If you're wondering whether the Ohio State "story" would ever die down, you're not alone. It seems like too many folks just aren't as satisfied as they thought they'd be taking down Jim Tressel. They want more bodies as they look for more people to blame for their own loss of innocence.

The story is no longer Ohio State. It's all the sanctimonious hand wringing taking place by self-appointed moralizers in the media who are getting a unique thrill dragging the lifeless corpse of Tressel through the streets again and again.

We've seen it from the dullards at Sports Illustrated to the dimwits at Yahoo Sports to the empty heads at ESPN. If that isn't enough for you, then you probably haven't picked up your local paper in awhile (and you wouldn't be alone on that count) because the locals aren't going to miss an opportunity to jump in, late as usual.

If there is a victim here, it's perspective. Lost in the two-step everyone is doing on Tressel's grave is that in his 10 years at Ohio State, there were probably 900 or so players that went through the program. We know that in that time, Maurice Clarett and the Tattooed 5 broke

NCAA rules. Ray Small admits he broke rules but was never charged. The Sports Illustrated story names about 28 players although there isn't verification of that number from any credible, independent source.

Still, using the number of players that sold their own memorabilia for tattoos and possibly marijuana (although there isn't any confirmation from any credible source of that accusation) identified by Sports Illustrated, it represents just 3% of all the players that went through the program at that time.

In one sense, that suggests 97% of the players were clean. Now all the moralizers like to throw in comments like "we know it was more than that" but that's just a way of making the problem look worse without having to bother to offer actual proof that it really is. It may very well be that the number is higher. But even if it doubles, that means that just 6% of all the players that went through the program broke the rules.

That isn't to excuse any of that behavior, either. The rule they broke is dumb but it is the rule. And 97% might get you an "A" in class but as far as the NCAA is concerned, anything less than 100% compliance is considered a failure. Fair enough. That's the program these schools signed up for and they have to live with that blood pact.

But the point is that rampant vilifying of Tressel and Ohio State as running a criminal program just doesn't match the facts. It only matches the convenient narrative of a bunch of lazy journalists who can think of nothing better to do then kick and punch a body that's already been beaten to a pulp.

What should be frustrating to most people at the moment is that the underlying infraction by Tressel was his failure to tell the truth and yet so many moralizing on Tressel at the moment are themselves far more willfully ignorant of the truth than Tressel ever could have been in his time at Ohio State.

Does it matter that Sports Illustrated's entire article was built on conjecture dressed up as fact? To me it does and hopefully it will to the NCAA, but who knows? They're as random as any sports governing body anywhere and that's taking due notice of outfits like FIFA and the International Olympic Committee.

There is virtually nothing in the Sports Illustrated article, outside of the admissions from the players we already knew about, which could ever stand up in a court of law. Maybe that's not the right standard when this is being tried in the court of public opinion but it strikes me that before you impose any form of death penalty, whether it's on Tressel, Gene Smith, Gordon Gee or a bunch of college kids, you ought to have something more to go on then supposition, conjecture, half truths and supposition.

But why single out Sports Illustrated? Terry Pluto, who usually gets things right, used his bully pulpit in the Plain Dealer to call for Ohio State to dismiss Pryor from the team. There is not one shred of logic, let alone fact, to indicate exactly why Pryor should be subject to such a drastic action. It's just Pluto saying that it will help rid the team of its problems.

I'm not here to defend Pryor except from unfair journalism. If he did more than what he's already been punished for, then by all means he deserves whatever action comes next. But Pluto hasn't suggested that Pryor is guilty of anything other than supposedly bad judgment for showing up for a meeting in a brand new used car for which no one has accused him, let alone proven, that he didn't pay for. Indeed, both the university and the dealership went to the unusual step of publicly demonstrating that Pryor got no such special deal on the car.

Maybe Pryor used bad judgment, I'll leave it to moralizers like Pluto who live at a higher level than the rest of us to decide. But it isn't a reason in and of itself to kick the kid off the team. Let's at least wait until there's an actual factual reason to do so.

Then there was Bob Frantz, the morning blowhard at WTAM who apparently has someone transcribe his ramblings into a column in the News-Herald. He gave a nice little shout out to the Sports Illustrated story and then piles on without any actual facts with the kind of throwaway line that tends to make these situations far worse than they are. He talks about the 28 players named by Sports Illustrated and says there were "probably more" even though he has nothing to back up that kind of statement than the view he has from inside his dark little studio in Cleveland.

Frantz's larger point had to do with beating down the notion that paying college athletes won't solve problems like this, it will only make them worse. I'm not sure how he got from Point A to Point B on that theory, but that's the least of the problems with his column. Taking an even

higher and more naïve moral ground than Pluto, Frantz says that amateur athletes must remain amateurs and it's up to the adults in the room to make that happen.

The problem with the premise is that college athletes, at least those in Division I on scholarship, have never been amateurs. If what distinguishes a professional athlete from an amateur is payment for services rendered, then the mere fact that the payment a college athlete receives is in the form of an expensive education and not cash is a distinction without a difference. Both are still quite valuable. The college athlete is only considered an amateur by fools like Frantz because that's how he chooses to label them. It doesn't mean it's true.

It's really just a question of how much more college athletes should be paid. It's a fair question to debate but suggesting that giving them a cash stipend like graduate assistants get will make things worse has no basis in fact.

This whole scandal at Ohio State will serve a greater purpose if it becomes a watershed moment by which everyone who ever made a buck off of it re-evaluates their own priorities. But these things rarely work that way, even if they should.

I'm tired of every writer at Sports Illustrated who ever bothered to publish an opinion advocating for a college football playoff because of the money moralizing against a stupid college kid wrongly thinking that he can't get in trouble by following the actions of those who are supposed to be shaping his development.

There's a real food chain in college athletics. It starts with the media and the networks that pay millions upon millions for the right to broadcast games. It extends next to the universities that take that money and millions more in sponsorships of all sorts, from luxury boxes to exclusive apparel deals with the likes of Nike. It extends next to the athletic directors who are rewarded financially for putting good competitive teams on the field and increasing the athletic program's revenues. It extends next to the coaches who are usually the highest paid employees at their universities. They get paid enormous sums for winning and they jump from program to program without care or concern to enhance their own bank accounts. The final link is the kids who actually make it all happen—the fuel without which this train would go nowhere. They get a free education but are constantly lured by the professional ranks, if they're good enough, to leave early and not even finish that education.

In that entire chain, the most pressure is actually put on the least mature and least equipped--the students. They are the ones that aren't supposed to act like every other money-grubbing adult in the chain above them and God forbid if they do. The chain gets broken and high minded thumb suckers at publications like Sports Illustrated lead the parade over the dead bodies by stupidly asking "how could this all happen?" not realizing that they didn't even bother to ask the right question.

It reminds me of the scene from Woody Allen's "Hannah and Her Sisters" where Frederick the artist is telling his girlfriend about a dull show on Auschwitz that he had just watched on television: "More gruesome film clips and more puzzled intellectuals declaring their mystification over the systematic murder of millions." As he shakes his head in bemusement, he says "the reason they could never answer the question 'How could it possibly happen?' is that it's the wrong question. Given what people are, the question is 'Why doesn't it happen more often?'" As Frederick notes, it does just in subtler forms.

Indeed. That's the state of college athletics at the moment. Given what's been created, the focus shouldn't be on the individual perpetrators but the conditions that have come to exist that all but guarantees it will happen more often.