

COMMENTARY: Big Ten policy needs reconsideration (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

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In light of the news Wednesday night that Jarrod Uthoff will transfer to Iowa after spending last season as a member of the Wisconsin basketball program, the Big Ten ought to start reconsidering its policy on in-conference transfers.

Let's make two things clear here: 1. What Uthoff did is within the rules. Same goes for Iowa assuming Uthoff and head coach Fran McCaffery didn't have direct contact with one another. This is where the phrase "Don't hate the player, hate the game," comes into play. 2. This isn't the first time, nor will it be the last time, that a kid transfers within the Big Ten.

I have no issue with how this went down from Iowa's perspective. I also have no issue with Bo Ryan or anyone associated with Wisconsin being upset about this, either. If the shoe was on the other foot here, folks in Iowa would be just as up in arms. These issues are getting enough press, so I'm taking a different angle here.

The one issue I have with this is with the Big Ten itself. The rule it put in place fairly recently needs to be revamped. Because if it isn't, what happened here with Uthoff has potential to become commonplace.

Yes, Uthoff can't play for Iowa during the 2012-13 season. Yes, he'll have to pay his own way and can't be given a scholarship until the redshirt expires at the earliest. But let's be honest. The kid was highly-touted enough in high

school and Iowa had enough interest in him back then that there's no way he remains a walk-on.

Sure, he loses a year of eligibility, but the "restriction" being put in place here isn't really much of one.

I have three ideas I'd like to throw out there to the Big Ten. The first is removing the redshirt year. This won't happen because aside from the extreme circumstances, any Division-I athlete who transfers has to redshirt. But what this would do in essence is only give those who transfer within the conference two years of eligibility on scholarship as opposed to potentially receiving a scholarship the second they're no longer being held out.

The second, more realistic option (at least compared to the first one) is make it so those who transfer in conference must be a walk-on for a minimum of two years as opposed to only one. The chances of a fifth-year senior doing this are slim and if they're good enough to potentially make it at the next level, they're probably not going to be playing college basketball for five years anyway. This would guarantee that anyone who did this had to spend at least one season where they can actually play in real games had to do so by paying their own way.

The last option is to have something similar to the Big East, which is not allow in-conference transfers to occur under any conditions. This just doesn't seem as realistic, especially now.

Again, there's no issue with Uthoff opting to transfer from Wisconsin to Iowa. It's his choice and as I said before, no one can fault him here for having a change of heart. It happens.

But if the Big Ten really wants to clamp down on such things from happening in the future, then changes to its rules and regulations need to be considered. It would not only serve the

best interests of student-athletes, but coaches as well, because then the restrictions they do place on anyone who leaves their programs will carry more clout.