

# Rich Man, Poor Man

Larry Fedora, Jeff Bower, and USM Football

A Guest Editorial

Much has been [reported](#) about USM's use of roughly \$7 million in student and taxpayer [money](#) to [support](#) the institution's \$19 million athletics department. As one might expect, such reports have generated some discussion about [the current state of USM's football program](#), which is only growing with the Centennial Homecoming [meltdown](#) against a mediocre East Carolina team. Internet message boards are awash with discussions from (1) the lack of defense being exhibited by recent USM teams to (2) the light punishment meted out to misbehaving players of late and the on-field "thuggish" behavior of USM football players, all under current coach Larry Fedora. Though many USM fans are now reminiscing about the Jeff Bower years (1990-2007), some are still supportive of Fedora.

Table 1 below presents a comparison of Bower's first 32 games as head coach at USM and Fedora's first 32 games, which takes us through the Centennial Homecoming debacle against ECU.

Table 1 – The First Years

*Jeff Bower*

*Larry Fedora*

Game	Opponent	Outcome	Cumulative Record	Opponent	Outcome	Cumulative Record
1	North Carolina State	L	0-1-0	Louisiana – Lafayette	W	1-0-0
2	Delta State	W	1-1-0	Auburn	L	1-1-0
3	Pittsburgh	L	1-2-0	Arkansas State	W	2-1-0
4	Colorado State	W	2-2-0	Marshall	L	2-2-0
5	Louisville	L	2-3-0	UTEP	L	2-3-0
6	Auburn	W	3-3-0	Boise State	L	2-4-0
7	Memphis	L	3-4-0	Rice	L	2-5-0
8	Tulane	W	4-4-0	Memphis	L	2-6-0
9	Cincinnati	L	4-5-0	UAB	W	3-6-0
10	Tulsa	L	4-6-0	Central Florida	W	4-6-0
11	East Carolina	L	4-7-0	East Carolina	W	5-6-0
12	Louisiana Tech	L	4-8-0	SMU	W	6-6-0
13	Memphis	W	5-8-0	Troy	W	7-6-0
14	Alabama	L	5-9-0	Alcorn State	W	8-6-0
15	Louisiana Tech	W	6-9-0	Central Florida	W	9-6-0
16	Auburn	L	6-10-0	Virginia	W	10-6-0
17	Tulsa	W	7-10-0	Kansas	L	10-7-0
18	Northern Illinois	L	7-11-0	UAB	L	10-8-0
19	Tulane	W	8-11-0	Louisville	L	10-9-0
20	East Carolina	W	9-11-0	Memphis	W	11-9-0
21	Cincinnati	W	10-11-0	Tulane	W	12-9-0
22	Florida	L	10-12-0	Houston	L	12-10-0
23	Virginia Tech	W	11-12-0	Marshall	W	13-10-0
24	Pittsburgh	L	11-13-0	Tulsa	W	14-10-0
25	Louisiana – Monroe	W	12-13-0	East Carolina	L	14-11-0
26	Auburn	L	12-14-0	Middle Tennessee State	L	14-12-0
27	Louisiana – Lafayette	L	12-15-0	South Carolina	L	14-13-0
28	Georgia	L	12-16-0	Prairie View A&M	W	15-13-0
29	Louisville	L	12-17-0	Kansas	W	16-13-0
30	East Carolina	W	13-17-0	Louisiana Tech	W	17-13-0
31	Alabama	W	14-17-0	Marshall	W	18-13-0
32	Tulane	L	14-18-0	East Carolina	L	18-14-0

As Table 1 above indicates, Bower won 14 of his first 32 games, while Fedora has won 18 of his first 32 games as USM's head coach. There is, however, a tremendous difference in the quality of the opponents Bower's USM teams faced and that of the opponents on Fedora's deck. For example, over his first 32 games Bower coached against North Carolina State, Pittsburgh, Colorado State,

Louisville, Auburn, Cincinnati, Alabama, Auburn, Cincinnati, Florida, Virginia Tech, Pittsburgh, Auburn, Georgia, Louisville, and Alabama. Through his first 32 games, Fedora has matched wits against Auburn, Boise State, Virginia, Kansas, Louisville, South Carolina, and Kansas. According to sources, these two lists are substantially dissimilar, with the more difficult having been faced by Bower.

