

# “What You Talkin’ ‘bout, Willis?”

*USM CFO/HR Director Russ Willis Out Front in Support of Athletics*

For some reason, the Martha Saunders administration is putting USM’s new interim chief financial officer/long-time human resources director, Russ Willis, out front to deflect [criticism](#) of the [institution's practice](#) of providing its athletics department with millions of dollars in financial assistance from student tuition revenue and E&G (education and general) funds. In standing behind athletics, Willis has been [stating](#) that these [monetary transfers](#) are necessary to (1) make USM a well known and great university, like others that are great in athletics, (2) maintain the university’s Division 1 athletics status, and (3) provide for the welfare and safety of the university’s more than 350 student athletes. Sources tell USMNEWS.net, however, that USM’s own press all too often refutes Willis’ claims about the benefits of USM’s marriage of academics and sports. With the sampling of evidence below, it’s difficult to refute sources’ views on this issue:

## Forward with gun conviction among USM newcomers

Patrick Magee • Hattiesburg American • August 14, 2010

**HATTIESBURG** —Southern Miss has added three players to its basketball roster, including one who was dismissed from the University of Nevada team for carrying a handgun on campus - a felony offense. Ahyaro Phillips, a 6-foot-8 forward from New Orleans, was arrested in April 2009 for carrying a gun on the Reno campus. According to an official with the Washoe County District Court in Nevada, Phillips pleaded guilty to a felony concealed weapon charge and had two misdemeanor charges connected with the case dropped. On July 15, he entered a drug court program. If he follows the conditions of the deal, he won't have to serve a sentence and his record will be sealed. "We did a lot of research on him," said USM coach Larry Eustachy. "The guy who recruited him to Nevada (Mark Fox) is now at Georgia and he said it was a no-brainer (to sign Phillips.) He's a real good kid who made a mistake." Phillips attended Fork Union (Va.) Military Academy before playing at Nevada, where he averaged 2.1 points and 2.7 rebounds as a freshman during the 2008-09 season. He played for Lamar State-Port Arthur (Texas) last season, averaging a team-high 11.2 rebounds. "I talked to his coach (at Fork Union) and he said he was there for a whole year and had one demerit because he drank his pop before he sat down at the table," Eustachy said. "He just made a mistake like we all have. We thoroughly researched it and talked to (the USM) administration. He's a good kid."

The other new players joining the program are Devonte Newbill, a 6-4 guard from Philadelphia, Pa., and Kody Williams, a 6-2 guard from Niceville, Fla. Newbill, who averaged 25 points a game as a senior in high school, signed with Marquette but his scholarship offer was rescinded by the school in the summer for what Marquette coach Buzz Williams told the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel was a "culmination of several things." "We found about it and started working it," Eustachy said of Newbill's release. "We just got him in on a visit. He's gotten a lot of offers. I think he's a versatile guard."

Among the other schools that recruited Newbill were West Virginia, Nebraska, St. Joseph's and Temple. Williams was a two-sport star at Niceville High who was considered a top football recruit as a wide receiver. In 2009, he was named the Panhandle area co-player of the year by the Northwest Daily News of Fort Walton Beach. This past season he averaged 12 points and 8.3 assists for Niceville High. Eustachy said Williams will be limited this fall because of a broken kneecap.



## DeAndre Brown, 2 other USM FB players arrested at pool party

Posted: Jul 10, 2010 3:15 PM EDT Saturday, July 10, 2010 3:15 PM EST Updated: Jul 10, 2010 3:15 PM EDT Saturday, July 10, 2010 3:15 PM EST

By Jeff Shepard

HATTIESBURG, M (AP) - A top receiver and a starting linebacker are among three Southern Miss football players arrested after allegedly refusing to leave when a police officer tried to disperse a large crowd at a pool party. The Hattiesburg American reported Saturday that receivers DeAndre Brown and Johdrick Morris and linebacker Martez Smith were arrested Thursday. Hattiesburg Police Department spokesman Sgt. Allen Murray said they were booked with disorderly conduct, a misdemeanor. Coach Larry Fedora did not immediately return a call from The Associated Press to his home Saturday for comment. Brown caught 47 passes for 785 yards and nine touchdowns last season. Smith had 82 tackles in 13 games. Morris played in nine games and started five, catching eight passes for 131 yards and a touchdown.

