

# 11/7/2011: State of the Big Ten, Volume 41 (premium)

*Every Monday, we will be running a weekly series titled "State of the Big Ten," which will be made available to all members of HawkeyeDrive.com. This series of columns will focus on one major headline regarding the conference and go in-depth on the subject at hand.*

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

In light of what has been revealed over the past 72 hours at Penn State, the topic to discuss here this week is pretty obvious. Those who haven't lived under a rock this past weekend know exactly what this is about.

If head coach Joe Paterno cares about the best interests of both his university and his football team, he needs to resign immediately. He needs to step away from his coaching duties, because it's not about what he did do, but what he didn't.

Legally, Paterno did what he was supposed to. This is what has been echoed by the state's Attorney General. Morally however, this isn't the case. The fact remains that someone that was once his top assistant is accused of molesting a 10-year-old boy in his locker room, and assuming this is true, nothing was done about it for nine years. He might not have been directly involved with the alleged crime itself, but it happened under his watch.

This goes beyond sports. This is about children being forced to do things against their wills. There shouldn't be any place for such acts in American society. Reading the 23-page Grand Jury report ought to make one either break down and cry, feel sick to their stomach, or have both reactions at once.

How no following up on an accusation this deplorable is baffling. How something of this magnitude doesn't force everything else to take a back seat in life at the moment it comes to light is absurd. How nothing was done to ensure that other children in that area wouldn't be harmed is despicable. There were eight victims mentioned in the report. That means eight innocent lives were destroyed because the adults in charge didn't use common sense.

Paterno might be the most influential figure in the entire state of Pennsylvania. He technically might have had higher-ups to report the matter to, but let's be real here. Coaches of Paterno's stature have a much bigger impact on their schools than their athletics directors or presidents. For evidence of this, just look at the entire mess surrounding Ohio State earlier this year, which looks minuscule now to what is happening at Penn State.

On Nov. 12, the Nittany Lions play their final home game of the 2011 season against No. 19 Nebraska. Penn State is ranked 12th in the country and is the only undefeated team in Big Ten play. None of that matters right now though, unless Paterno steps aside.

To not resign keeps this dark cloud hovering around a group of individuals that have done nothing wrong while they take part in what has probably been an incredible season for them on the gridiron. The current players don't deserve to have this distraction weighing on their minds before playing such a crucial game that could be the difference in them playing in the inaugural Big Ten championship game next month and sitting at home watching someone like Ohio State or Wisconsin play at Lucas Oil Stadium instead on Dec. 3.

The man is 84 years old. He's the winningest head coach in the history of Division-I college football. Until now, the name "Joe Paterno" had been held for decades in the highest regard. If any integrity is to be sparred, Paterno needs to walk away.

Now. He needs to do so for the sake of his program, for the sake of his university, and for the sake of all those impacted by these travesties so that they can maybe move closer to having some closure to the nightmare they've all had to endure.

Paterno is scheduled to have his weekly press conference and take part in the Big Ten teleconference on Tuesday. The fact of the matter is no one wants to hear from him right now about Nebraska. No one wants to hear about how practices went during the bye week. All of that is secondary to this story, as it should be.

This is only going to get uglier and uglier (heck, it already has). The sooner Penn State can start with a completely clean slate, the better off both the football program and the university will be in the long run. The longer Paterno tries to hang on now, however, then the more damaging future consequences are going to become. For him and for the school.

As depressing as that might sound to those who have followed Paterno's coaching career for so long, the fact that it has come to this doesn't make writing a new chapter of Penn State football now the best solution, but perhaps the only solution.

While Paterno and Penn State decide their course of action here, let's hope all those who were victims here receive the right help from the right people going forward.