

Déjà Vu?

Yesterday [Hattiesburg American](#) sports reporter Jason Munz advised the community,

In a joint release, Southern Miss and Alabama announced the two schools [University of Alabama and Southern Miss] have agreed to schedule a football game that will be played on Sept. 13, 2014, at Bryant-Denny Stadium in Tuscaloosa, Ala.

This announcement is an eerie reminder of what happened about a year ago. On November 6, 2012 – barely a year ago – Nebraska and Southern Miss began discussions to move a much anticipated home game for the Golden Eagles to Nebraska. By the end of the month, an agreement was signed to move the game to Nebraska. In return, Southern Miss got \$2.125 million. This is almost exactly the amount necessary to buy out the remaining three years on the contract of first year coach Ellis Johnson. As no one has forgotten, Johnson’s one year tenure at Southern Miss ended with a 0-12 record.



As [Deadspin wrote at the time](#), “it’s not a secret that schools rent out their programs to act as home punching bags for big programs, nor is it a surprise how much money is at stake. But it’s instructive to see the bald calculus of college sports: Southern Miss, forced by the shame of a winless year to swallow a coach’s contract, is able to turn around days later and sign a deal that completely covers its expenses.”

Todd Monken was hired as Johnson’s replacement. Now, Monken has lost ten straight games and is widely anticipated to end his first season with a 0-12 schedule. In many

ways, the Monken tenure has been even more humiliating than Johnson's. Southern Miss ranks [dead last](#) nationally in turnovers, and has provided the most one-sided margin of victory for the season for eight of its last ten opponents. Six of Southern Miss' ten losses under Monken have been by [40 points](#) or more.

When former interim [President Aubrey Lucas](#) announced the decision to fire Ellis Johnson, he tied it to a decline in attendance. "Athletics is entertaining, it's theater," Lucas said. "And when people quit buying tickets to go see the play, something has to happen. It's always unfortunate."

According to [USA Today](#), in 2011, USM averaged 28,400 for their six home games. In 2012, USM averaged 25,751 fans for six home games. USM's reported attendance for two home games in 2013 has been 25,729 for the season opener, dropping to 21,891 for the loss to FIU. (In case you are curious, Roberts Stadium has a capacity of 39,000.). Attendance for Southern Miss' homecoming against North Texas was 23,203, which is, according to [The Hattiesburg American](#), "the smallest crowd for a homecoming game at M.M. Roberts Stadium since 1995...". According to people in attendance, by half-time fully half the crowd called it a day and departed the stadium. Last Saturday, according to the [Sun Herald](#) "[t]he official attendance ... was 20,802, but the actual crowd appeared to be closer to half that number."

Obviously, people have quit buying tickets. After 10 losses, in what sources claim is an effort to hold on to his job, Monken dismissed his offensive coordinator. In quite possibly the understatement of the year, Monken [explained his decision](#) saying, "[w]e haven't played particularly well as a team. So this (staff change) is not solely put on that position. But at the end of the day, we've all got to perform better at all spots, starting with that group, and that just happened to start today."

Now, Southern Miss, arguably the worst football team in Division 1 football, has scheduled an early season home game against Alabama, which is widely viewed as the best football team. Is Southern Miss getting ready to buy out the contracts of yet another head coach and his coaching staff?