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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.

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Less than a week after legendary Nebraska football coach Tom Osborne announced he was retiring as the school's athletics director, Nebraska hired Shawn Eichorst, who held a similar title for 18 months at Miami (Fla.).

There are a few layers to this hiring that are pretty significant – his Big Ten background, the salary Nebraska will be paying him, the potential ramifications this could have on Miami, and what this does for Nebraska going forward.

Let's start with Eichorst's Big Ten background. Prior to becoming the AD at Miami, Eichorst worked for Barry Alvarez in the Wisconsin athletics department. One of the factors to consider here is that long before Alvarez became a Badger icon, he played at Nebraska. He's also one of the reasons Eichorst held that job he had at Miami. Alvarez has been at the forefront of things Big Ten-related since Nebraska joined the conference in 2010, so it's not hard to imagine he played a role in his alma mater landing a successor for Osborne that fits the mold of a Big Ten guy.

Next, let's move on to Eichorst's salary at Nebraska. According to multiple reports, Eichorst's starting salary is set at \$973,000. Why is this significant? Because it makes him

the third-highest paid athletics director in the Big Ten behind only Alvarez and Ohio State's Gene Smith and he becomes the sixth-highest paid AD nationally. That's a lot of money to invest in someone who doesn't have any Nebraska ties and has less than two years experience in charge of an entire athletics department. From a Big Ten standpoint, there's no doubt there are other athletics directors who are going to see Eichorst's starting salary and think they're deserving of more than they're currently getting.

Before getting into how this could ultimately shape Nebraska's long-term future, let's also examine how this affects Miami for a second. This is a school marred by a scandal that came to light in August 2011. Not only were there issues in Miami's athletics department surrounding the football program, but the basketball program also had issues, too.

While the bulk of these alleged NCAA violations didn't happen on Eichorst's watch down at Miami, his departure from the school comes about a month before the NCAA is expected to announce its findings and whether Miami will face any heavy sanctions. Even if Eichorst is the guy Nebraska was targeting from the get-go, there's going to remain speculation whether he left Miami just to avoid the hard times that are likely ahead for its entire athletics department.

Finally, let's explore the potential ramifications this has on Nebraska. This is an athletics department that has started showing more of a commitment to its men's basketball program, hiring Tim Miles to replace Doc Sadler as its coach last spring and opening Pinnacle Bank Arena before the start of the 2013-14 season.

From a football perspective, this could get really interesting. If the Cornhuskers' recent 63-38 loss to Ohio State this past weekend is an indicator, the fan base is starting to get restless with Bo Pelini and the thought of a possible 7-5 season won't sit well in Lincoln. Keep in mind,

Nebraska fired Frank Solich after a 9-3 campaign in 2003. The expectations around the football team are always sky high.

Should the day come where Eichorst decides to part ways with Pelini and begin pursuit of a new football coach, it's a hire that would define his tenure as Nebraska's AD, for better or worse. Steve Pederson, who is currently the AD at Pittsburgh, is the one who fired Solich and replaced him with Bill Callahan. That one disastrous hire cost Pederson his job at Nebraska, so there's no reason to think it couldn't happen to Eichorst either if he ends up making a hire that goes array.

Right now, it's too early to say whether this hire by Nebraska proves to be a good one or not. But this is a development that's worth keeping an eye on over the next few years because it could very easily define how much success Nebraska will have across the board in the Big Ten.