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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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Three weeks remain before the 2012 Big Ten Championship Game takes place at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis. When that game concludes, there could be as few as five teams from the conference who are even bowl-eligible.

Yes, that's not a misprint. As few as five teams, not even half of the Big Ten, could be bowl-eligible.

Now granted, Ohio State and Penn State would both be bowl eligible if not for postseason bans being part of their respective sanctions. But that's not the case. Right now, the Big Ten has four bowl-eligible football teams: Nebraska, Northwestern, Michigan and Wisconsin.

At least one more team will get to six wins as Michigan State and Minnesota both already have five victories and still play each other Nov. 24 in Minneapolis. The odds of both these teams reaching six wins are actually pretty good, but if either of these teams loses all of its remaining games, 5-7 is the end result and the holidays are spent at home.

Of the 10 teams who could potentially reach a bowl game, the only one who can't play in a bowl at this moment is Illinois. If Purdue loses to Iowa this week, that would be the

Boilermakers' seventh loss, keeping them in West Lafayette during bowl season. Even if the Hawkeyes prevail against Purdue, they'd still have to win one of their final two games of the season against either Michigan on the road or Nebraska at home in order to reach six victories.

Amazingly, there's a scenario where Indiana could finish 5-7 but still play in the Big Ten Championship Game and then a win in that would send the Hoosiers to Pasadena, even though 6-7 wouldn't even be .500. Assuming Indiana doesn't win the Big Ten though, the Hoosiers still have to win two of their last three games in order to reach the six-win threshold.

But there are two problems for the Big Ten if this doomsday scenario of only five bowl teams happens. First, it all goes back to perception. The one thing that's already a given is the only team going to a BCS bowl is whoever wins in Indianapolis next month playing in the Rose Bowl. If only five teams are bowl-eligible, it means the Big Ten fails to fill three of its eight bowl allotments – the two bowl games played in Texas and the Little Caesars Bowl in Detroit. Just that alone is going to have many nationwide frowning upon the conference.

More importantly for the Big Ten though is revenue sharing. Even though the three games not being filled are the three lowest bowls on the conference's totem pole, that's still money not coming in. Add in that this is the first time since 2004 where there won't be two Big Ten teams playing in BCS bowls and that's even more money the conference isn't getting that it's normally accustomed to receiving.

There might be a day where the Big Ten is the toast of the town in college football again. But the fact of the matter is more ridicule is coming before that day arrives and this particular scenario is one that should it play out, is going to be difficult for the conference to overcome in this day and age where every little thing is dissected. It won't be able to

live this year down.