

The Failure of USM's "LE Experiment"

And, Is Racism Part of this Story?

When the leaders of your institution can't see what journalists are pointing out to them there is little reason to believe that your institution is being led by the capable. In USM's case, that point is hammered home time and again on the pages of USMNEWS.net. It's also true that local and statewide media are adept at "outthinking" USM time and again, as shown recently by *The Clarion Ledger's* sports guru [Rick Cleveland](#), a USM alumnus. Five years ago Cleveland spelled out just why firing then-USM head men's basketball coach James Green, the first African-American to hold that post at USM, was a terrible idea. Five years later Cleveland got the chance to say "I told you so" (see link above).

A look at the numbers in Table 1 below shows just why "the LE experiment" was, and is, a failed one. Those numbers cover the first five years at USM for each coach (Eustachy and Green), and they come from famed sports analyst Jeff Sagarin.

Table 1
5-Year USM Basketball Records -- Larry Eustachy vs. James Green

Larry Eustachy, 2004-05 through 2008-09				James Green, 1999-2000 through 2003-04			
Season	W-L	Win%	Post-Season	Season	W-L	Win%	Post-Season
2008-09	12-17	41.4%	None	2003-04	12-15	44.4%	None
2007-08	15-14	51.7%	None	2002-03	13-16	44.8%	None
2006-07	16-11	59.3%	None	2001-02	9-17	34.6%	None
2005-06	7-21	25.0%	None	2000-01	21-9	70.0%	NIT
2004-05	8-17	32.0%	None	1999-00	17-12	58.6%	None
Totals	58-80	42.0%	None	Totals	72-69	51.1%	1 NIT

Notes: Sagarin reports contests between Div 1 teams only. USM not only received an NIT invitation in 2001, it also won the Conference USA regular season title. At that time, Conference USA included Cincinnati, Louisville, Marquette, North Carolina at Charlotte, South Florida, and Virginia Tech.

The data in Table 1 show that Green had 14 more victories and 11 fewer losses over the five years between 1999 and 2004 than current USM coach Larry Eustachy has had over the five years between 2004 and 2009. And, as Cleveland points out, USM is spending millions more dollars to assist Eustachy than it ever spent helping Green succeed. Green's worst year, 2001-02, was better than two of Eustachy's five years (thus far), while Green's best year, 2000-01 was 10.7%-points *better than* Eustachy's best year, 2006-07; in fact, Green's second-best year, 1999-2000, was about as good as Eustachy's best year thus far.

Do you think that race applies in this case? Many people do. Some say that the data do as well.