

# Longing

## AN EDITORIAL ON THE WAY THINGS ARE AT SOUTHERN MISS

Today's (12-Oct-09) blog from USM president Martha Saunders, which invites USM faculty and staff to come and enjoy the festivities at the 13-Oct-09 "open house" for the new University Club, highlights the way things often work at USM. In doing so it hints at three types of "longing" that characterize the way USM administrators operate. The first type of longing centers around things that the institution can easily (readily) turn into a reality. Examples of these include establishing a University Club, or at the more local level, setting up a new CoB Honors House for well-connected students. Often times these forms of longing center around reconstructing *the way things once were at USM*, as emphasized by Saunders' latest post about missing the Charcoal Room and the original University Club.

The second form of longing centers around things that never were, and that can never really be. The administration's approach to these things seems to recognize reality, as when administrators like former USM president Shelby Thames referred to USM as "world class" (or back to the present, when Saunders utters nonsensically that USM is *the premier research institution of the Gulf South*). In this case, there is no real effort to achieve the unachievable, which many would say is a good thing. The third form of longing is similar to the second in that it centers around things that never were and that are highly unlikely in terms of a future reality. Unlike the second form of longing, however, USM administrators actually believe the object of this form of longing is potentially achievable. A prime example of this form is when USM constituents state that they want to get the athletics program, namely football, to that ever elusive "next level." Unfortunately for USM, efforts to make the object of this form of longing a reality often lead to a series of *boneheaded decisions*, like when long-time football coach Jeff Bower was fired by Saunders and replaced with upstart Larry Fedora.

The table below lists all of the college football teams who are members of so-called BCS, but not also former C-USA members, and that were also defeated by Bower (from 1991-2007) and/or Fedora (since the beginning of 2008).

Bower's BCS Victims	Conference	# Wins	Fedora's BCS Victims	Conference	# Wins
Auburn	SEC	1	Virginia	ACC	1
Virginia Tech	ACC	1			
LSU	SEC	1			
Georgia	SEC	1			
Illinois	Big 10	2			
Pittsburgh	Big East	1			
Alabama	SEC	1			
Oklahoma State	Big 12	2			
Nebraska	Big 12	1			
North Carolina State	ACC	1			
		<b>12</b>			<b>1</b>

As the list above indicates, Bower defeated the likes of Alabama, Auburn, Georgia, Illinois (2) LSU, Nebraska, Oklahoma State (2), and Virginia Tech, to name some. In two years of action, Fedora has defeated only one such school (Virginia). Thus, in *8.5 times the number of Fedora seasons* Bower has *12 times the number of Fedora BCS wins*. Thus, Fedora has a lot of catching up to do (and even more so in terms of *quality* of BCS victims compared to Bower).

Nowadays, USM football fans are toiling away with a coach whose overall record is 10 wins and 9 losses. The Eagles are currently on a 3-game losing streak, and one ignominious mark after another is being achieved under Fedora's leadership. Fedora's first year, 2008, was the first non-winning regular season at USM since 1993, or 16 years prior. And early in the 2009 season (this season), Fedora lost to UAB, marking the first time in USM history that the Golden Eagles lost to that struggling program. Last Saturday USM lost to lowly Louisville, a program whose fans are hoping to fire its coach by season's end. One UL fan ("LouICEville") posted the following to a USM fans board on 12-Oct-09:

As bad as things are for Louisville Football these days at least we still own The Golden Showers of Happlesburg. I think that's four in a row over you mid majors. Remember when we were on equal ground with you guys? Oh man, that seems like Gator and Orange Bowls ago. Wait, it was!! You gotta keep hope, though. Once you get back to your absolute peak you'll be able to go to the NobodyCares.com bowl. Good times await!!

I guess there's always basketball season...wait...not for you guys!!

LouICEville entitled the post above "Well . . . at least we still own you pathetic fools . . ." He or she hits all the marks, highlighting the folly of form #3 of USM longing. He/she even takes a shot at USM's basketball program, which is headed by the embattled Larry Eustachy, a controversial hire from the Thames administration (2002-07) that was meant to be a "to the next level" move from that quarter.

Now that the Saunders administration has acquired a multi-million dollar Beechcraft (another product of form #3 longing), and during the worst economic recession since the 1930s, to where does USM fly from here? No one knows exactly where the next folly lies, but it is certain to be just over the horizon.