

Special Report

USM's Focus on Athletics about to Spike

Saunders Governs More Like Thames Every Day

Just when conventional wisdom indicated that the Martha Saunders administration's focus on athletics couldn't be any sharper, news from a USM sports website known as *The District* (hosted by BigGoldNation of rivals.com) reveals that it can, and likely will. In a thread from 11-April-2011 entitled "Southern Miss Athletics Summit . . .," SethManKA1 posted the following:

A buddy of mine who is a business owner and Eagle Club member said he was sent a private letter from Martha Saunders requesting his presence at a Summit which would talk about how to get USM Athletics "to new heights." He attended and told me that all the "high up" contributors were there giving their opinion. After the Summit he told me that the sentiment in the entire room of only a couple hundred people was that USM needed to bring to The Rock better non-conference competition. Like Nebraska, Kansas, etc. Interestingly, he said that Saunders and RG pre-arranged to talk over the phone through a PA system to the AD from Boise State. The Boise State AD conferenced called and said they initiated 25 points toward putting their program "on the map." After the phone conversation, people at the Summit asked Richard Guinani how many points we had of those 25...we didn't have any of those points. Apparently, General Jeff Hammond is getting discouraged because RG say's "no" to many of his ideas. This info comes from my friend. Again, not sure how accurate that is but my friend knows alot of people. The basic sentiment about RG is that he is too "conventional" with the program. Many want RG to retire. They said he has two years left on his contract. Saunders wants the attendance to all our sporting events to increase and she is holding RG accountable. I hope the USM administration will take the criticisms and suggestions and bring Southern Miss "to the top!" I am optimistic! I wanted to share this info...thought it would be interesting.

According to this poster, Saunders sent "private letter[s]" to various USM supporters, requesting their attendance/participation at an athletics "Summit" aimed at figuring out how to get USM athletics "to new heights." SethManKA1 also writes that the Boise State University athletics director attended the Summit via telephone, and gave those gathered a 25-point program for putting an NCAA Division I athletics program "on the map." SethManKA1 points out, however, that, when asked, USM officials admitted to not having put together any of the 25 points listed by the BSU AD.

News of this athletics summit will not likely be seen as good by USM faculty, who have suffered under Saunders' reign as president since 2007. Sources tell USMNEWS.net that, with each passing day, Saunders seems to govern more like her predecessor, Shelby Thames, who led the university from 2002-2007.