

Updated, 20 April 2010 – See Below

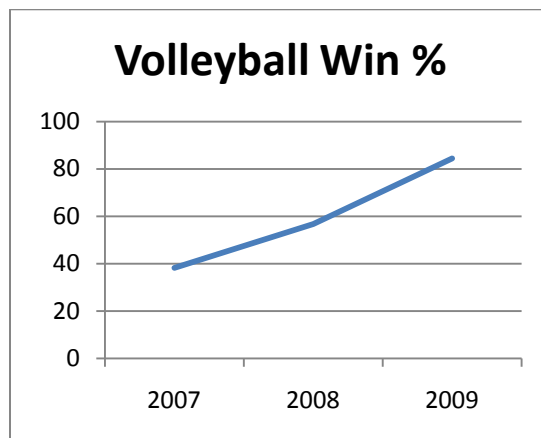
Aunt Martha's Seasons

A Look at How USM's Prez is Managing Athletics

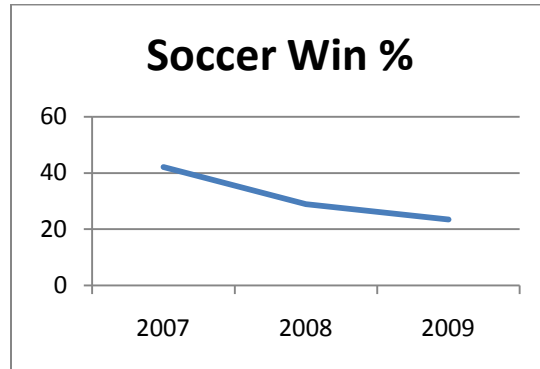
The "Banner Year" series here at USMNEWS.net has pointed out that USM's varsity sports programs appear to be slipping under USM president Martha Saunders' stewardship. This report examines how Saunders has been managing, or as the data below suggest, **mis**managing, the fall and winter athletics programs at USM. The numbers in Table 1 below make the case that USM's fall and winter sports programs have been awash in mediocrity since Saunder's arrival back in spring of 2007. The win percentages range from a low of 31.8% in soccer to a high of only 59.4% in volleyball. USM's football program (53.8%) has even fallen below its lackluster men's basketball program (54.5%) under controversial head coach Larry Eustachy.

Sport	Wins	Losses	Ties	Win %
Volleyball	57	39	0	59.4
Soccer	17	37	1	31.8
Football	21	18	0	53.8
Women's Basketball	50	47	0	51.5
Men's Basketball	54	45	0	54.5
Totals	199	186	1	51.6

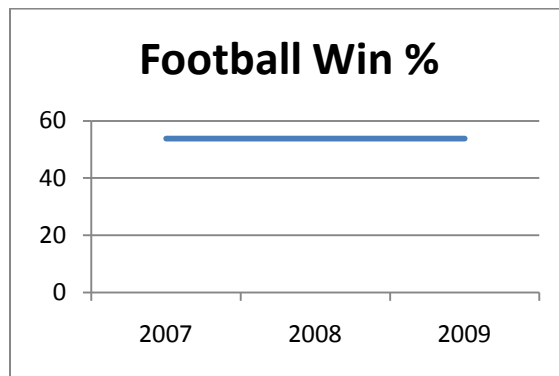
A look at the individual trends also yields a mixed bag of sorts, along with some bad news. The trend for volleyball shown below is quite remarkable. The Lady Eagles are headed for the sky under Saunders, though some say that the head coach will likely be moving on to a bigger institution in short order.



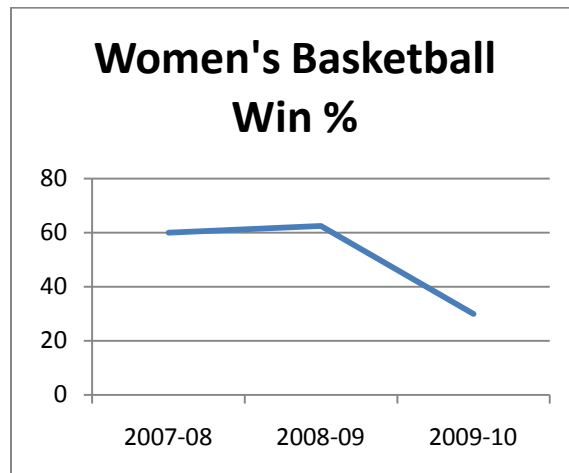
The record for USM soccer is moving in the wrong direction under Saunders. As the trend below indicates, there is not much room for soccer to fall in 2010 and 2011. Will a single-digit winning % arrive in the near future?



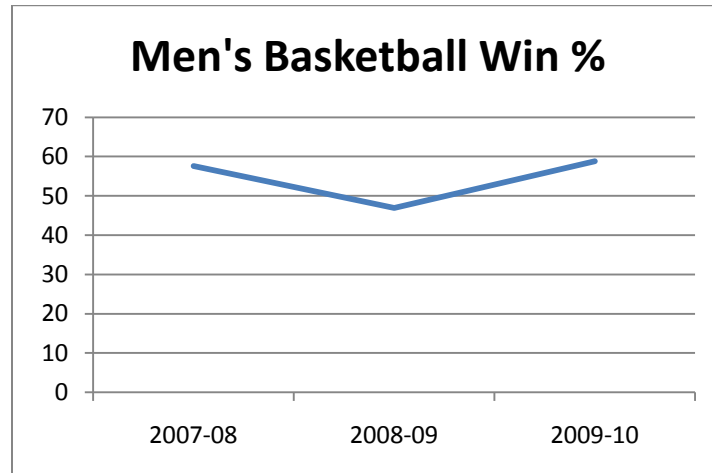
As the picture below points out, the USM football program has flat-lined under during Saunders' presidency. After hitting only the 53.8% mark for three years in a row, Eagle football fans are becoming restless. How many New Orleans Bowls in a row can they get excited for? Only time will tell.



Perhaps the most disturbing turn for Eagle fans is the drop the women's basketball program has taken of late. Winning just nine games in 2009-10, many USM faithful are beginning to doubt coach Joye Lee-McNelis' ability to lead the program.



The men's basketball program has been a virtual roller coaster since 2007. Up and down (see picture below), the unit's mediocre results hinge on playing a schedule heavy on NAIA-level competition, such as William Carey, Belhaven, and others. Controversial head coach Larry Eustachy seems, however, to have a permanent hold on his job, even under Saunders.



The disturbing aspect of this report is that, generally speaking, USM's fall/winter sports programs typically outperform its spring sports programs. The two track teams typically flounder, softball has been stuck in the mud for a number of years, while men's and women's golf and tennis are notoriously unreliable in terms of providing a winning product. Among the spring sports menu, only baseball produces at a noteworthy rate.

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After this report was put together and awaiting publication, it was discovered the USM head volleyball coach, Ricci Luyties, accepted the position as head coach at the University of California at San Diego. Luyties was named the new head coach by UCSD on 22-March-2010, according to a UCSD [press release](#). Luyties (pictured below) produced a 44-18 record in his final two seasons (2008 and 2009) at USM, including the school's first-ever Conference USA championship in 2009, a season that also ended with the remarkable record of 27-5.



Luyties is easily the most storied volleyball coach in USM history. As a player at UCLA, he won four consecutive NCAA championships. Luyties' #11 UCLA jersey was retired just after his career ended there. Later, he captured gold Medals in Olympic Games held in 1988 in Seoul. It is clear that the Martha Saunders administration faces a near-impossible task in replacing Luyties. It is also clear that USMNEWS.net's correspondents have an almost uncanny ability to forecast events related USM.