

# Race for the NACDA Cup

## Which USM Administrators Fostered Success . . . and Diversity?

Each academic year the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics (NACDA) sponsors a race between NCAA member institutions, wherein points are awarded for each institution's performance in male/female collegiate sports. At the end of the year the points are tallied and the institution with the highest tally is awarded the NACDA Cup for that year. Examining past NACDA Cup races, as this USMNEWS.net report does, provides a perspective on where USM's athletics have been, and where they are now. In doing that, an assessment can be made about current (Martha Saunders) and past (Shelby Thames and Horace Fleming) USM administrations with regard to how they are, or aren't, fostering athletics success . . . and diversity.

This particular analysis of USM athletics begins with the data in Table 1 below. There, USM's points totals from NACDA Cup races from 1998-99 through 2007-08 (with some years missing) are shown.

**Table 1**  
**USM's Performance in the Directors' Cup Race by Year**

| Year    | Points            | Description  | USM President-AD |
|---------|-------------------|--|------------------|
| 2007-08 | 75                | 50 pts baseball; 25 pts football                                 | MS-RG            |
| 2006-07 | 75                | 45 pts football; 25 pts baseball<br>5 pts women's track & field  | ST-RG            |
| 2005-06 | no data available |  |                  |
| 2004-05 | no data available |  |                  |
| 2003-04 | 81.5              | 31.5 pts men's track & field; 25 pts baseball<br>25 pts softball | ST-RG            |
| 2002-03 | 83                | 50 pts baseball; 33 pts men's track & field                      | ST-RG            |
| 2001-02 | no data available |  |                  |
| 2000-01 | 62                | 32 pts men's track & field; 30 pts softball                      | HF-RG            |
| 1999-00 | 122               | 75 pts softball; 47 pts football                                 | HF-RG            |
| 1998-99 | 60                | 20 pts baseball; 40 pts softball                                 | HF-BM            |

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MS=Martha Saunders; RG=Richard Giannini; ST=Shelby Thames; HF=Horace Fleming; BM=Bill McClellan.

As the data in Table 1 above indicate, USM's highest NACDA Cup score came in 1999-2000, under the leadership of then-USM president Horace Fleming. That year USM scored 122 NACDA Cup points. The second and third best performances came in 2002-03 and 2003-04, respectively. Both scores (83 and 81.5, respectively) were earned during the Shelby Thames administration of USM. Rounding out the top five performances are 2006-07 under Thames, and 2007-08 under Saunders. These years saw USM total 75 NACDA Cup points.

It is not surprising that Thames provided three of the top five NACDA Cup performances during the time frame studied. Most USM athletics supporters were elated when Thames was named by the Mississippi IHL as the USM president back in May of 2002. He has been widely known for being a supporter of USM sports teams, and his family name on USM's baseball facility

bears this out. What might surprise USM athletics boosters, however, is that the institution's NACDA Cup performances were, on average, better under Fleming than under Thames, as pointed out in Table 2 below.

**Table 2**  
**USM's NACDA Cup Performance by President**

| President        | NACDA Cup Pts Avg |
|------------------|-------------------|
| Fleming, Horace  | 81.33             |
| Thames, Shelby   | 79.83             |
| Saunders, Martha | 75.00             |

The contest has been close, as only 1.50 NACDA Cup points separate Fleming (first) from Thames (second). These two presidents surpassed Saunders by 6.33 and 4.83 NACDA Cup points (avg), respectively. This result is not likely to surprise many, if any, readers of this report.

USM's *overall sports package* enjoyed more NACDA Cup success under Thames' leadership than it did under that of either Fleming or Saunders. Table 3 below indicates that USM's average NACDA Cup scores were greater than zero in five separate sports under Thames, including (1) baseball, (2) football, (3) softball, (4) men's track & field, and (5) women's track & field. Average scores for these sports averaged from 1.67 points (women's track & field) to 33.33 points (baseball) under Thames' presidency.

**Table 3**  
**USM's NACDA Cup Sport Diversity by President**

| President        | Baseball | Football | Softball | M-T&F | W-T&F |
|------------------|----------|----------|----------|-------|-------|
| Thames, Shelby   | 33.33    | 15.00    | 8.33     | 11.00 | 1.67  |
| Fleming, Horace  | 6.67     | 15.67    | 48.33    | 10.67 | 0.00  |
| Saunders, Martha | 50.00    | 25.00    | 0.00     | 0.00  | 0.00  |

The numbers above are NACDA Cup per-year (avg) scores; M=Men's; T&F=Track and Field; W=Women's.

Interestingly, USM's sports portfolio has become much less diversified (across sports) under current president Martha Saunders than under either Thames or Fleming. While Thames' presidency produced non-zero scores across five sports, Fleming's produced scores no lower than 6.67 (baseball) across four separate sports. Saunders, on the other hand, appears to be working to turn USM's athletics department into a baseball & football factory. While USM's average annual NACDA Cup scores in those sports have been quite high under Saunders, the institution has not been producing NACDA Cup points in any of the remaining three sports.

What's interesting about the Saunders administration is that USM's women's sports programs are struggling most when compared to what was going on under Fleming *and even Thames*, as indicated by Table 4 below. As shown in Table 4 below, the Fleming administration produced 15.33 *more* NACDA Cup points (on average) in women's sports than in men's sports. Table 4 also indicates that the Thames administration did not score well on the gender diversity front, a result that likely surprises very few members of the "USM

family." To say that *many* in the USM family think of Thames as a chauvinist likely understates reality.

**Table 4**  
**USM's NACDA Cup Gender Diversity by President**

| President        | Male Sports | Female Sports | F/M  |
|------------------|-------------|---------------|------|
| Fleming, Horace  | 33.00       | 48.33         | 1.46 |
| Thames, Shelby   | 69.83       | 10.00         | 0.14 |
| Saunders, Martha | 75.00       | 0.00          | 0.00 |

The numbers above are NACDA Cup per-year (avg) scores.

The final column in Table 4 above works as a sort of "chauvinism scale," where 0=chauvinist (pig?) and >0=degrees of chauvinism declining as the ratio increases (up to non-chauvinist). Isn't it interesting that Saunders scores worse on the chauvinism scale than does Thames? Put differently, isn't it interesting that the Thames administration appeared more pro-female than the Saunders administration currently does? The softball team appears to be at its lowest point now under Saunders, while the results are even more discouraging in soccer (see USMNEWS.net's Aunt Martha's Banner Year series) -- both sports where Saunders actively handled recent head coaching hires.

The results of this report have likely opened some eyes within the USM family. The results aren't flattering for the "image development"-conscious Martha Saunders administration of USM, particularly with regard to the current "gender diversity" aspects of USM's athletics program.