

11/14/2011: State of the Big Ten, Volume 42 (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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In light of what has taken place over the past nine days at Penn State, *CBSsports.com's* Brett McMurphy reported Monday morning the Big Ten had made the decision to remove Joe Paterno's name from its football trophy that will be awarded to whoever wins the league's championship game in Indianapolis on Dec. 3.

This was a move that had to be made, and honestly, it's a little surprising this wasn't done sooner.

Forget for a second about how the Big Ten decided to go and hyphenated every single football-related trophy it plans to give out two weeks from now. There's more to this.

Last week's "State of the Big Ten" was about how Paterno needed to resign immediately as a result of his role and what he didn't end up doing when told of alleged sexual abuse being done to children on his campus and inside the showers of his football facility. Instead, he opted to stand his ground until Penn State's Board of Trustees had no other choice but to fire him on Nov. 9.

As written last week, this story shouldn't be about Paterno. It should be about those who had their innocence taken from

them as a result of these atrocities that reportedly took place and weren't dealt with accordingly.

Unfortunately, the majority of the narrative has been about Paterno. It has been about Penn State students congregating on his front lawn. It has been about what ensued in State College when the announcement was made. Observing from afar, it was disgusting to see what was going on last week. Those who did witness everything in person had to be left speechless.

What became clear in the hours leading up to his dismissal was that Paterno didn't really have the best interests of his university in mind. Had he simply stepped aside when he could and should have, the growing perception about him now wouldn't have been as awful as it has become because he had to be forced out.

Going back to what took place Monday, this was a decision Delany had to make. After everything that has taken place this month, there was no legitimate excuse for keeping Paterno's name on that trophy. Doing so would've only cast an even darker cloud on the conference as it began preparing for what is supposed to be a culmination of everything the Big Ten had done from the moment Nebraska became a conference member.

Not doing this would've sent the wrong message at a time when further mistakes cannot afford to be made. It would've given the indication that football is more important than the health and well-being of children, especially those who are victims of sexual abuse.

Perhaps this decision could and should have been made sooner – kind of like Paterno no longer being Penn State's head coach – but at least this act was made. Just like things would've been much worse last weekend had Paterno coached Penn State's game against Nebraska, things here would've gotten much worse had the week of the Big Ten championship approached and his name remained on that trophy.

With this decision being made, the story's focus needs to be back on point with where it should have always been – with the victims and their families.