**The New York Times**

**Sports Briefing | College Football**

## **Southern Miss Players Arrested on Misdemeanor**

**By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**

**Published: July 10, 2010**

A top receiver and a starting linebacker are among three Southern Mississippi players arrested after allegedly refusing to leave when a police officer tried to disperse a large crowd at a pool party. The Hattiesburg American reported Saturday that receivers DeAndre Brown and Johdrick Morris and linebacker Martez Smith were arrested Thursday. The Hattiesburg police spokesman Sgt. Allen Murray said they were booked for disorderly conduct, a misdemeanor. Brown caught 47 passes for 785 yards and 9 touchdowns last season. Smith had 82 tackles in 13 games. Morris played in nine games and started five, catching eight passes for 131 yards and a touchdown.

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### **Star player for USM Golden Eagles arrested for discharging firearm**

*Posted: Feb 16, 2009 3:39 PM EST Monday, February 16, 2009 3:39 PM EST Updated: Feb 16, 2009 4:24 PM EST Monday, February 16, 2009 4:24 PM EST*



HATTIESBURG, MISS (WDAM) - The all time leading rusher for The University of Southern Mississippi has been arrested and charged with discharging a firearm within city limits. Damien Fletcher, 21, along with Brennan Houston, 22, were arrested Sunday night at their apartment complex on North 38th Avenue in Hattiesburg. Police were responding to calls of gunshots coming from the apartment complex which houses most USM athletes, including football and basketball players. Fletcher was charged with discharging a firearm inside the city limits, and Houston was charged with possession of marijuana, both misdemeanors. Fletcher has been the starting running back for the Golden Eagles for the last three years, amassing over 4,000 yards. He won the Conerly Award in 2007 as

the state's best football player. He has another season to play. Houston, who also has another year to play, was a backup offensive lineman last season. Head Football Coach Larry Fedora issued a statement late today (Monday) saying, "I have been made aware of the situation and am gathering all the facts are in, I then will make my decision pending the legal process on any action that I feel appropriate." Athlete Director Richard Giannini said, "We take this incident seriously and are thoroughly investigating the issue. We will take the necessary disciplinary action when the review is completed."



## Former USM coaches win \$1.2 million lawsuit

Posted: Jun 23, 2008 11:53 AM EDT



A Forrest County jury has awarded three former University of Southern Mississippi soccer coaches \$1.2 million in their lawsuit against the university. John Vincent, John Mollaghan and Jed O'Conner claimed they were fired or removed from their positions in 2000 as retaliation for reporting alleged sexual advances toward O'Conner by Women's Administrator Sonya Varnell. The lawsuit was filed against Varnell, Athletic Director Richard Giannini, and former University President Horace Fleming. The coaches alleged sexual harassment, sexual discrimination and lack of due process.



**Threaded Mode | Linear Mode**  
**Former USM coaches win \$1.2M in court**

### Author Message

**EagleRockCafe**   
Heisman



Posts: 5,082  
Joined: Nov 2003  
Reputation: [147](#)  
I Root For: Eagles  
Location:

**Post: #1**

### **Former USM coaches win \$1.2M in court**

This is not good. I had no idea this was even going on. I imagine USM fans will want answers from our A.D. about this...

*Three former University of Southern Mississippi soccer coaches were awarded nearly \$1.2 million in damages today in Forrest County Circuit Court.*

*Former head coach John Vincent and two assistants, John Mollaghan and Ged O'Connor, had filed suit claiming sexual harassment, sexual discrimination and lack of due process. The suit named the university, former USM President Horace Fleming and current employees, USM athletic director Richard Giannini and senior women's administrator Sonya Varnell as defendants.*

*Vincent was awarded \$500,000, recoverable from Fleming, Giannini and Varnell. Mollaghan was awarded \$376,000 and O'Connor \$300,000, both recoverable from Giannini and Varnell.*

*The actions that brought the suit occurred between Dec, 15, 1999, and July, 2000.*

06-21-2008 06:34 AM



## USM settles with ex-student

**Full story: Hattiesburg American**

The University of Southern Mississippi paid more than \$110,000 to a former women's tennis graduate assistant after she complained of sexual harassment from then-coach Randy Rowley, the Hattiesburg American has learned.

4 Comments

Emily Witherow. Morgantown, WV Sep 23, 2009

Good for the young woman to have the courage to go after him. How many young women were just happy to have this end and said nothing to anyone in authority. She is a hero for saving other victims. It sounds as though the [University](#) gave the ultimatum to resign or be fired. USM keep taking the high road.

Usmalum Houston, TX Sep 27, 2009

Rowley is a snake. He was having an affair with one of the tennis players back when I went to school there.

John Newland Lakewood, CA Jan 13, 2010

I see he is now coaching for the Army men's tennis team. Hopefully he does not make any strange advances on the men as well. Scumbag of a man.

