

# 12/20/2010: State of the Big Ten, Volume 17 (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

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One of the more bizzare scenes you will ever see in college basketball took place over the weekend. Inside the Breslin Center in East Lansing, Mich., the Michigan State Spartans were playing, and head coach Tom Izzo was not on the bench coaching.

Izzo was suspended from the Spartans' 90-51 win over Prairie View A&M on Dec. 18 as a result of a secondary NCAA violation having to do with someone with ties to a potential recruit receiving money for working a camp said recruit didn't end up attending.

Say whatever about Izzo being punished and suspended from his duties as a head coach, but given what actually occurred, this is not something that should taint Izzo's reputation as a college basketball head coach.

This is the same guy that turned down a chance to coach the Cleveland Cavaliers this summer and stick with the program he built into a perennial giant. The same guy that has guided Michigan State to six Final Four appearances and a national championship back in 2000. The same guy that has the Spartans poised at another conference title run and possibly a third straight trip to the Final Four.

Izzo admitted embarrassment by this whole mini-episode that took place recently, and as ridiculous as the violation seems, he did pay his dues to the NCAA.

Think about all the different college basketball coaches out there that for whatever reason are associated with illegal recruiting, even if there is no proof of any wrongdoing. Chances are pretty solid that Izzo's name never comes to mind. In fact, that could probably be said for most (if not all) of the coaches working in the Big Ten right now.

Izzo is the dean of coaches in the conference at this time, and he is probably the most successful head coach the Big Ten has had with men's basketball since Indiana severed ties with Bob Knight back in 2000. He is a guy that many associated with the game believe has integrity and does everything at Michigan State the right way.

Secondary violations happen at plenty of programs (Iowa recently self-reported itself to the NCAA for secondary recruiting violations). There is a reason they are considered "secondary." Regardless of what actually transpired at Michigan State last summer, it is not as if this is a repeat of the whole "Fab Five" scandal at Michigan, or all the wrongdoings done at Ohio State under then-head coach Jim O'Brien.

The best thing now for the conference, and especially for the Spartans, is for everyone to move on. Michigan State has a top 25 team in Texas visiting the Breslin Center this week before the Spartans begin Big Ten play on New Year's Eve against Minnesota. This is kind of a big game for Izzo's squad considering how it has already lost games to the likes of Connecticut, Duke, and Syracuse, all of whom are ranked in the top 5 nationally by the AP as of Monday.

To let something like this secondary violation continue to linger is not going to be helpful to a team that has the

potential Michigan State has this season. Not to mention this is not anything that could nor should smear Izzo's legacy at the school.

He will bounce back from this, the Spartans will bounce back from this, and the Big Ten will bounce back from this.