

## *Special Report*

# USM Fans Melting Down

## Websites Call for Firing of Johnson

With the 15-Sept-2012 loss to East Carolina by a score of 14-24, many USM fans have given up on the Ellis Johnson administration of USM's football program. Numerous threads and posts at *The District*, a fans' [message board](#) at BigGoldNation.com, not only call for the firing of Johnson, USM's new head football coach, many have presented plans for doing so by season's end. One thread even directs readers to a new website, [FireEllisJohnson.com](#), which appears to be a developing site devoted to the ousting of Johnson. A screen showing the main page of that site appears below.



Some of the fans visiting *The District* are reminding each other that it was former USM president, Martha Saunders, and Jeff Hammond, Saunders' selection to replace former USM athletics director Richard Giannini, who teamed up to bring Johnson to campus last spring (2012) to replace departed head coach Larry Fedora. Johnson is now 0-2 as USM's head football coach, having lost badly to Nebraska on 3-Sept-2012. With Western Kentucky and Louisville facing USM over the next two weeks, many fans are predicting either 1-3 or 0-4 beginnings to the 2012 season.

What many USM fans do not realize, however, is that USM has begun its 2012-13 sports season with its worst performance since at least 2007, if not before. The volleyball team, currently under the direction of Saunders hire Abbey Sutherland, is only 4-8 on the young fall 2012 season. Saunders hired Sutherland to replace Ricci Luyties, who left USM after the fall 2009 season to take the reins at the University of California - San Diego. That fall 2009 season, Luyties' Golden Eagles went 27-5, winning the C-USA regular season championship. At the time of Sutherland's hire, USMNEWS.net predicted a steady decline in women's volleyball at USM. With records of 19-12 and 17-15 during her first two seasons, and now with a 2012 record of 4-8, that steady decline has occurred just as predicted. Meanwhile, the women's soccer team is only 3-3-1 thus far in 2012 under the leadership of Scott Ebke, another Saunders' hire. Ebke has yet to

win even 20 total soccer games since he was hired by Saunders before the fall 2007 season.

With USM fans predicting records that top out at 6-6 on the season for USM football, it is a foregone conclusion, at least on *The District*, that Johnson was a bad hire. Now, however, there are even some early calls for replacing Hammond as the USM AD. With these men being in their first year at their respective helms, sources tell USMNEWS.net that their firings are not forthcoming this year. If so, things will likely get much worse for USM athletics before getting any chance to improve.