

SHOULD JOE PA

Joe knows.....losing

By ERIC THOMAS

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Why should Joe Paterno step down at Penn State? Plain and simple, he is losing his touch with the game and losing his control over his players. The once proud standard for all that was good with college athletics has become a terrible, unrecognizable shell of his former self.

This season, the team and the tradition have all started that long journey down the drain, dying a painful and frustrating death.

Joe doesn't have it anymore and in order to uphold the class and dignity he once set for others to follow, he should be man enough to admit he has lost the Midas touch. Yet for some reason, whether it is to prove to media members, himself or players he can still do it, Paterno has failed miserably and tragically right before our eyes.

Since the end of the 1999 season, there have been nine reported or rumored off of the field incidents involving Penn State football players. This season alone, E.Z. Smith, Andrew Richardson, Tyler Reed, Jeremy Kapinos and most recently

Tony Johnson have all been charged with underage drinking or DUI. Other problems include Anwar Phillips alleged sexual assault, from which he was cleared (but still allowed to play in the Capital One bowl despite being charged with violations of the conduct code), Scott Paxson was charged with

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possession of stolen property and criminal mischief, two players were involved in a fight which sent two wrestlers to the hospital, Rashard Casey and a high school friend were accused of beating an off duty cop, and there are rumblings of an alleged incident during the week of the Alamo Bowl involving a prominent player.

With this season's current record, the team is a miserable 21-23 since 2000. The three previous years they were a combined 28-9 and the three seasons before that 29-8. During this stretch of horrendous football, fans and media members have been witness to Paterno chasing down and verbally abusing officials after games and during weekly news conferences. We have also been witness to Joe not accepting responsibility for the team's actions. He has pointed the finger at everyone but himself.

Recently during the Minnesota game, Paterno along with five other coaches had a say in the teams play calling. At the end of the game, offensive coordinator Fran Ganter was seen yelling obscenities after a failed Paterno call. There is no reason why four other coaches, including Paterno, should be calling offensive plays. That is Ganter's job.

During this current display of pitiful football, the teams 23 losses have been by an average of 12.3 points, which does not look like much on the surface, but consider they have lost six of those games by 18 or more points (including one game by 39), 11 by 10 points or more but the hardest losses to swallow were the nine games they lost by seven or fewer points-including all four losses last season. Add into the equation that the Lions have started 0-1 in Big Ten play in three of the last four seasons and you have proof that the game is passing JoePa by at a torrid pace.



photo by Dan Storm

The aging king leads his warriors to battle. Paterno leads the team onto the field before every game.

Joe is also getting slaughtered in the recruiting wars. Since 1999, Paterno has failed to land top notch state players such as Jeff Smoker, Jaren Hayes, Matt Schaub, Kevin Jones, Steve Breston, Tim Massaquoi and Marlin Jackson. The saddest part is the fact that all of those players except Schaub and Jones are on Big Ten Rosters. This season alone Paterno, in desperate need of a quarterback, failed to land two of the nations hottest blue chip prospects in Wilson West Lawn product Chad Henne and Penn Hills prospect Anthony Morelli. Henne is off to Michigan, Morelli to Pitt. Go figure. West Virginia alone has 28 players from Pennsylvania, 15 of which were highly touted by national recruiting services.

As recently as 2000, a player who was nominated to the Big 33 all-star team was quoted by a state publication that he refused to choose Penn State because of Paterno's age and also because of his play calling. The player, an offensive lineman, would have started all four years with the blue and white.

As if more proof was needed, all you need is to watch a tape of the Minnesota game, note the terrible clock management, Ganter's tirade on the sideline, and the miss-use of freshman Austin Scott and 6'8" tight end Matt Kranchick at the end of the game. Paterno called for a draw-play with tailback Ricky Upton to end the second quarter as Upton was stuffed, the Lions later turned the ball over. And to rub even more salt in the wound, Paterno called for another draw with Scott at the end of the game, in which two unblocked Minnesota linemen met Scott at a "supposed" hole and stuffed the rookie.

After the game had been completed, Paterno defended the play blaming an offensive lineman and calling the play "brilliant."

I hate to say this old man, but brilliant would have been walking away three years ago when the program took a turn for the worse. Brilliant would have been not acting selfish, thinking you can still coach at a high level. Brilliant would have been going out with the respect and applause you once deserved. Brilliant would be standing up and looking in the mirror and admitting you cannot do this anymore.

All of the great ones admit it when they cannot go on, yet there is Joe showing his age, at times classless actions and all the time it seems for selfish and immature reasons.

He has become a farce and what we all had hoped we would never see him become, yet now have to endure until he is man enough to admit it is time to move on.