Maybe if Ohio State football coach Jim Tressel had been more like University of Connecticut basketball coach Jim Calhoun, the Buckeyes wouldn't have an interim coach for the upcoming season. But instead, as Memorial Day dawned, Tressel showed himself far more sensitive to the criticism and damage to his program than Calhoun ever could for his. And so, as Memorial Day dawned, Tressel held an early morning meeting with his players and his coaches and announced he was resigning.

The timing of Tressel's resignation could have been the impending story that George Dohrmann wrote for Sports Illustrated but if it was it's not necessarily for what the story contained but what it represented. This was a story that wouldn't end no matter how long Tressel had remained with the program. You can't move on until you move on.

With each passing day until the next media target emerges, and one always does, bits and pieces of the Tressel resignation story will emerge. Already it's being said that university officials encouraged him to resign and that's probably true. The only way to quit worrying about what's around the next corner is to start walking a straight line.

The sadness Buckeyes fans are feeling at the moment over this most miserable of stories is understandable. No matter what one thinks of what Tressel did or didn't do, he remains a great man and a great coach who deserved better.

Even as that sadness has taken hold for fans, it will compete with a healthy dose of anger as well, mostly directed at whoever they feel is to blame for this most stunning of developments.

As people pick over the bones of what remains of one of the all time great coaches in NCAA history, they will predictably stack up the blame for this result like so many cords of firewood.

The media, of course, is taking its usual blame not necessarily for reporting the story but for piling on. But blaming the media seems so Sarah Palin. The underlying story had to be reported and the fact that the coverage was incessant is more a function of the proliferation of news sites than anything else.

Still, the media in some sense is always to blame but let's face it, they had a lot to work with.

Terrelle Pryor, Boom Herron, Devier Posey and the rest of the crowd trading off their small-time celebrity status for privileges they didn't deserve are getting their share of blame as well. These kids, stupid as kids can be, are now classified as low character individuals and evidence of what happens when you shake hands with the devil.

Those players and others did have a responsibility to follow the rules and repeatedly did not. But it's still a little unseemly, isn't it, to talk about college kids that way? Heck, their character is hardly even established at this point. So let's ease off on harping on the kids, even the bad ones. Tressel, probably more than any other coach, seemed uniquely qualified to teach them life lessons and the testimonials from former players for whom he did just that back up this point. The fact that his success rate wasn't 100% is not much of a sin.

Still, in the law of negligence there is the concept called last clear chance and in this case

Tressel had the last clear chance to avoid their negligence and did not. He had his reasons and it really doesn't matter what any of us think about those reasons. His decision making was flawed but so is most when judged in retrospect.

I still don't think that what Tressel did was a dischargeable offense. He was taking the medicine he deserved for the misconduct he had engaged in but he has a body of work to consider and all of those factors in my view more than weighed in favor of his remaining with the program. Indeed, I didn't think it was even a close call.

But there was blood in the water and there is a certain segment of our population that just loves to circle around those pools. In that sense then it's not a surprise that Tressel took the measure of the situation and realized that he'd never be able to swim safely to shore and neither would his program with him in the lead.

Some will see the Tressel resignation as a cut and run, for him and the university. In many ways, though, it was the ultimate act of courage and loyalty. The program is and always should be bigger than any individual.

Now what? That's very hard to figure. One thing though that is clear is that the question is far more significant now than when Tressel took over the program from John Cooper. What Tressel did for Ohio State can't just be measured in wins and losses, though his record is nothing short of amazing. It can't be measured in victories over Michigan, although his record their too was amazing.

Far more was the complete restoration of a storied program that took place under his watch. The head football coach for the Ohio State Buckeyes has always been a plum job but never more so than now and that's because of what Tressel did for this program.

Cooper left the program a mess. He recruited well but coached poorly. Discipline was lacking as was direction. Tressel brought a steady hand and methodically built the Buckeyes into such a juggernaut that his position became one of the top two or three coaching jobs in the country. Put it this way, Tressel made it so that no coach would ever leave Ohio State to become head football coach anywhere else.

Athletic director Gene Smith has an incredibly difficult decision on his hands and how he handles it will say a lot about where he and university president Gordon Gee want to take this program in the wake of all the criticism it's received. Surely they don't know yet what they want to do which is why Luke Fickell was named interim head coach for the rest of next season.

The speculation started months ago that Urban Meyer would be available in 2012 and perhaps he will. Hiring him would be tantamount to telling Buckeye faithful that the Ohio State program they came to know and love under Tressel will continue.

On the other hand, they could keep Fickell or go with a lesser name, like Michigan did in hiring Brady Hoke, as a way of staying off the radar screen for awhile and letting the program absorb the self-inflicted body blows.

I'll stay out of the prediction business. I thought Tressel would survive this and that was clearly wrong. But for those feeling sad and a little despondent over this all, just remember that no matter what comes next the program survived Cooper. It will survive this.