Never underestimate the power of victory to push the demons away.

Ohio State's win over Akron may have righted the ship for its fans just as each win by Miami, Oregon, USC, Auburn and the like will buoy their fans.

But no single win itself is going to do much to right the ship of college football generally. College football is in very serious trouble. It's not the kind of trouble that can be easily fixed and even if it could, there's no will to do so at the moment. But it's foolish to ignore the red flags flying over the sport and wish its problems away. Ignorance is not bliss.

At what point, for example, do we all stop citing to every instance involving every school caught doing something and then try to make the rather pathetic case that these are a series of isolated incidents? And if we're using the words "series" to explain away what we'd like to believe are isolated incidents then aren't we just being our own worst enemies by not admitting that all of it is really a rather disturbing trend.

Maybe the situation in Miami will be the flashpoint for college football, but I doubt it. It's just the latest egregious example. Oregon is wrestling with its own shady behavior as is Boise State. Auburn's resurgence brought with it the predictable NCAA scrutiny and the stink over how exactly Cam Newton got there is never going to quite leave the program. There's also a convincing argument that the flashpoint really should have been USC bringing in Lane Kiffin to fix their problems. Kiffin is nothing if not the poster child for college football opportunism as he left a Tennessee program in shambles and cleaning up its own NCAA mess that he caused as

he headed to USC.

And these are only the situations that the average fan is familiar with. Less known are all the literally hundreds of issues that come each week in nearly every program around the country. The NCAA rule book and the method in which it is (must?) be interpreted has become nearly impossible for professional compliance officers. The NCAA would love to upgrade its technology and replace its antiquated fax machine but they never get a chance. It hums with compliance reports 24/7/365.

So, yea, compliance with the rules is an issue but it isn't the problem. The rules are just the NCAA's way of trying to treat a disease, the billions of dollars that have infected college football, that has no cure.

The money grab at the college level is the tsunami that is destroying the very essence of the game itself. With public college budgets strained by state legislatures with their own budget problems is it any wonder why college presidents look at the money generated by big time football and rub their hands in glee like they're Nucky Thompson in Boardwalk Empire?

Football, as practiced at the highest levels, throws of money like Angelina Jolie throws off pheromones. Ohio State and Texas and a handful of others are the tease for all the other schools looking to cash in. The money becomes the siren song that lures otherwise decent thinking and acting human beings to do some pretty ridiculous things. Just saying no is hardly a viable option when there's a whole in the budget the size of Montana.

All this money of course is the byproduct of an amoral media machine that needs these games for its own survival. And of course the machine wouldn't have all these millions to toss about so indiscriminately if not for the various advertisers who just have to get their product in front of all those eyeballs watching all those games.

Leading the pack of course is an increasingly more corrupt ESPN whose organization is so rife with conflicts of interest and self-dealing but likely will escape any real government scrutiny because of a misguided tea-party sentiment that rules and regulations are for suckers and socialists. But ESPN is most certainly helping to bring about the ruination of the sport that right now is a substantial revenue item on its balance sheet. ESPN gets in bed with Texas on the

Longhorn Network. It gets in bed with the SEC on its network. And then it spends its time talking down any other team that could possibly overshadow, not to mention devalue, the investments its made in those other teams and conferences. How else to explain Mark May?

With the significant help of outfits like ESPN, college football hasn't just become a cesspool. It's become an untreatable cancer. The funny thing is, everyone associated with college football knows it has the disease but believes the best cure is simply not to go to the doctor.

When you stop to consider college football below the current Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS), where championships are actually decided on the field and television money is nearly non existent, you start to more fully understand how thoroughly corrupted the FBS has become from the money.

At schools not worried about winning some mythical jerry-rigged BCS championship, there is a certain retained purity about the sport. The time devoted by the athletes to their sport at those levels isn't quite all consuming, mainly because the participants enter college knowing that there path to later success will be laid not by their ability to punt, pass or kick, but by their performance in the classroom.

No one should have faith in the NCAA's ability to legislate away its problems, either. More rules on what can be served at a players' only pre-game breakfast is surely not the answer. Besides, the NCAA is merely a feel-good creation of and beholden to the member institutions that can, at any time, throttle back its influence.

Real reform will come only when the presidents of the top universities take the problem by the scruff of its neck and demand a real solution in the form of ridding the sport of the corrupting influence of money. And the only way to do that is to stop giving individual schools a financially-based incentive to get a leg up on any other school.

If the key college presidents want to something positive for the sport, something that will really bring about reform, here's a modest but very workable solution.

First, establish one "super" conference of schools willing to pay a five million dollar entry fee each year. That will force every college to decide whether or not it's worth the price. Many won't pay and it will be better off for it. So will their budgets and by proxy their students. They can go back to lower divisions that won't have an entry fee.

For every school willing to pay the entry fee, make them then live with a fixed football budget, a "salary cap" of sorts. Every school would have the same budget. To support it, each team in the super conference will share equally all revenue generated by their sport (and I mean all revenue, without exception). Finally, abolish the BCS in favor of a legitimate playoff system. This will provide the performance incentive that every school that remains in the super conference to want to compete at the highest level.

Under this construct, the NCAA rule book would necessarily get skinnier and the compliance process would be simplified, although it would never disappear completely. Let's face it, being declared "national champions" is still a powerful incentive for some schools/individuals to cheat. Human nature can never be fully anticipated or controlled.

That still leaves one issue to deal with and that's the athletes. Right now they are the fuel that powers the engine and while there is no question that a fully paid education is a pretty decent payment, they should share in more. Grad students are paid a stipend to help teach. Athletes should get a stipend to play and it should be equal across all of the super conference.

Of course this idea won't work because it would require the dismantling of the current system. But the truth is that the current system is being dismantled piece by piece and isn't worth saving anyway. It's just a choice over whether the college presidents want to do it in a proactive way as a means of coming up with something better or want to have it simply tumble down around them when it's too late to rebuild.

Maybe big time college football is not fixable at this point or maybe it's not even worth trying. But left to its own devises, it will implode and that's guaranteed. And when that happens, the right question will not be "how did this happen" but instead "how did this not happen even sooner?"