

MISERY

by: C. ANNA HALL

I have been following the [USA Today misery index](#). Over the past couple of seasons, Southern Miss has become a permanent fixture. Here's the report for last week's humiliating loss to North Texas.

10. Southern Miss: You'd think Southern Miss fans would be numb to ineptitude by now, but every now and then there's a reminder just how far this program has fallen. The latest was a 55-14 loss Saturday to North Texas, which makes 19 in a row for the Golden Eagles with no end in sight. It's now very possible Southern Miss could string together consecutive winless seasons, which is mind-blowing for a program that put up 18 straight winning seasons between 1994 and 2011. Southern Miss fired Ellis Johnson last season after just one year on the job, but it's almost certain the same fate won't befall Todd Monken, even though his team got out-gained 529-249 yards by North Texas and committed five turnovers.

On Saturday (October 25, 2013), Southern Miss lost its nineteenth straight game. According to Craig Stephenson of [GulfLive.com](#) “[i]t was the fourth time this season and the third time in four games that Southern Miss gave up 55-plus points.” In the same article, Stephenson reported “[t]wo weeks ago, I asked Monken if the 24-23 loss to previously (and since) winless Florida International was “the bottom.” He answered that he wasn't sure it could get much worse.” Yet week after week, it seems the “bottom” keeps reaching new low points.

A real measure of the problems with USM's football program is the precipitous drop in attendance. According to [USA Today](#), in 2011, USM averaged 28,400 for their six home games. In 2012, USM averaged 25,751 fans for six home games. USM's reported attendance for two home games in 2013 has been 25,729 for the season opener, dropping to 21,891 for the loss to FIU. (In case you are curious, Roberts Stadium has a capacity of 39,000.). Attendance for last weekend's homecoming against North Texas was 23,203, which is, according to [The Hattiesburg American](#), “the smallest crowd for a homecoming game at M.M. Roberts Stadium since 1995...”. According to people in attendance, by half-time fully half the crowd called it a day and departed the stadium.

Curiously, when former [President Aubrey Lucas](#) announced the decision to fire Ellis Johnson, he tied it to a decline in attendance. "Athletics is entertaining, it's theater," Lucas said. "And when people quit buying tickets to go see the play, something has to happen. It's always unfortunate.”

When is something going to happen to end the misery that is USM football?