

# 10/18/2010: State of the Big Ten, Volume 8 (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*

The news from last weekend of Minnesota relieving head football coach Tim Brewster does not come as a surprise. What is unusual is how everything transpired.

Coming into the 2010 season, there was certainly pressure on Brewster. He came to the Twin Cities with very high aspirations and exuded confidence in his product. Basically, he was a heck of a salesman.

But while the selling of a product is all fine and well, the actual product has to live up to its standards, which was absolutely not the case here.

For all the heat Brewster took on his way out, and justifiably so given who Minnesota was losing games to and how it was losing those games, he can't be the only one to blame for the debacle that has taken place.

Before this year, there had to be reason for fans of the Golden Gophers to feel excited. The team was back on campus, playing in a brand-new, state-of-the-art stadium that was built on the Minnesota campus. The Golden Gophers seemed to finally fit in, if you will, with their Big Ten counterparts.

The timing of Brewster's hire made some sense back in 2007. Go

back and watch how Minnesota absolutely unraveled in that 2006 Insight Bowl loss to Texas Tech, a game the Golden Gophers were winning 38-7 in the second half. If a head coach cannot maintain a 31-point second-half lead in a bowl game, that is discouraging, especially when Brewster's predecessor, Glen Mason, had a reputation for this throughout his Minnesota tenure.

Simply put, there was a reason Minnesota athletics director Joel Maturi went the direction he did, and at the time, who was blaming him?

Now the actual hire of Brewster maybe did not make the most sense from a coaching standpoint. But remember, this was 2007. Minnesota needed someone that was going to sell recruits on TCF Bank Stadium. Brewster did exactly that. With having the team no longer sharing the Metrodome with two professional sports franchises, there was an opportunity for those who remembered the Golden Gophers' glory days to be re-engaged with the program, and for that matter, the university. Brewster took advantage.

What made it difficult to take Brewster seriously those first couple of years, however, was that all the talk about his program was more centered around building towards the future, as opposed to what was actually happening on the field. Even in 2008, Minnesota started the season 7-1 and was nationally-ranked before nose-diving the rest of the way to finish 7-6.

Unfortunately for Brewster, that was around the time when the attention he craved finally came Minnesota's way.

No one can criticize the man for his passion or for the energy he provided. What he can be, and should be, judged on though is how ill-prepared he was for that big moment when everything else fell into place.

This may have been Brewster's first head-coaching gig, but in hindsight, that should have been enough of a red flag to not

hire him in the first place, even though he knew his talking points to a "T" like a politician.

Which leads to Maturi, who better get this next hire right, or he will be toast. Based on what has been reported the past couple of days, the conclusion could be made that the success of the football program at Minnesota is not as important as other sports.

Yes, TCF Bank Stadium was built. But it holds 50,805 seats. Brewster made the ill-advised comment in August that "TCF Bank Stadium is the best stadium in the Big Ten," when there are three stadiums in the conference that carry twice the capacity.

With the Big Ten adding Nebraska and having two divisions for football starting next season, Minnesota needs to worry less about perception now and become more committed to having a winner on the gridiron. Winning games is how revenue is made, how fans become interested, and how the Golden Gophers can someday soon have a true home-field advantage when they play at TCF Bank Stadium.

Whoever comes in to rebuild this program has an opportunity to turn Minnesota into what it once was, and the resources to do that are firmly in place. But it will take time.

There was a legit reason for Maturi hiring Brewster three years ago, but that particular reason should have been lower on the totem pole of factors into Maturi's decision-making.

That is why the Golden Gophers are where they are right now.