

12/17/2012: State of the Big Ten, Volume 78 (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.

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Last week, the Big Ten Network posted a survey on its web site with questions pertaining to the future of football divisions once 2014 arrives and both Maryland and Rutgers are official members.

It provided three options, one of which was a geographical split. The three options aren't what matter here because anyone with a pulse can recognize that revising them East-West makes the most sense and should've been done from the get-go.

The survey itself is flawed. Why? Because there's no way the Big Ten is settling at 14 teams. The conference is going to expand again. It's not a matter of if, but when.

And while football coaches might not want to hear this, here's what would make the most sense once it reaches 16 – pods. Instead of two divisions with eight teams, have four pods with four teams that can be based geographically. From there, each pod winner could be grouped for a four-team playoff to determine a Big Ten champion (sound familiar?).

Right now, the only legitimate drawback would be if the Big Ten wanted to go beyond 16, which it might. Then pods might not make total sense. But it's worth repeating: The final

number will not be 14.

Three things to consider with pods: First, how they're divided up. Two of the pods would be dependent on which schools get added. But if one pod features the four Western schools that would all be natural rivals (Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, Wisconsin), and then the second pod features the two Illinois schools and two Michigan schools, that's half of it right there.

The winners of those pods can meet in Chicago, the winners of the others can meet at either FedEx Field in Washington or MetLife Stadium in New Jersey. You know, the two parts of the country where the Big Ten just enlarged its footprint. It would be consistent with Big Ten commissioner Jim Delany saying how a second branch would be built out East to go along with the current one in the Chicagoland area.

Oh, and doing this could also keep the Big Ten's championship game at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis, which is as good a setting as there is.

Secondly, and this pertains to the whole competitive balance thing that resulted in Legends and Leaders. It's possible to have a geographic split where Michigan, Nebraska, Ohio State and Penn State are all in separate pods. Heck, there could still remain the possibility of a Big Ten title game featuring the Wolverines and Buckeyes, just like there's potential for right now.

Lastly, pods would make scheduling easier. Yes, coaches are going to be against having a ninth game and might be against a semi-playoff leading to a conference championship. But that's already the direction college football is going anyway with a national four-team playoff in, oh yeah, 2014. Plus, Delany has made clear he wants more conference games.

By using pods, a nine-game schedule can be done where each team plays everyone in its pod and then two teams from each of

the other pods. This would allow all 16 teams to play everyone at least twice over a four-year span. Or another option would be playing all four teams from another pod and then two cross-overs from the remaining two pods (this would allow Michigan and Ohio State to keep playing annually). Either way, this could work and would make logistical sense.

So going back to this survey, does it really matter? There's a playoff coming in 2014 and there are at least two more teams joining the Big Ten in 2014. The timetable for further expansion here is pretty obvious, and that's not only for the Big Ten, but for a conference like the SEC as well.

It's not about how the dominoes fall because once one falls, so will the rest. It's a matter of when they fall. Because whether it's in January or July, this is something that's inevitable.

Oh, and the same can also be said for the "Legends" and "Leaders" monikers. The sooner everything gets sorted out, the better off everyone – the conferences, football coaches, players, media and fans alike – will be.