Some sources also believe that a more appropriate comparison is that between Bower's *final* 32 games as head coach and Fedora's *first* 32 games at the USM helm. This is so because of the conference affiliations, bowl ties, etc., that benefit(ed) the both of them are all present here. This is done in Table 2 below.

**Table 2 – The Transition Years**  
*Jeff Bower* *Larry Fedora*

Game	Opponent	Outcome	Cumulative Record	Opponent	Outcome	Cumulative Record
1	Marshall	W	1-0-0	Louisiana – Lafayette	W	1-0-0
2	Houston	L	1-1-0	Auburn	L	1-1-0
3	Memphis	L	1-2-0	Arkansas State	W	2-1-0
4	Tulane	W	2-2-0	Marshall	L	2-2-0
5	Arkansas State	W	3-2-0	UTEP	L	2-3-0
6	Florida	L	3-3-0	Boise State	L	2-4-0
7	Southeastern Louisiana	W	4-3-0	Rice	L	2-5-0
8	North Carolina State	W	5-3-0	Memphis	L	2-6-0
9	Central Florida	W	6-3-0	UAB	W	3-6-0
10	Tulsa	L	6-4-0	Central Florida	W	4-6-0
11	Houston	W	7-4-0	East Carolina	W	5-6-0
12	Virginia Tech	L	7-5-0	SMU	W	6-6-0
13	East Carolina	L	7-6-0	Troy	W	7-6-0
14	Memphis	W	8-6-0	Alcorn State	W	8-6-0
15	Tulane	W	9-6-0	Central Florida	W	9-6-0
16	UAB	W	10-6-0	Virginia	W	10-6-0
17	Marshall	W	11-6-0	Kansas	L	10-7-0
18	Houston	L	11-7-0	UAB	L	10-8-0
19	Ohio	W	12-7-0	Louisville	L	10-9-0
20	Tennessee – Martin	W	13-7-0	Memphis	W	11-9-0
21	Tennessee	L	13-8-0	Tulane	W	12-9-0
22	East Carolina	W	14-8-0	Houston	L	12-10-0
23	Boise State	L	14-9-0	Marshall	W	13-10-0
24	Rice	L	14-10-0	Tulsa	W	14-10-0
25	SMU	W	15-10-0	East Carolina	L	14-11-0
26	Marshall	W	16-10-0	Middle Tennessee State	L	14-12-0
27	Central Florida	L	16-11-0	South Carolina	L	14-13-0
28	UAB	W	17-11-0	Prairie View A&M	W	15-13-0
29	Memphis	L	17-12-0	Kansas	W	16-13-0
30	UTEP	W	18-12-0	Louisiana Tech	W	17-13-0
31	Arkansas State	W	19-12-0	Marshall	W	18-13-0
32	Cincinnati	L	19-13-0	East Carolina	L	18-14-0

Through his final 32 games, Bower coached against Florida, North Carolina State, Virginia Tech, Tennessee, Boise State, and Cincinnati. Again, through his first 32 games, Fedora has matched wits against Auburn, Boise State, Virginia, Kansas, Louisville, South Carolina, and Kansas. Sources say that these lists, though a bit closer than the previous two, are dissimilar. It appears, to some at least, that USM athletics director Richard Giannini is providing Fedora with a much easier slate of opponents so that Fedora's record will exceed that of Bower. This is ostensibly being done in order to justify firing Bower – which Giannini did with USM president Martha Saunders' assistance – and hiring Fedora at a *significantly higher pay scale*. As the Table 2 data indicate, such a Giannini-Saunders plan would not be working out so well, given Bower's 19-13 record, compared to Fedora's 18-14 mark.