Southern Miss Head Coach Jay Hopson
Feb. 1, 2017 – National Signing Day

Opening Statement:
“Exciting day. Very fired up about our future Golden Eagles. It’s a strong class and we’re certainly excited for the future we have here.”

Very heavy defensive class:
“It’s kind of like an NFL draft. You know what your needs are with your graduating senior class and your upcoming senior class. So you know where you have to have depth for the future. I think you also saw a strong high school class building for the future. Definitely excited about the guys.”

Largest group of coast kids since 2006:
“I think first and foremost we have to thank Desmond Lindsey for doing a tremendous job on the south Mississippi side. Our football coaches as a whole did a tremendous job. Wes Turner, Director of Player Personnel, did an outstanding job all year long in the organizational side of recruiting which is always a feat in itself. Our assistant coaches did a great job there and I’m just really proud of those guys and to be associated with this group. But yes, a lot of coast guys. That’s kind of who we are. We’re the University of Southern Mississippi so we want as many south Mississippi guys as we can. We want to stay in that footprint of South Mississippi, Panhandle, Alabama, Florida and Louisiana. That’s kind of who we are and always have been and it’s great to get a lot of local guys.”

Do you see this recruiting class making an impact next season?
“I do. That’s always up to them. We’ll find out in August who’s going to play and who’s going to red shirt. You won’t know until then. It’s a great group of guys. I always talk about Southern Miss guys and these guys are Southern Miss guys. It’s a group of men that are high character, tough guys that we pride ourselves with chip on our shoulder guys. It’s a group that I’m excited about.”

Quarterback competition:
“Of course all quarterbacks are different. Both of them do things strong and it’s going to be fun to watch them battle. Marcelo Rodriguez came into camp and did a tremendous job of throwing the ball. Steven Anderson is strong, 6-foot-3 and 245 pounds. He throws the ball extremely well. He’s smart, durable and there’s nothing you can’t do with him. Marcelo throws the ball and it comes out hot. He can really rip it. It’s going to be fun to watch them battle. That’s the great thing about football: competition. You put the ball down and watch them compete for it. I think those are two guys that are competitors and you thrown them in the mix with two guys we have here. That was a spot that we needed to at least sign two just to make sure we have a solid core deep in the quarterback position.”

What’s the conversation of trying to get these recruits coming here?
“Well we’re looking for a Southern Miss guy. We’re looking for that guy that believes in this University, believes in who we are. The defensive guys who believe in the nasty bunch or offensive guys who believe in black attack. It’s an attitude. It’s who we are. We’re built on two or three-star players that have a chip and that’s who we’ll continue to be. At the end of the day, we’re going to find those guys that over the years not only have produced a lot of NFL players, a lot of all-pros, a lot of Hall of Famers or NFL MVPS. We’ll try and stick to that course because that’s a course that proves to be the right course.”

In state and high school emphasis on recruiting:
“Well what’s happened is that we have to build from the ground up high school wise. That’s a must. I believe in this city. I believe in this area. I’m a Mississippi born myself so at the end of the day; I just believe that the guys in this state can play football. I always will until you put me in a coffin. I always talk about Mobile, Panhandle and Florida, we consider that just a still home print for Southern Miss. You have a great one, Lee (Roberts), who’s a great one from the Panhandle. The reality is that’s a Southern Miss home territory. We have a lot of Golden Eagles down there that not only played here but coach high school ball in the area. That’s something that is a special area that is unique to us.”

Freddie Hartz early commitment:
“I think Freddie is a young man that is just a hard-nose linebacker that you'll have to ask him but I think fell in love with that tradition. Just wanted to be a part of the Nasty Bunch and he’s a guy you watch hit people and role around the sidelines, he plays with that Southern Miss chip. We’re glad to have him starting early and certainly excited about him.”

**Darius Mayberry playing with current players:**
I’ll say we feel like we got a real good one. You put him on the line and race him in the 50-yard dash; I know where I’m putting my money at. The one wearing black and gold. At the end of the day, we’re excited about him. We think he’s a playmaker. We think he has a lot of speed and ability. Again, we think he’s a Southern Miss guy.

**Connection in Miami:**
"I spent my whole life recruiting down there, too. Tony's [Pecoraro] done his whole life down there, too. Tony has that area. All the coaches really. Dez [Lindsey] on the coast, Tony in South Florida and all the guys in the area did a tremendous job. But I think it’s a natural area for us because we do have relationships and connections down in that area so that always helps when high school coaches know you. It’s certainly a helpful thing in recruiting."

**How has National Signing Day changed?**
“I don’t know if the day has changed much. It’s still an exciting day. It’s one of my favorite days in football. It’s a fun day, an exciting day. It’s an opportunity to see who’s a part of the football family now. You have an idea of what you have moving forward in the spring. It’s always a fun day. It’s a celebration. It’s an exciting day.”

**Thoughts on early signing period:**
“I’m going to go against the grain. We have a system that's not broke so I don’t see what the big rush is to fix something that isn't broke. I don't know if there is such a thing as an early signing period because in football you're only talking about February 1 to December 15. That’s only a month in a half. It'd be different if you were talking about signing after your junior year. But when you’re only talking about a month and a half all you’ve really done is moving up signing day. Teams aren't just going to sit around and wait like we’ll just do nothing and wait and see what they get. What you'll see is everybody pushing it up. I think it’s going to be a move that a lot of universities will have to invest more into the support staff because now you’re talking about visits that will have to be during game days because when the season is over, it's signing day. I’m not a big fan. It's going to be a very expensive move to move it up. Some programs may feel differently, but I feel when you move up the signing date to an early signing date, you’re just moving the signing date. I don’t think you have a lot of guys sit back and wait and see what happens there and then we'll go out and recruit. It’s not the way it's going to work. Everybody is too competitive. It may happen but I think there’s a lot of unknowns. You don’t know what all the unknowns are so lets stick with the system that's not broke. Everybody understands it and it works pretty well.”