When all hell broke loose at Ohio State last Spring, it wasn't surprising that eventually stories would get written that would be less than flattering of former head coach Jim Tressel, even if lightly sourced and highly speculative. He was fair game, after all, because he had admittedly failed to disclose potential violations of NCAA regulations to his boss, athletic director Gene Smith. When he signed an affidavit indicating he was unaware of any potential violations that pretty much made him a piece of raw meat to any writer with a grudge.

Those stories that did get written, like the Sports Illustrated hit job, were lightly sourced and highly speculative but mostly revealed nothing new nor did anything to cause people to re-assess all they ever thought about him. Tressel didn't get a pass but his reputation didn't take any more hits.

That won't happen for Joe Paterno. The grievous nature of his misconduct is so insidious that in large measure it truly does undo a lifetime of other good work. It's not just that Paterno failed at protecting innocent children from a creepy alleged pedophile, it's also that Paterno actually used that lifetime of other good work as a club to bang over the heads of his bosses whenever they tried to rein him in.

The Wall Street Journal, in an article that appeared Tuesday, left no doubt as to exactly why Paterno did deserve to take the fall he did. Paterno may have had a supervisor but it was in

name only. The story left no doubt that Paterno had an unrelenting grip on the administration at Penn State for years. It also left no doubt as to how exactly Paterno could become so blinded by the power that he yielded that he would look the other way when his friend and assistant, Jerry Sandusky, was engaging in very suspicious and odd behavior.

The best part of the story? It's not lightly sourced or highly speculative. It is established not through whispery shadowy figures looking for their 15 minutes of fame but instead by the official records Penn State was forced to keep as a public institution.

A series of email exchanges and other incidents surrounding Paterno's vaunted program tells the story very clearly of the man who really ruled Penn State and how in other contexts Paterno was willing to misuse his power to further not the interest of the school at large but those of his team and players and, ultimately, himself.

The WSJ article, written by Reed Albergotti, describes clashes that Paterno repeatedly had with the Penn State standards and conduct officer over the increasingly large number of disciplinary infractions committed by his players, things like campus fights and drunk driving, and how in each instance Paterno was able to keep his players from being subjected to the same standards as the general student population.

An old school type, Paterno was of the firm mind that athletes were different and could be dealt with separately and behind the closed doors of the locker room. He never did accept subjecting his players to the same rules as the rest of the student population.

In one particularly damning confrontation (though, frankly, it's all pretty damning) Paterno forced the hand of university president Graham Spanier by giving him an ultimatum: fire the standards and conduct officer, Dr. Vicky Triponey, or forego any fund raising by Paterno. This was no idle threat. Paterno raised hundreds of millions of dollars for the university over his long tenure and he was telling Spanier that the spigot would stop unless Spanier fired another university employee that had dared to cross ol' JoePa.

This ultimatum came out of an incident involving a player that Triponey had suspended, Dan Connor, for making harassing phone calls to a retired assistant coach. Despite the suspension, Paterno told Connor to suit up anyway. Triponey told Connor that if he did he faced expulsion.

That's when Paterno made his ultimatum, which prompted a visit from Spanier to Triponey at her home.

Spanier told Triponey that if forced to choose, he would choose Triponey over Paterno in the squabble but Spanier also made it quite clear to her that he didn't want to be forced to make that choice. Given the not-so-subtle message, Triponey relented and significantly reduced Connor's suspension.

That was somewhat of a prelude to another ugly confrontation, the one that ultimately pushed Triponey to quit her efforts to wade through the cesspool that Paterno created.

In 2007 6 players were charged with forcing their way into a campus apartment and beating up several students, one severely. Triponey's department took over the inquiry and was thwarted in her efforts to investigate by the players who essentially refused to talk to her. When Triponey complained about the stonewalling to Paterno and suggested he have his players cooperate, Paterno refused, telling her that the players shouldn't be expected to cooperate with the school's disciplinary process because to do so would pit player against player thus impacting the team dynamic.

Stop and consider for a moment how seriously twisted Paterno's thinking had to be to make that case. Publicly he espoused a "do the right thing" approach. That's always easy when things are quiet. But "do the right thing" only works if you follow it when times are tough. Here, Paterno deliberately kept his players from cooperating in a university investigation into allegations that they beat up other university students.

Ultimately and not surprisingly the players suffered very little in the way of discipline for the ugly incident and Paterno cleared his conscience by imposing his own discipline—having the whole team pick up trash after football games. Very old school. Very stupid.

Once Paterno was able to rid the university of a pest like Triponey, her replacement was far more compliant, agreeing with Paterno and making a recommendation to the university that only Paterno should have the right to discipline his players.

In large measure, this all starts to answer the question of why Paterno, Spanier and the rest of the administration would be so tone deaf when it came to the accusations against Sandusky. In large measure it was because the university had long since abdicated any authority over anything Paterno touched. Is it really hard to imagine Paterno stonewalling a real investigation into Sandusky, especially when you consider that Paterno waited a day after he found out before he told his boss?

Meanwhile and despite all public statements to the contrary, it's now more clear than ever that Paterno had little interest or regard for anything outside of his football program. His fundraising activities, while prolific and greatly benefiting the university generally, intentionally became the sword he'd use to cut down any resistance in his path. It's kind of sick, kind of twisted but ultimately is why football programs like this get so out of whack.

Ultimately, for all the good that money brought, it was stained and what's even more important, the university knew it. Spanier and the university's board of trustees created a monster in Paterno and then recoiled at any attempts to control their creation. In truth they couldn't anyway. His ego run amok and his values long since compromised, he was a runaway train for years and it was only a matter of time before he either died or crashed, the university administration apparently ambivalent as to which would occur first. Unfortunately, the well-being of several young boys became collateral damage.

**

[redacted]

[redacted]