

# 12/26/2011: State of the Big Ten, Volume 48 (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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What might be an underrated headline from a national perspective was a pretty significant one in the Big Ten last school, and just may have simply added fuel to what was already becoming a fierce border rivalry.

On Dec. 20, Iowa saw its defensive line coach, Rick Kaczenski, resign from his post to pursue what was called "another coaching opportunity." This "coaching opportunity" surfaced two days later when Kaczenski was named the new defensive line coach at Nebraska.

Yes, Nebraska. The Big Ten's newest member acquired an assistant coach from a school that not only is in its conference, but also in the Legends Division, a school that plays the Cornhuskers in football every season.

No matter what the feelings are towards Kaczenski in Iowa by Hawkeye fans, this is a bold hire by Nebraska and head coach Bo Pelini, who promoted his previous defensive line coach John Papuchis to defensive coordinator following his brother Carl Pelini leaving the program to become the head coach at Florida Atlantic. Papuchis' promotion allowed this move by Kaczenski to be possible.

This, of course, has ramifications. Typically when assistants make a move like this, it comes when the head coach it worked for previously is out of a job. Coincidentally, Iowa wide receivers coach Erik Campbell arrived in 2008 after having been both a player and an assistant at Michigan. The difference there, however, was that Campbell was Lloyd Carr's assistant and wasn't retained by Rich Rodriguez when he became the Wolverines' head honcho.

In this case, Kaczenski's move comes while Kirk Ferentz is still Iowa's head coach, a role he said he remained committed to in a release sent later that evening just hours after Kaczenski's departure became public. Even more significant is that this also comes at a time when Iowa is about to lose Norm Parker, who is retiring from his position as defensive coordinator after the Insight Bowl on Dec. 30.

Another startling aspect to this is that Kaczenski will be with the Cornhuskers in Orlando this week and coach in the Capital One Bowl when Nebraska plays South Carolina, another school Kaczenski was once an assistant at, on Jan. 2. It would be hard to blame any of the current Iowa defensive linemen, including all four of the fifth-year seniors slated to start in the Insight Bowl, for being upset that their coach not only left them before their seasons (and careers) ended, but went to coach a team Iowa just lost to a month ago in its bowl game.

From a recruiting standpoint, it's hard to say the impact this will have. Could Kaczenski attempt to poach some commits from Iowa between now and National Signing Day? Perhaps. Ferentz's statement issued late on Dec. 20 was probably an attempt on his part to dispel any myths of him possibly leaving for another coaching gig, and if that is indeed the case, the tactic is a telling one.

At this point in time, it's best for Ferentz to just move on and deal with Iowa, while Kaczenski just moves on and fills

his role on Pelini's staff. But with that being said, this could lead to some fireworks next season on Nov. 23, when the Cornhuskers make their return trip to Kinnick Stadium to play the Hawkeyes.

Because it's not every day someone works at one program, then simply moves on to work for a rival.