Emma Weddell Hattiesburg, MS Apr 28, 2010

yup Rowley was an awful awful man and we went to the [administration](#) every single day and it was the worst time for us as a team. i don't know how he lives with himself. the day he told us he resigned, we all busted out in joy

# Rowley quits as tennis coach

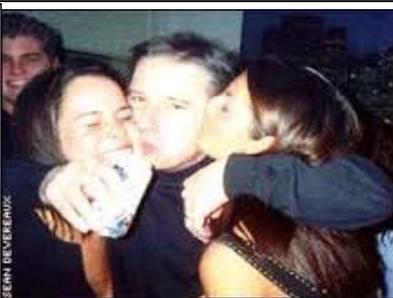
By Special to The Printz

**Published:** Monday, August 24, 2009



**Randy Rowley**

Southern Miss Director of Athletics Richard Giannini announced today that women's tennis coach Randy Rowley has resigned effective immediately. Rowley oversaw the women's tennis program for seven seasons in which he compiled a 76-68 record. Under Rowley, the program achieved Southern Miss' first national team ranking, recorded the most wins in a single season and finished third in the Conference USA tennis championships. His previous collegiate coaching stops included being an assistant men's coach at Texas Tech (2000-02), head men's coach at Louisiana-Monroe (1995-2000), head women's coach and assistant men's coach at Louisiana-Lafayette (1993-95), assistant men's and women's coach at Kansas (1996-97), director of tennis at Seward County (Kan.) Community College (1984-86) and women's student assistant coach at Southwestern College (1979-84).





## Southern Miss hires Eustachy

By HATTIESBURG, MISSISSIPPI - Southern Mississippi has given Larry Eustachy another chance to coach in the NCAA.

Eustachy resigned at Iowa State last year after published photographs showed him at a college party kissing and being kissed by young women. He will be introduced as the Golden Eagles' new basketball coach at a news conference tomorrow.

Eustachy was the AP's coach of the year in 2000 and led the Cyclones to Big 12 titles in 2000 and 2001. Iowa State reached the regional finals of the 2000 NCAA tournament.

Eustachy takes over for James Green, who resigned the day before the Golden Eagles' final regular-season game. Southern Miss went 13-15 this past season.



10-12-2006, 07:25 PM | **Two USM Football Players Arrested**

and kicked off the team for pulling a drive by.....with a BB gun. I guess CUSA does everything on a smaller scale.

### **USM players allegedly shot student with BB gun**

**Quote:**

HATTIESBURG — The players dismissed from the Southern Miss football team wounded a student with an air-powered BB gun fired from a players' car, police said.

C.J. Bailey and Cornelius McGee were arrested and charged with aggravated assault early Wednesday morning. USM coach Jeff Bower said he dismissed both Wednesday, and that they won't be permitted back on the team regardless of any appeal process the two pursue.

The players were suspended from the university, pending an appeal.

They will not be permitted to return to campus or ask for an appeal until they meet with Eddie Hollaway, USM dean of students.

"They would have to be cleared through the dean of students office before anything else," Hollaway said. "Then, we would go from there."

According to USM Police, Robert Lee of Clinton reported being hit by a pellet near his right eye while walking on campus. Lee gave a description of a car that Lee said the shot came from, and USM Police chief Bob Hopkins said the description fit a red Nissan Altima registered to Bailey's parents in Moss Point.

A BB gun and ammunition for the gun were found in the car, and the pellet taken from Lee matched the type found in the car, said Hopkins.

Bailey, a 19-year-old freshman, was charged with felony aggravated assault and possession of a firearm on state property, a misdemeanor. He was released on a \$51,000 bond.

McGee, a 19-year-old sophomore from Clarksdale, was charged with felony aggravated assault and released on a \$50,000 bond. A court date has not been set. The aggravated assault charge carries a maximum sentence of 20 years.

McGee was a back-up cornerback and special teams player. Bailey was being redshirted this season.



**September 12, 2005**

## **Southern Miss cheap shots draw ire from Tide**

So much for the goodwill directed toward the Southern Miss football team in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, at least in the eyes of Alabama players. Tide quarterback Brodie Croyle complained of numerous hits he took from Golden Eagle players; hits he deemed to be cheap shots or overly aggressive contact in Bama's 30-21 win over USM. He explained: "It seemed like at times they were going straight for my knees, trying to twist them..." "That's probably the maddest I've ever been on a football field," Croyle said. "As mad as I was, JB (Closner) and K.D. (Ken Darby), I thought they were fixing to start swinging at people." USM did garner one personal foul penalty for a late hit (by DL Tom Johnson) on Croyle, whose career at Bama has been marred by injuries. According to the Mobile (Ala.) Register story, Croyle was caught on the referee's microphone profanely complaining about the cheap shots. He hoped his mother wasn't reading lips or, if she did, that she would understand.

