

Time for Saunders to Consider Some Real Cuts

Despite winning a Conference-USA regular season championship and taking the USM men's basketball team to two post-season NIT tournaments, former head coach James Green was fired by USM president Shelby Thames and USM athletics director Richard Giannini. According to these officials, Green was let go after the 2003-04 season for failing to put fans in the stands at USM's Reed Green Coliseum.



Eustachy cozies up to UM co-ed after ISU loss at UM.



Eustachy participates in "triple kiss" with two UM co-eds after ISU loss in Columbia.

Thames and Giannini promptly moved to hire Larry Eustachy, the former head coach at Iowa State University who exited that position in national disgrace, after being photographed (see photos above) engaging in inappropriate behavior at a University of Missouri students' party following an ISU loss in Columbia.



Larry Eustachy and then-wife, Stacy, during a news conference at which he said he was quitting.

Now, mid-way through the 2008-09 season at USM -- Eustachy's 5th season with the program -- the Golden Eagles are only 13-7 on the season, including multiple wins against NAIA and similarly-positioned programs, and Eustachy's overall record with the school is only 73-70. What's more problematic is that attendance under Eustachy is not better, and may even be worse, than that under Green. Regulars at Reed Green are consistently met with swaths of unoccupied seats, such as in the photograph below taken during USM's recent win over Marshall University. What's even worse for Eustachy is the fact that USM's two (arguably) best players, Courtney Beasley and Craig Craft, are both seniors. The two

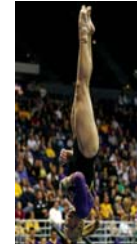
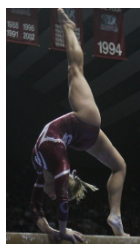
combined for 42 of USM's 75 points in the 31-Jan-09 loss (75 to 87) to the University of Texas at El Paso.



To provide some context for Eustachy's dismal record of putting fans into the seats at RGC, it would seem appropriate to provide a comparison of USM men's basketball attendance to sports attendance of other sports programs in neighboring states. Table 1 below compares USM *men's basketball* attendance to *women's gymnastics* attendance at Alabama, Arkansas, Auburn and LSU.

Table 1: Jan-09 Fan Attendance Comparisons

Home Game/Meet Date	USM Men's Basketball	Alabama Gymnastics	Arkansas Gymnastics	Auburn Gymnastics	LSU Gymnastics
7-Jan-09	3,596				
9-Jan-09			2,003	6,874	
16-Jan-09		10,021			4,369
17-Jan-09	4,196				
23-Jan-09			2,714	2,861	
24-Jan-09	3,575				
27-Jan-09	3,516				
30-Jan-09			2,786	3,251	
Game/Meet Totals	14,883	10,021	8,115	12,986	4,369
Games/Meets	4	1	3	3	1
Average Attendance	3,721	10,021	2,705	4,329	4,369
Rank in Table	4th	1st	5th	3rd	2nd



As Table 1 above indicates, the Jan-09 average attendance at Reed Green Coliseum for men's basketball at USM is only 37% of that for home gymnastics meets at Alabama, and just 85% and 86% of those for home gymnastics meets at LSU and Auburn, respectively. And with USM's average attendance falling since 1-Jan-09, and Arkansas' gymnastics attendance on the rise since 1-Jan-09, it would not be surprising to see that USM soon sits in 5th among the averages/institutions in Table 1 above.

Larry Eustachy is not performing up to the standard set by USM administrators when he was hired about five years ago. Attendance in RGC is dismal, and Eustachy's record, which includes numerous wins over William Carey, Spring Hill, and the like, is even worse. Isn't it time for USM president Martha Saunders to cut USM's losses from this quarter?