



Letters on Leadership #13: Joe Paterno, Jerry Sandusky and Penn State University

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Clients who have worked with The Program over the past 8 years (and all of the individuals who receive these “Letters on Leadership”) are aware of The Program’s and my belief that everything that happens or fails to happen on a team is the responsibility of the leader. My teammates and I who had the privilege of serving in our Armed Forces learned this lesson from either our parents or at the very least, when we first began our military training.

Personally, I was taught and learned this lesson during Plebe Summer at the United States Naval Academy when I was 17 years old. It was then reinforced during my four years attending Navy and then again every day during my eight years of active duty service while commissioned as a United States Marine Corps Officer. It has served me well as a military and business leader, as a coach and mentor of young men and women, and even more so as a Father. It is a lesson I strive to instill daily in my own son.



This past weekend's festivities at Penn State University celebrating their former head football coach, Joe Paterno, was indicative that many individuals either never learned this lesson or else simply don't agree with it. Even if you do not want to believe the overwhelming evidence that suggests otherwise, and would prefer to believe that Coach Paterno did everything he could have possibly done to ensure that numerous young boys were not repeatedly raped and sexually abused in Penn State Football facilities and elsewhere by Jerry Sandusky, a former Penn State Football coach hired by Coach Paterno, the leader is still responsible and accountable for everything that happens or fails to happen on their team and within their organization.

I do not believe "celebrations" should occur for any leader of any organization where young boys and men were repeatedly raped and sexually abused. I conducted an exhaustive search on the internet and thankfully didn't find any other team, school, business or organization that has done so after learning of similar criminal conduct. Just Penn State. Just for their former head football coach.

I never met or knew Coach Paterno, but from what I have read, he and his wife and family did thousands of wonderful things throughout his life for Penn State, his players and numerous others who came in contact with him on a daily basis. Based on the outpouring of support from former players and alumni, I understand that Coach Paterno positively influenced thousands of young men.

I have to believe that all of these wonderful things are affecting people's feelings about Coach Paterno's knowledge and conduct surrounding the sexual abuse that occurred in his football facilities, by a coach he hired and worked with for numerous years. Coach Paterno was the leader of an organization where numerous young boys and men were repeatedly raped and sexually abused. Therefore, he should be held accountable for it. Not celebrated.

The Program has worked with numerous student-athletes, coaches and teams at Penn State University since our inception. It has been our privilege to do so. We have also made a lot of money during this time for doing so. Fear of losing that valuable revenue stream has kept me



silent on this issue. I am not proud of myself as a leader, as a man, or most importantly as a father who desperately wants to ensure that I do everything I possibly can to ensure that I raise my son to be a man. A man who will accept responsibility and accountability for everything that happens or fails to happen in his own military unit, business and most importantly, family. By remaining silent, I have implicitly condoned the support that Coach Joe Paterno has received from former players, alumni and Penn State University.

This Letter on Leadership is my attempt to correct my mistake. I write it not to change anyone's feelings or beliefs. That will not happen. I write this for my son.

Attack!

Eric Kapitulik
Founder and CEO

"Letters on Leadership" are published periodically by The Program, a leadership development and team building company that works with the nation's leading corporations as well as professional and collegiate athletic teams.

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