We'll probably never really know how it was the Jim Tressel actually came to lose his job as head coach of the Ohio State Buckeyes. Sure we understand the email from an unethical lawyer that Tressel stupidly didn't pass along to anyone else in authority and the false statement he made about it months later as the lynchpin. But why Tressel was ultimately forced into early retirement is murkier.

It's been several months now since the revelation of Tressel's misconduct and the "we've got his back" press conference that university president Gordon Gee and athletic director Gene Smith held saying that Tressel's job wasn't in trouble.

From that point forward came a media onslaught unlike anything Ohio State had ever experienced. And yet through all the pseudo investigations, especially the discredited hack job that proved more false than true perpetuated by Sports Illustrated, Tressel's only misconduct was and remained his incredibly stupid decision to not forward on an email.

In fact, with the distance that a few months provides, it's become clear that not one other Buckeyes player has come under the NCAA's microscope or been threatened with suspension. No assistant coach has been shown the door for engaging in any sort of background dealing or in some way facilitating the misconduct by the Tat 5. Most importantly, despite the reckless allegations of drive-by journalists, there has been not a shred of evidence offered, despite all of the digging and probing, that Tressel was running any sort of rogue program or that the Ohio State athletic department generally had a wild west approach to compliance.

But yet the white hot glare of those drive-by journalists proved to be more than the weak leaning trustees, or at least some of them, could handle and thus Tressel had to be sacrificed. Officially

it was a resignation but what happened unofficially probably won't come out for years if at all.

Meanwhile far worse scandals have hit college football in this same season and in each case the head coach has retained his job. There's the whole Cam Newton affair in which it's actually been proven that his own father was offering him up to the highest bidder. The claim was that Auburn didn't pay Newton a penny and indeed it's never been shown that Auburn did in fact pay Don King Wannabe Cecil Newton anything for his son's services.

But yet Newton, after a checkered and short career at Florida that saw him get thrown out of that university allegedly for both stealing and cheating, ended up in Gene Chizek's lap in Auburn. Maybe Chizek never got the scrutiny that Tressel got because Chizek's career up until he met Newton was about as mediocre as they come. But even more galling is that even the NCAA let Newton slide because it was his father that engaged in the misconduct and not the son.

I said then that was a loophole that you could drive a truck through and it remains one today. Put it this way. Terrelle Pryor and the rest of his cohorts could have skated past any suspension had they just said that they thought their fathers paid for the tattoos, even if it had later been revealed that the currency was their sons' memorabilia.

So give Cecil and Cam Newton credit for being cleverer than Terrelle Pryor and DeVier Posey.

That doesn't erase in the least what Tressel did, but it certainly would have taken the players off the hook and then the program suddenly doesn't look any more rogue than Auburn's.

As bad as the Newton affair was for college football, it may end up a mere sideshow to what's going on with Chip Kelly and the University of Oregon program. Yahoo Sports, which first took on the Ohio State story, has revealed in just the past few days that Kelly personally approved a $25,000 payment to Will Lyles to secure the services of two high school players.

When the allegations were first revealed how it was that Oregon was able to sign key players, including running back LeMichael James, the university scrambled to put together a report that

demonstrated it had done nothing wrong. The payment to Lyles, they claimed, was for recruiting services, a quaint notion that Lyles was just a guy getting by running a little service to help out cash strapped programs with recruiting budget shortfalls. As if.

As a point of clarification for the uninitiated who want to think that this is still the 1950s, there are actually "recruiting services" out there that get paid hundreds of thousands of dollars from some programs to provide video and other reports on various high school players. It's not clear whether the players directly "sign" with these services because that would make it look like they had agents, something the NCAA frowns on. And yet these services end up forging special relationships with certain players, usually from tough inner city backgrounds, in order to better market themselves to good and receptive programs just trying to give a kid a break.

It may not be illegal at the moment for any school to use a recruiting service but it is unusual. Oregon for example said it used Wyles' as part of its overall approach to making efficient use of its recruiting budget. Given that kind of fallacy it almost makes you feel empathy for Cecil Newton who basically served as a one man recruiting service for his son.

But getting back to the point it appears that Oregon's defense of it termed wholly innocent acts was a sham. Yahoo Sports, after interviewing Wyles several times, claims among other things that Wyles' reports, in other words the actual services he was supposed to provide on various recruits, were put together months after the fact and at the request of Oregon once they knew they were in the crosshairs of an investigation that was blowing the cover off its shady practices.

The Yahoo Sports story also claims that Kelly was personally involved and has the evidence to prove it including a note Kelly personally wrote to Wyles thanking him for chaperoning three highly touted recruits to a Ducks' game in 2009.

But if you think that's the worst of it, you'd be wrong. Wyles was straightforward in admitting that the only service he really provided was to cuddle up with a few elite recruits and get them to Oregon for money. He did this by personally supervising the transfer of James from one high school to another that didn't require a standardized test to graduate. That little task directly paved the way for James to get to Oregon, otherwise he may have never graduated high school.

He also did it by helping another recruit, Lache Seastrunk, obtain a different legal guardian because Seastrunk's other guardian, his mother, didn't approve of his decision to attend Oregon.

The only thing more outrageous than the conduct itself is the media's lack of obsession with it, save for Yahoo Sports. Maybe that's because it's the Oregon Ducks and not the Ohio State Buckeyes. Maybe it's because it's Chip Kelly and not Jim Tressel. Maybe it's because it's more convenient to get to Columbus, Ohio than Eugene, Oregon for the mostly lazy journalists plying their trade these days.

It may be that Kelly will eventually lose his job but right now I'm not hearing Mark May or any of the other conveniently outraged at ESPN obsess over it. In fact Kelly and the Ducks' program are getting mostly a pass even though their alleged misconduct is far, far worse than anything that went down at Ohio State.

No one accused Ohio State of putting together an after-the-fact justification of its own misconduct. Indeed, if anything Gene Smith and Gordon Gee were too forthcoming about the underlying but isolated misconduct. No one, including Tressel, is accused of paying or arranging the payment of money to players or their recruiting services.

If any program was playing on the fringes of legality it was Oregon and not Ohio State.

But the difference here, particularly in retrospect, is that Smith and Gee through together an ill-conceived press conference to defend Tressel when what they should have done was taken the Oregon bunker mentality approach. That press conference served as convenient red meat for those who felt Smith, Gee and Tressel needed a comeuppance for being, well, so successful.

In one sense it is nice that the trustees at Ohio State took a stand and didn't lower the university's standards to those of Oregon and Auburn and the multitudes of others over the years that have been found to have done far worse. But in another sense it's shameful that the trustees didn't at least take the benefit of time and distance to place all of this, including Tressel's misconduct, into a larger context. Instead they caved to the popular opinions of people that don't know any better and in the end took down a man who deserved punishment

but not the death penalty.

Tressel deserved a better fate then he got from those trustees and here's hoping that his former employer and the political appointees who control it eventually realize that and come to the conclusion that the next permanent head coach for Ohio State is the one still living in their backyard.