One of my favorite Steven Wright lines goes something like this: “You know that feeling you get in the pit of your stomach when you’re leaning back on the back legs of your chair and you get to that point when you know you’re going over backwards?....I feel that way all the time.”

There’s a feeling something like that among Ohio State fans in the aftermath of Jim Tressel’s resignation Monday. We know we’re falling, but we haven’t hit the floor yet.

The better analogy might be that unsettling time when a packed airliner approaches the runway to land, but hasn’t quite touched down. Suddenly you’re reminded of how fast you’re moving....it’s noisy....lots of people you don’t know are equally invested in the uncertain outcome...and in the agonizing seconds right before touchdown, the passengers know they can have no real effect at all on the landing. Still, with all their body language, they reach as one for the secure feeling of landing gear on runway, enduring that pit of the stomach feeling together.

(At the risk of stretching this analogy too far....) Unlike any plane I’ve ever been on, this OSU flight is already assured of a crash landing of some severity, with casualties among the crew already being carted out. The passengers are scrambling for their flotation devices.
(Okay, that’s played out)

In the end *(if only this were the end)* Jim Tressel couldn’t survive his own colossal, and still not totally explained blunder. His serious NCAA violations brought embarrassment to OSU and left

his own title-studded career with an indelible stain. The scandal will leave the football program limping forward, sanctioned, missing key personnel, and under untested leadership. The Tressel Era thus ends unceremoniously...no statues, no testimonials, no avenues bearing his name. It wasn't supposed to be like this.

No amount of positive job approval ratings from his superiors, nor broad-based loyalty from his players, nor a winning percentage better than that of Hayes, Bruce and Cooper, was enough to override the fallout from the dishonesty by Tressel that has left Buckeye Nation with that Steven Wright feeling.....all the time. The feeling lingers because the coach is gone, but the reckoning for Ohio State athletics is ongoing, and it looks like it will continue for some time, as investigations carry on, and sanctions are weighed. The fan base is bracing, but has yet to find the bottom.

Humor me then, as I ramble through some random thoughts on OSU and Tressel, and throw in some links to writing on the subject that I think is worth your time...(not so fast, *Sports Illustrated*).

The heroic media at work: We might as well start with that SI article , which, for all the hype it generated in advance of publication, contained little in the way of new information, let alone anything new directly linkable to Jim Tressel. The most important of the disclosures by author George Dohrmann was that there were several more Buckeye players involved in the memorabilia-for-tattoos-or-cash transactions than just the five already suspended for those violations, including at least five players being counted on to start or play key roles on defense for the 2011 team. He names names, but bases the identities of the players on hearsay. It remains to be seen if there is any paper trail or other evidence of their involvement.

It is being reported that those current Buckeye players are already being questioned by the NCAA about the allegations this week. The author flatters himself in the article by taking credit for the timing of Tressel's resignation - *("Tressel was forced out three days after Sports Illustrated alerted Ohio State officials that the wrongdoing by Tressel's players was far more widespread than had been reported.")* - but it's quite possible that Tressel's consultation last week with his new attorney Gene Marsh was more responsible for the decision. For weeks, the realization had been building that there could be no happy ending with Tressel remaining in place. In that light, and recognizing that the

SI
article wasn't the bombshell it was purported to be, the closeness of the article and the resignation seemed more coincidental.

Dohrmann reaches back 30 years for dirt on Tressel...reporting as an example of his treachery an anonymously sourced story of the coach, as a young graduate assistant at OSU, "fixing" a raffle so that a prominent recruit could win. He revisits Tressel's days at YSU, and recounts the well-worn story of improper benefits Penguin QB Ray Isaac received from a wealthy booster as an example of the "pattern" of Tressel violations...or his "ignorance" of same. (Isaac has responded
forcefully in defense of Tressel and refuted Dohrmann's implications).

Dohrman made his name on a story about scandal at the University of Minnesota. Interviewing disgruntled former players and convicted tattoo artists, and quoting anonymous sources on 30-year old stories won't win him any Pulitzers this time around.

And please understand...none of this is an effort to blame the media for any of OSU's shame and embarrassment, or for anything done by Tressel or anyone else who behaved badly at Ohio State. I do maintain that the national media helped create and drive a perception of events that was somewhat distorted and sensationalized....but more media criticism can wait...

[redacted]