

## *Revisiting Sports at Southern Miss*

### **Turmoil, part 1**

Over the past couple of years, sports at Southern Miss has been in a state of near constant turmoil. What kind of turmoil? Three athletics directors, three head football coaches, two head basketball coaches, and various coaches from less well publicized sports. Then we have over a million dollar short fall in the athletics budget that coincided with former President Martha Saunders' invitation to step down. Don't forget the NCAA sanctions or the embarrassing episode in which members of the Southern Miss band shouted racial slurs at a basketball player – on national TV!

Given the turmoil in sports at Southern Miss or the past year or so it is not surprising that usmnews.net's readers have asked to revisit some of the reports and editorials published here. Here is [the first in the series](#).

## Hammond Fires Shot at Giannini, then Calls for Civility

*by Duane Cobb*

"This university athletics department is going to deal with this [more than \$1 million financial crisis] not only this year, but in the years ahead. It was due to a lack of leadership. It was due to mismanagement. It was due to a lack of accountability . . . Let's honor (outgoing USM president Martha) Saunders. Let's quit it, knock it off. Let's all kind of look in the mirror. It's not what the university can do for me. It's 'What can I do for this university?' The answer is simple - unite." Interim USM athletics director Jeff Hammond, 27-April-2012.

USM interim athletics director Jeff Hammond's 27-April-2012 call for a return to civility in the USM family seems a bit hollow coming directly after he publicly rebuked his predecessor, former USM athletics director Richard Giannini, for creating what is being referred to as a financial crisis in excess of \$1 million in that USM division. According to Hammond, the \$1 million hole that became public yesterday, amid the sudden resignation of USM president Martha Saunders, was created by mismanagement and a lack of accountability under Giannini. Now, Hammond is referencing the need to schedule road contests against national powerhouses in football and basketball in order to make up the difference. In doing so, Hammond is also asking the USM family – many of whom were scratched in the eye by what they believe was Giannini's ouster in late 2011 at the hands of Saunders – and perhaps Saunders'

Granted, Giannini [hasn't been a saint](#) sitting atop of USM athletics – the [national scandal](#) involving bowl committees attests to that – but he has publicly defended himself, [telling media outlets](#) that not one NCAA-mandated audit of both the USM athletics operating budget or the USM Athletics Foundation ever turned up even a single irregularity during his 13-year tenure over sports at USM. Not only that, Giannini added that at the time he left USM in Jan-2012, he encouraged the Saunders administration to conduct a final, six-month audit covering the 1-July-2012 through 31-Dec-2012 budget period. According to Giannini, USM never acted on that encouragement. At the same time, Hammond also appears to be short on saintliness, having recently been twice accused of harassment by high-ranking female administrators in the USM athletics department. Both of these complaints have been lodged with the Mississippi