	4-14	83-89
173	Tulane	L	4-15	83-90
174	UTEP	W	5-15	84-90
175	East Carolina	W	6-15	85-90
176	Marshall	W	7-15	86-90
177	Memphis	L	7-16	86-91
178	UAB	L	7-17	86-92
179	Houston	W	8-17	87-92
180	Rice	W	9-17	88-92
181	Tulsa	L	9-18	88-93
182	SMU	L	9-19	88-94
183	Central Florida	L	9-20	88-95
184	East Carolina	L	9-21	88-96

As Table 1 above shows, Lee-McNelis could not conquer Louisiana-Monroe until her fourth try, and by year five she was back to losing to ULM again. Luckily for Tolar, USM didn't schedule ULM last year. If it had, maybe we would be talking about 9-22 instead of 9-21. From top to bottom, the opponents are *anything but* scary. Still, Lee-McNelis' program has managed to rack up losses to American, Arkansas-Little Rock, Belmont, Birmingham Southern, Columbia, Davidson, Elon, Jackson State, Jacksonville State, Louisiana-Monroe, Mercer, Northwestern State-Louisiana, South Alabama, Southern Utah, Stephen F. Austin State, and Texas A&M-Corpus Christi. A few of these occurred on multiple occasions, and all of these are spread out over Lee-McNelis' whole six-year tenure at USM.

Tolar's guest column also takes issue with the assertion that students are not coming to the Lady Eagles' contests by citing USM's highly-rated Conference USA attendance records. Photographs say otherwise. Below are three photos from Victoria Tyler's [recent editorial](#) about the also dismal USM Lady Eagles soccer program. Clearly, not many attended this late-2007 contest that Martha Saunders apparently enjoyed being a part of (as assistant coach).



The illustrated history below, all of which (1) comes from USM's own web pages, and (2) covers the whole Lee-McNelis tenure, also attests to not only a lack of interest among USM students, but also a general malaise regarding the Lady Eagles cagers.





Most of the photos above paint an embarrassing picture of attendance at Lady Eagles basketball games, as does the banner below.



Clearly, students aren't supporting the Lady Eagles with their attendance at home games. Being a local, Tolar likely really knew this all along. Rankings on attendance from Conference USA simply reflect the fact that relatively few people attend games across the conference as a whole. For outsiders, how USM comes up with inflated attendance counts at sports events is alluded to in a recent [guest editorial](#). Also there is an interesting comment about *duplicated headcount* enrollment figures.

Finally, the back end of Tolar's comment highlights exactly the kinds of points Saunders and Lyman made in cutting the academic programs. By definition, the smallish size (12 or 13) of a women's college basketball roster means that very few students directly benefit from participation in the program. Several of the academic programs that USM has slashed in recent months had more majors on their "rosters." When all of this is added Lyman's comment at the 1-Oct-2010 faculty senate meeting – that the USM women's basketball program *loses a lot of money* each year – one has a ready-made case for eliminating this lagging sports program and its "faculty."