A brief prelude

This is not a sports article. This is something that should never be required to be said, written or debated.

These reflections are my own, and they are based on the allegations surrounding the Penn State sex scandal. I fully realize that no one has been convicted yet, and that in this country, every one is innocent until proven guilty. But with the actions already taken by the university (the terminations of football coach Joe Paterno and president Graham Spanier in addition to the actual arrest of Jerry Sandusky), it's safe to say there's enough evidence here to make some accurate assumptions.

Like many of you, I've sat at my computer and read dozens of articles related to this story -- opinion pieces covering a bizarre range of emotions that stretch from rage toward the university to support of what is now the former head football coach.

I have a few emotions too. I've felt anger, confusion/bewilderment, sadness and even a little bit of embarrassment for some people involved.

The Most Important Element of This Story

It isn't Joe Paterno's termination. It isn't the impact this scandal will have on his legacy. It isn't

Graham Spanier's termination or the cover up Tim Curley and Gary Schultz orchestrated. It isn't even Jerry Sandusky's monstrous actions.

The most important element of this story is the young kids who were victimized by Jerry Sandusky. The young kids who have now grown up to young adults wearing scars that they will take with them to their graves.

When looking at this story, whether you're a columnist searching for an angle to cover or a die hard Penn State fan, this is the perspective that is required before you form any sort of opinion. This isn't a story about a football coach. This isn't a story about a university. It's bigger than that. It's a story about an unknown number of children who were viciously abused by an adult that had no regard for their well being. So before you do anything, think of the victims first -- because there has been enough neglect demonstrated in that area, a decades worth, for us to willingly ignore the needs of these victims any longer.

To the Penn State Fans and Other Joe Paterno Supporters Who Rioted Last Night

I watched in horror as I saw you crowding the streets in support of Joe Paterno and sincerely prayed this:

I hope that while these people are chanting "We Want Joe" and turning news vans upside down, that at some point during the night they have the fortune to stumble on even a microscopic fiber of moral awareness. If not for themselves, then for their current or future children.

It is literally impossible for me to understand the thought process of any human being that has the urge to defend Joe Paterno. It's even more mind boggling why anyone would defend Paterno when he himself admitted yesterday that he wished he would've taken more action in 2002 when he was first told of Sandusky's misconduct. If the man himself is saying he should have done more, why on earth would anyone think his handling of the situation was appropriate?

It doesn't matter how much Joe Paterno contributed to the university. It doesn't matter how his termination will impact his legacy as a coach/person. He could have won twice as many games as he did while rebuilding Beaver Stadium with his bare hands and it still wouldn't have changed this simple fact:

Joe Paterno effectively deserted an unknown number of kids (a number that I'm praying to God stops growing) by his lack of action in 2002. Yes, he did what he was legally obligated to do by reporting what he was told to university personnel. But with his monumental neglect to following up on this situation, regardless of what he was or wasn't told by Mike McQueary the day after the abuse took place, he effectively allowed a man to abuse more than a handful of other children by his inaction. Frankly, that inaction outweighs the accomplishments that elevated him to be the kind of man we thought he represented.

Those children, *those victims*, needed a hero. They needed a man who prided himself in doing things the right way. They needed exactly who we all thought Joe Paterno was. What they

received though was the coldest shoulder any human can offer to another -- absolute abandonment.

That is indefensible.

Regarding Everyone Else Involved

My frustration with this situation boils over at this point. Mike McQueary -- who witnessed with his own eyes the peak of horror Sandusky was capable of in a university shower in 2002 -- didn't immediately intervene when he saw a 10 year old boy being victimized in the worst way imaginable. He didn't stop the horror himself. He didn't call the police.

He called his father instead, who for some God awful reason provided the worst advice I could possibly think of in that situation. McQueary's father did not say, "Hang up the phone right now and immediately call the police," like he should have. McQueary's father did not say, "Well get your ass back there and get the child away from that monster, and then when the boy is safe, get to a phone and immediately call the police," like he should have. What he effectively said was, get out of there and go home.

How is that even a blip on the radar of appropriate options when being a part of this situation? That is, quite literally, *the last thing he should have done*. He left that young boy in Sandusky's hands, and up until this story broke, not one damn person -- not Paterno, McQueary, McQueary's father, Spanier, Curley or Schultz -- tried to discover the identity of this victim to get him help.

That is beyond negligence. That is beyond outrageous. It is humanity at it's lowest point.

Check that

Jerry Sandusky is humanity at its lowest point. A ton of attention is being placed on the men who could have done something, and while they deserve every degree of heat they're facing, it would be injustice in its truest form if we didn't paint Sandusky in the light he deserves to be painted in. The pain this man has caused these children is irreversible. I wish I could offer more of an opinion about this man, but his actions are so vile and disturbing that I can't possibly let my mind reach depths that low.

To the Victims Involved

I'm praying for you. I pray that you realize that the actions of the men above, from Sandusky

himself to everyone who had a chance to put him behind bars but chose not to -- is unacceptable. I pray that you realize you deserved a better childhood. I pray that when you turn on your television and see men and women rioting in support of a man who abandoned you at your greatest time of need -- that you realize this is one of the greatest embodiments of ignorance you will ever witness.

But above all else, I'm praying that you realize none of this is your fault.

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