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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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Following Wisconsin's stunning 70-31 massacre of Nebraska in the Big Ten Championship Game last weekend, the Big Ten bowl lineup of seven games was set. Had Nebraska won, the lineup looked to have more of a certainty to it. But as a result of the Badger victory, there was a bit of chaos Sunday.

The three 6-6 teams (Michigan State, Minnesota and Purdue) all went where many projected them to wind up, so there weren't issues there. It came at the top with determining the three Florida bowls played on New Year's Day.

In terms of how the standings shook out in the Legends Division, Nebraska, Michigan and Northwestern all went where they probably deserved to end up. Nebraska returns to the Capital One Bowl for the second year in a row, while Michigan is in the Outback and Northwestern fell to the Gator. The intriguing point to make here though is while the Wildcats lost both their head-to-heads with the Cornhuskers and Wolverines, they did possess a better overall record than Michigan, meaning they could've been selected for the Capital One Bowl.

Prior to Saturday's title game, the talk was had Wisconsin won, Northwestern's odds of being in the Capital One Bowl

would be extremely likely. For one, as just mentioned, Nebraska played in that bowl game last year, and usually a team feeling down after losing a championship game like the Cornhuskers did probably won't travel as well to the same bowl for the second straight year.

Also, because of bowl-selecting guidelines put in place by the Big Ten, Michigan wasn't allowed to be picked over Nebraska for the Capital One Bowl had both teams been on the table. So the feeling was Northwestern, a team that overachieved this year and hadn't been to Orlando in 16 seasons, would travel well and the Capital One Bowl seemed intrigued with the idea of inviting the Wildcats.

But then something happened and instead of having Michigan or Northwestern playing Texas A&M, the match-up became Nebraska and Georgia. There has been speculation that the Big Ten got heavily involved in the selection process to ensure Nebraska didn't completely nose-dive after losing to Wisconsin, which would coincide with similar reports of the SEC doing the same with Georgia after the Bulldogs lost to Alabama.

Here's the issue though: It sets an awful precedent for conferences like the Big Ten and SEC to do this. If there are going to be bowl games and those bowls are going to send reps across the country to scout games and gauge interest of the schools they're aligned with, then they all need to be able to do their jobs. That's not to say there shouldn't be guidelines, but if, in this case, the Capital One Bowl felt more compelled to invite Northwestern than bring back Nebraska for the second time in a row, it should've been able to.

If the Big Ten is going to do this now, why wasn't this done last year after Michigan State lost the conference's title game? The Spartans were in the Capital One Bowl two years ago and would've been looking at another Orlando trip had the same precedent been used.

That's not to say Nebraska doesn't warrant playing in this game against Georgia. If the Capital One Bowl's incentive from the get-go was to take those teams if they both lost last Saturday, then that's great. But if it truly came down to the Big Ten forcing the bowl's hand as speculated, then that's a problem.

With the conference on the brink of expanding again in 2014 and with the bowl lineup likely being reconfigured next year, this might be a good time for the conferences and bowl committees to gather together and re-assess their priorities, especially with a playoff starting in 2014.

Should the bowls select based on conference standings or through their own independent criteria like they always have? If it's the latter, then let the bowls handle their business. It's their game.