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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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When the 2011-12 men's basketball season comes to an end, Nebraska athletics director Tom Osborne is going to have a difficult decision on his hands. That decision is whether or not to retain Doc Sadler as his men's basketball coach, and it's a decision that needs to be made as soon as possible, one way or the other.

Nebraska is one year away from opening Pinnacle Bank Arena, which will be the team's new basketball venue beginning in 2013-14. Along with it will be upgrades that are necessary in order for the basketball program to keep pace with the rest of the Big Ten.

Aside from there actually being a new facility where games will be played and practices will be held, the situation in Lincoln looks eerily similar to one that occurred in Iowa City two years ago when Iowa athletics director Gary Barta pulled the trigger on a coaching change right before renovations of Carver-Hawkeye Arena were completed.

The reason for this analogy is simple – Pinnacle Bank Arena ought to be used as a recruiting ploy and whether it's Sadler or somebody else coaching the Cornhuskers, that coach has to be allowed the opportunity to reap some of the rewards

himself.

If Osborne elects to keep Sadler on board, then Sadler deserves the opportunity to see everything through and get an opportunity to use whatever's new to the benefit of him and his staff. Keeping him around only to relieve him of his coaching duties won't do anyone any good.

Nebraska has to be able to sell something when that arena has its grand opening, anything that isn't a team completely rebuilding from scratch. The clamoring from Cornhusker fans to fire Sadler has gained steam over the last few weeks, not only because of the number of losses, but how some of the games Nebraska's losing have occurred. Last weekend, the Cornhuskers traveled to Michigan State and left the Breslin Center scoring a measly 34 points for the entire game.

Yes, Michigan State is the Big Ten's best team. And yes, Nebraska did lose its top player – senior guard Bo Spencer – to an ankle injury during that contest. But even with both of those things working against the Cornhuskers, they ought to have still been able to score at least 40 points. Heck, they scored 48 points during the second half of their 79-73 win over Iowa last month. That's 14 more points in one half alone than what was accumulated in East Lansing Feb. 25.

Sadler has been Nebraska's head coach for six years. Last season while finishing their tenure in the Big 12, the Cornhuskers played in the NIT and looked like a competitive basketball team. They've been plagued with injuries this season, but in comparison to some of the top programs in the Big Ten, the talent just isn't there right now.

If a new coach is going to be brought in, it has to be done this spring so that way that person, whoever it is, can at least be given a fair attempt to generate enthusiasm for the program as it enters its new digs. If it's really inevitable that Sadler isn't the solution long-term for Nebraska, then

why waste any time beyond the Big Ten Tournament if you’re Osborne?

Again, it’s Osborne’s decision to make – one way or the other. The decision just has to be made with the long-term interests of “Nebrasketball” in mind.