

From the Sidelines



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I am Penn State

THIS ISN'T THE COLUMN I HAD PLANNED TO WRITE. But because of the crimes of one evil man, and the decisions made by a handful of others, my alma mater, The Pennsylvania State University, is being dragged through the mud from coast to coast. And I am sick about it.

I have a 13-year-old son. It's difficult to imagine his being in the shoes of the victims of the monster who is Jerry Sandusky. I don't see how those men can ever be made whole again, and most likely many of their family members will never get over it either. Perhaps a whole lot of money is coming their way down the road but does anyone really think that will even up things?

No one knows how much Joe Paterno, a great but flawed man, knew or understood about his former colleague's disgusting behavior and now, thankfully as far as I'm concerned, he's dead and so can't be paraded about on TV to defend himself. Evidence uncovered in the university's own investigation of the scandal points to Paterno's not being completely in the dark regarding the situation. And I think when Paterno told students outside his home after his firing late last year, "I should have done more," he knew he hadn't done the right thing, horribly so. Cancer, schmancer—this realization is what killed the coach.

That the suits that ran Penn State covered up Sandusky's crimes to protect the university's brand, and the football program, there's little doubt, which was inexcusable behavior that I trust will mean prison time for them.

What a comedown for a football program that prided itself on being "cleaner" than our competition. And Penn State was cleaner—until we became what many now must consider the "dirtiest" of all time.

I don't agree with all the harsh penalties the NCAA handed down but Penn State deserved a heavy hand, given that the decisions made by the "leaders" allowed Sandusky to continue to ruin the lives of young men. It's a shame that so many innocent folks, from students to business owners to football players, faculty, and alumni, will long pay the price for those decisions.

But amid all the heartbreak and tears, recriminations and finger-pointing, one thing keeps coming to mind: those so-called leaders who failed those young men are not Penn State. I am Penn State.

Dan Douglas, head groundskeeper for the Reading Phillies, is Penn State.

Allen Johnson, head field manager for the Green Bay Packers, is Penn State.

Brad Park, Rutgers University sports turf specialist, is Penn State.

Vickie Wallace, University of Connecticut extension educator, is Penn State.

The student-run IFC/Panhellenic Dance Marathon, which raised \$10.7 million for pediatric cancer research at the 2012 event alone, is Penn State.

The *Wall Street Journal's* #1 school in a survey of top corporate recruiters is Penn State.

A major college football program that graduates 80% of its team and shows no achievement gap between black and white players is Penn State.

If there ever was a very large, very diverse group of Americans who will put their hearts, minds (and yes, wallets) together to make something good come of tragedy, it is the Penn State community, past, present, and future. Just watch and see.

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