The Student Printz – Opinions

## **Recruiting Marcus Raines bad for USM**

By George Spinks

**Published:** Tuesday, April 26, 2005

When the news was released last week that our very own world-class university was recruiting Pasadena City College's top linebacker Marcus Raines, the initial reaction among the student body was positive. On the cover, Raines appears to be a top prospect, and top prospects are certainly something Southern Miss' football team needs after this recruiting season. Unfortunately though, there is more to Mr. Raines than meets the eye. Namely, he is a convicted felon. According to university reports, the junior college athlete served time for his role in the death of a high school student, Christopher O'Leary, in 2000, and as a consequence, served one year in a juvenile detention center and two years in a boot camp. The exact details of what happened the night of O'Leary's death are somewhat murky, but according to published reports from various newspapers that covered the death of O'Leary and the legal proceedings that followed, it has been generally established that Raines and two of his teammates got in a fight with O'Leary at a party in Palmdale, Calif. One of the teammates punched O'Leary, who fell to the ground, and was kicked in the head by Raines. O'Leary died of complications from his injuries three days later. Of course, as most in Raines' position would claim, he has reformed since this time, and USM has been unlucky enough to snag his services. For some, Raines' past may not seem to be a problem. The attitude, especially within the athletic community, is if he can better our football program, he is welcome at USM. But for many across campus, the situation is not so simple, as a convicted felon will be representing the black and gold on and off the field.

Admittedly, it is quite possible this potential player has reformed, but what if he hasn't? Is the university prepared to take on the public relations nightmare that would arise if Raines should become a student here in Hattiesburg and relapse into his former ways? I seriously doubt it. To make matters worse, word is Raines will be an athletic scholarship recipient. "They believed in my character and decided to scholarship me," Raines told CBS Sportsline.com's Dennis Dodd. "They asked me a lot of questions, but they believed in me." The problem with situations such as the one before the university community is not as simple as having blind faith in someone or something. Ultimately, you can have all the faith in the world in something, but something could happen and ideas could change. Yes, Marcus Raines probably deserves another chance in life, but is USM the place for it? In my view, the answer is no. Having someone with this individual's history and reputation as an athlete, much less a scholarship athlete, is irresponsible and unwarranted to say the least.



April 18, 2005

## Southern Miss offers scholarship to convict

Southern Miss president Shelby Thames (Shelby.F.Thames@usm.edu) sat down with the man who plead guilty to his role in the beating death of a high school student. The talk went so well, Southern Miss will offer the convict a football scholarship and a "second chance". LB Marcus Raines plead guilty to involuntary manslaughter for his role in the fatal beating of Christopher O'Leary at a May 19, 2000, party in Palmdale, CA. After a confrontation, Littlerock QB Richard Newton hit O'Leary, knocking him to the pavement. Future Golden Eagle Raines kicked him in the head "like a football" as O'Leary's girlfriend tried to revive him. O'Leary would die from the wounds days later.

Raines served one year in a juvenile institution and two years in a boot camp before enrolling at Pasadena City College. Raines committed to Kansas State in December, but the scholarship offer was rescinded after booster backlash resulting from Raines's criminal record. Following the meeting with Southern Miss, Raines announced that USM had extended the scholarship offer: "They believed in my character and decided to scholarship me," Raines said of Southern Miss by phone Monday from Pasadena, where he is still attending junior college. "They asked me a lot of questions, but they believed in me." Southern Miss athletic director Richard Giannini (Richard.Giannini@usm.edu) confirmed as much. "He didn't hide anything from us," said Southern Miss athletic director Richard Giannini. "He deserves a second opportunity. He's dedicated his life to being a positive mentor, helping people like him." According to CBS SportsLine.com, Raines will sign a scholarship agreement with Southern Miss that does not bind him to the school until he enrolls.

I'm all for second chances. Maybe Southern Miss should look into giving Christopher O'Leary a second chance. Oh wait, they can't. Marcus Raines kicked him in the head like a football and he died.  
Southern Miss - wake up and pull this scholarship offer right now.

Posted by Kevin Donahue

As the sample of news stories above points out, it is difficult to argue that USM athletics have been a significant benefit to the university. In fact, one could argue that through stories like those above, the institution is being seriously harmed from its participation in Division 1 sports.