

# 10/22/2012: State of the Big Ten, Volume 70 (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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The 2012-13 college basketball season hasn't even tipped off yet and already, it has been tumultuous for Tubby Smith and the Minnesota Golden Gophers.

On Friday, forward Trevor Mbakwe walked out of a Miami courtroom avoiding jail time following a DUI arrest last July. Not even 24 hours had passed before assistant coach Saul Smith – Tubby's son – was arrested on suspicion of a DUI in Minneapolis. Saul Smith has since been placed on unpaid administrative leave by Minnesota athletics director Norwood Teague and further punishment could still be coming his way.

Even if this is Saul's first offense, the punishment needs to be harsher here and he probably should be fired altogether.

First of all, there's the timing. The fact that he even allowed himself to be put in this position in the first place is bad. But again, add in the fact that this occurred just after one of his own players just dodged sitting in a jail cell for the exact same offense is pretty poor judgment. Honestly, anyone associated with that program right now ought to avoid consuming any alcohol of any kind right now.

Sure, the argument can be made that this is a free country and

they all should be allowed to do whatever they want in their free time as long as they're not breaking the law. The argument isn't for everyone involved with Minnesota basketball to not be allowed to drink ever again. Just not right now. Not right after the legal process had just played out in the case of someone who just happens to be the best player on the team.

But back to Saul Smith. Let's re-emphasize another key factor here – he's Tubby's son. Yeah, he's just one of the assistant coaches, but the fact of the matter is he's going to be held to a higher standard based on name alone. That's something that happens in all lines of business, not just in the world of college basketball.

It's already hard enough on Tubby Smith knowing one of his assistants just got arrested on DUI suspicion and has to take an unpaid administrative leave. But compound that with the fact that the particular assistant just happens to be his son and it only makes things more stressful on him, not just as a coach but as a father as well.

Look, Minnesota has a chance to be a pretty good team this season. The Golden Gophers made a nice run in March all the way to the NIT championship game where they lost to Stanford and they return the two players who made that run possible in point guard Andre Hollins and forward Rodney Williams.

And oh yeah, Mbakwe was granted an extra year of eligibility after missing the majority of last season with a torn ACL. On the court, Minnesota has three solid basketball players to build around.

But the distractions are already beginning to mount. Add in that there's going to be extra incentive for Tubby Smith to have a bounce-back season with the hiring of Teague as the school's new AD and this was clearly the last thing he needed to deal with.

If Minnesota can avoid further distraction, then it should be

fine. But if not, remember that it's now not only a poor decision by a player making times in Minneapolis rough, but also a poor decision by an assistant coach that probably should've known better more than anyone else involved in that program.