Fumbled the ball

Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune

JEERS ... to University of Idaho Athletic Director Rob Spear and football coach Paul Petrino. They converted a simple shoplifting incident into a full-blown scandal that taints the Vandals brand.

More than a month ago, three UI football players were caught on videotape stealing clothing worth about $370 from the UI VandalStore.

Petrino - not the players - returned to the store with the goods. After the coach met with bookstore managers, the case was dropped. The players were sanctioned under the UI student code of conduct.

UI officials stonewalled. For weeks, they refused to release names. They denied requests for public records. The UI eventually released the video - which implicated wide receiver Dezmon Epps and cornerback Isaiah Taylor.

Taylor got dropped from the team.

But Epps - who has already piled up a drunken driving, a driving without privileges and a petty theft record - got yet another break.

Oh, and his one-game suspension didn't occur during the Vandals' matchup with Ohio - where the UI had a chance to win. Petrino yanked Epps from the UI's game with USC - which, as expected, was a blowout.

The UI continues to conceal the identity of the third man. Why?

Spear and Petrino have taken a losing football program and grafted onto it a reputation for bending the rules and tolerating criminal behavior.

JEERS ... to Clarkston City Councilor George Nash. Monday, he copped out.

Up for a vote was whether the council should continue its misguided attempt to thwart the will of the voters and block legitimate marijuana retailers from opening within the city limits.

Nash has supported that policy in the past.

But the Washington Division III Court of Appeals in Spokane stayed an injunction against the Greenfield Company opening its doors.

So the question to the council was whether to appeal.

Councilors Terry Beadles, Alice White and Kelly Blackmon voted yes.

Councilor Brian Kolstad voted no.

And Nash?

He abstained.

Unlike Kolstad, whose business relationship with Greenfield Company owner Matt Plemmons creates a conflict of interest, Nash's silence has no justification.

And depending on how this fall's city elections go, Nash could be the swing vote on this issue. What's he hiding?

JEERS ... to U.S. Sen. Mike Crapo, R-Idaho. If his campaign was candid, Crapo would never be able to convince any Idahoan of modest means to give him another dime.

Crapo's campaign war chest has $4.2 million in cash. He's got so much money that his campaign could afford to lose $250,000 of it on a failed Nevada investment without breaking a sweat.

Of the $2.7 million he's raised, less than 2 percent of it came from small donors - people who gave less than $200. Insurance companies, securities and investment firms, commercial banks and finance and credit companies - who follow what Crapo does on the Senate finance and banking committees - provided much of it.

The national Democratic Party long ago wrote off the Gem State. Crapo's next Democratic challenger will have to live off the land - or private funds.

Crapo, by the way, consistently ranks as the state's most popular top-tier elected official. He's had nominal opposition since his first election to Washington, D.C., in 1992. About the only threat he faces would be a GOP primary insurrection - and he's taken care of that by veering to the right and forging alliances with conservative operatives such as Lou Esposito and "Tea Party Bob" Neugebauer.

Yet, the latest Crapo campaign fundraising letter is circulating a message of panic to Idaho contributors: Send him $95,000 by Sept. 30 or risk political annihilation:

- "With a projected campaign budget of $2.5 billion, I expect Hillary Clinton to spend a pile of money here. Because I'll be on the ballot next year, I'm not taking anything for granted."

Here's one thing you can take for granted: Hillary Clinton is not going to waste one dime trying to win Idaho's electoral votes.

- "Our liberal opponents and the media will seize upon any potential weakness to paint a picture that my campaign isn't strong and vibrant."

Crapo is a Republican incumbent in a Republican state with a well-oiled campaign machine and no opposition in sight.

When did he become so hysterical?

JEERS ... to Congressman Raul Labrador, R-Idaho. Once again, he's threatening to seek House Speaker John Boehner's ouster in the current standoff over federal funding of Planned Parenthood.

"If we're going to do business as usual, it is going to be very difficult for me to continue with the same leadership that we have now," Labrador told Politco.

Even some of Labrador's allies in the House Freedom Caucus are growing weary of this tactic. Rep. Tom McClintock, R-Calif., quit the caucus Wednesday because he thinks undermining Boehner has only helped congressional Democrats.

In 2013, Labrador was a ring leader in an aborted coup against the GOP leader.

Two years later, he supported Boehner, saying, "I think it is unwise to marginalize yourself when there is no chance of victory, which was the case today."

After members of his political base chastised him for selling out, Labrador has flipped again.

This political ping-pong is enough to give you a headache.

Pick a side, congressman.

JEERS ... to Washington state Auditor Troy Kelley. The list of federal felonies facing him - including money laundering, tax evasion and possession of stolen property - expanded. It now totals 17 counts.

He's on unpaid leave but refuses to do the right thing - step down entirely.

Friday, he showed up in a federal courtroom and pleaded innocent to this newest round of charges.

A trial date once set for January has stretched in to March. You know how federal trials - especially for white collar crime - drag on. This one won't get resolved quickly.

So, well until the end of 2016 - when the next auditor election will be held - Washington's state watchdog agency will remain under a cloud. - M.T.