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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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The Bill O'Brien Era at Penn State began with a rude awakening for the Nittany Lion faithful, one that reverberated not just throughout Beaver Stadium on Sept. 1, but also through the entire landscape of college football.

Penn State, a once proud program that has now been tarnished by the despicable actions of a few individuals, won't be the same ever again. Sure, there might be a day where its football program sits atop the Big Ten once again. But that day isn't coming anytime soon, even after the postseason ban concludes following the 2015 season.

O'Brien inherited a ginormous mess in State College, and the Nittany Lions' 24-14 loss to Ohio this past weekend was a glaring reminder. Now to be fair, Ohio is probably the best team in the Mid-American Conference this season. It certainly looked the part overcoming an 11-point deficit to beat Penn State on the road by 10 points.

But this game proved to be indicative of just how rough this season especially is going to be for O'Brien's squad. As stated before, Penn State has leadership on the defensive side of the football. But the offense now lacks the playmakers needed to make this a respectable football team.

Penn State is going to continue to struggle as the weeks and months progress. As good as Ohio is – and make no mistake, Ohio is a solid football team this season – there will be tougher opponents and tougher games for Penn State to play over the course of the autumn. Playing on the road this week at Virginia, a team who won eight games last season and reached the Chick-Fil-A Bowl, will be far from easy. As will playing against a triple option team like Navy that will be well-rested before visiting Beaver Stadium and a Temple squad determined to end its skid against Penn State head-to-head.

Then there's Big Ten play, where the schedule isn't really that kind to the Nittany Lions.

Before the sanctions, postseason ban and player transfers all came into play, this was a team that maybe would've won 7-8 games given the talent that was handy. Now? This team might not even reach five wins this season and that is far from an exaggeration.

What happened to Penn State last weekend against Ohio wasn't an aberration. It was a taste of what the future is going to be like now for that football program. While the Nittany Lions become less and less talented player-wise, the parity that now exists in college football will allow teams like Ohio, Navy and Temple to come into Beaver Stadium and walk out with victories. What once seemed so rare – Penn State losing games at home – is about to become so common.

It's a cold reality of what really lies ahead for O'Brien and this program going forward.