

MEETING OF JULY 24, 2007

Minutes of Meeting of July 17, 2007

- President Freddy Walter presided over the meeting.
- Kris King offered the invocation.
- Felicia Warren led the Club in the Pledge of Allegiance.
- Tina Lowrimore introduced visiting Rotarians and guests:
 - Pierce Stevens, Sr. of the Petal Club.
 - Sam Britton of the Waynesboro Club Alan Smithers was a guest of Todd Bradley.
 - Harold Nickleson was a guest of Johnny Stevens.
 - Ashley Read was a guest of Valerie Sartin.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- 1) Thanks to Chris Strebeck and Matt Devereaux for serving as greeters.
- 2) Freddy congratulated Quentin Benedict and his wife on their upcoming 65th wedding anniversary.
- 3) He also announced that Gaston Smith has resigned from the club due to the health problems of both him and his wife. He asked those who know Gaston to stay in contact with them.
- 4) Members were encouraged to contact the committee chairs announced last week and volunteer their services for the coming year. Those committee appointments are also in today's SPOKES. If you fail to volunteer, you are likely to be appointed to a service project.

LAST WEEK'S PROGRAM

Tom Potter introduced the guest speaker, Richard Giannini, the Director of Athletics and Chair of the Southern Mississippi Athletic Foundation.

Mr. Giannini thanked Club members and other donors throughout the community who have participated in recent projects to improve the University's athletic facilities. He noted that those facilities still present the biggest challenge to the future of USM's athletic program. He noted that our facilities pale when compared to those of universities around us and others participating in Division I and Conference USA competition.

When Mr. Giannini came to the University, the Circle of Champions had just been kicked off. The goal was to get just a handful of donors to agree to contribute \$10,000 per year for ten years with the proceeds being used to begin athletic facility renovations. As of today, 109 have committed to the Circle of Champions program. Thirty-one of those donors have agreed to contribute more than the \$100,000 pledge.

Work on the South End Zone is progressing rapidly. The concrete work is scheduled to be completed by homecoming and the entire project should be completed by the opening day of the 2008 season. That project cost is \$32 million and is being paid for completely by donors.

Reed-Green Coliseum is getting a face-lift. Thirty-thousand square feet is being added to the stadium. A new heating and air conditioning system, a new sound system, and a fire safety sprinkler system is also being added.

Twelve suites are being added to the press box of the baseball stadium. The stadium is also getting new restrooms and lockers. Work on this \$3.2 million project is expected to be completed within the next thirty days.

Work is also beginning on Fourth Street improvements near the Coliseum and baseball stadium. A new ingress and egress system is being added, including turn lanes and a traffic signal.

Dr. York is contributing land at Canebrake that is to be used for the construction of a clubhouse for the men and women's golf teams.

Other athletic facilities needs include the construction of a softball stadium, an Olympic Sports Training Center, the addition of six varsity courts and a long-term maintenance program for The Rock. Giannini noted that recent construction projects on the campus eliminated the existing tennis courts as well as the old Sports Arena, both of which need to be replaced.

Giannini says the USM football team looks good for the coming season; in fact, he expects it to be better than any team of recent years. The season kicks off on September 1. Eight of the games will be televised this coming season. He expects the men's basketball team to finish as good as the teams of the late 1980's and early 1990's. The women's basketball team will be challenging other teams for the top spot in the league.

He invited Club members to participate in the USM athletic program by supporting it and attending events. He noted that there are now more than 70

motor homes on campus during regular games participating in tailgating.

Giannini ended his presentation by noting that the number one goal of the USM athletic program is the education of student athletes. With less than one-percent of collegiate players going on to play in professional leagues, athletes must get a good education while in college so they can be competitive when they enter the workforce.

THIS WEEK'S PROGRAM

Jay Johnson, Offensive Coordinator/Quarterbacks, is our speaker.

Jan Johnson is in his third year as the offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach and fifth year overall on the staff at Southern Miss. He joined Bower's staff in 2003 as the tight ends coach, before coaching the running backs in 2004.

Last year, Johnson guided the Southern Miss offense to one of the best seasons in recent memory, netting 4,288 yards of total offense (1,336 rushing, 2,952 yards passing) and scoring 355 points (29.6 per game). The total offense was the fifth-best performance in school history; the passing yardage was the all time best, the points scored were second most, while the passing yardage per game (246.0) was second.

His quarterback, Dustin Almond, had one of the best seasons ever by a Golden Eagle signal caller in 2005, as he set the single-season record for passing completions (216), passing attempts (392) total offense (2,762), while throwing 23 touchdowns, the second most in school history.

In 2004, Johnson guided a solid stable of running backs, which averaged 144.9 yards per game, 22.8 more yards per game and six more rushing touchdowns than in 2003. Anthony Harris, Sherron Moore and Larry Thomas carried the majority of the load for the season.

Johnson helped guide senior tight end Terrell Browden to a successful season in 2003, when he earned All-Conference USA second team honors and then signed a free agent contract with the Cleveland Browns. He has extensive coaching experience and knowledge of several positions, including quarterback, receivers, defensive backs, running backs, and tight ends.

Johnson has honed his coaching skills at a variety of levels and schools. He started his coaching career at Columbia-Hickman High School in 1993, serving as the quarterbacks, receivers and defensive backs coach.

In 1994, he moved to Missouri as a graduate assistant coach, later moving to Augsburg College, serving as the school's offensive coordinator and recruiting coordinator from 1994-95, before moving to that same position at Truman State from 1995-97. He directed Truman State's offense to an average of over 30 points and 400 yards a game during the 1995 and 1996 seasons.

He served as a graduate assistant at Kansas from 1997-99 and became its quarterbacks coach in 1999, serving in that role until 2001, when he moved to coach running backs and coached in that role before arriving at Southern Miss.

Johnson, a three-time All-Gateway Conference quarterback and four-time conference player of the week in his playing days at Northern Iowa, led his teams to a 31.8 record, and won three conference championships, while appearing in three national playoffs. He finished his career with almost 500 completions and threw for over 8,000 yards and 58 touchdowns.

He was elected team captain in both the 1991 and 1992 seasons. He quarterbacked the '92 team to a 12-2 record, a conference championship and the No. 3 ranking in the final NCAA Div. 1-AA poll.

Johnson also holds a variety of academic honors to go with his on-field prowess. He earned President's Academic Excellence honors in the Gateway Conference and held a perfect 4.0 grade point average while completing his master's degree at Missouri. That earned him a Superior Graduate Achievement Award from the Department of Health and Exercise Science, and he was a Dean's List scholar at Northern Iowa where he compiled a 3.47 GPA. He also taught several courses while at Truman State and Missouri.

He is married to the former Lori Ross and they have a son, Cole.

Editor: Gary Garner