

2/11/2013: State of the Big Ten, Volume 86 (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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Major news emerged Monday afternoon from Big Ten headquarters in Park Ridge, Ill. It was there where the Big Ten's football coaches and athletics directors held a meeting and publicly released a statement regarding NCAA legislation with recruiting that would go into effect as early as July 1 of this year.

Basically, this new legislation would lead to recruiting deregulation. What Big Ten coaches and ADs expressed concern over in a statement released Monday are three things:

- 1. Limitations on the number and duties of coaches, and along those lines, elimination of recruiting coordination functions.*
- 2. Deregulation of modes and numerical limitations on communication.*
- 3. Elimination of printed recruiting materials and video/audio legislation.*

Barring delay or complete upheaval, these changes to the recruiting game won't bode well for the Big Ten as a whole. The conference already has a muddled reputation right now in terms of football. With such recruiting deregulations being put in place, a conference like the SEC is going to prosper.

The Big Ten addresses concern about how these changes would affect the families and coaches of high-school prospects. If a coach is able to text recruits on a daily basis and keep tabs on the kids they're targeting, what's not to say they won't do it? They'll dedicate the time to it if they deem it necessary and let's face it, recruiting is the most vital part of a coach's job description.

In a sport like basketball, this is a more reasonable thing because there are two signing periods (fall and spring) and there's a huge difference between only having to keep tabs on four or five kids as opposed to 25, which is the number of football scholarships allowed to be filled per year by a program not dealing with scholarship reductions (i.e. Penn State).

There have been a lot of things where the Big Ten has usually been the least willing to adapt, like the whole thing with the college football playoff going into effect in 2014). But this is something they seem to have a reasonable argument toward why more time should be spent thinking about the ramifications of such legislation.

Football is a different beast from every other college sport there is. With such legislation, coaches won't be able to take a break from trying to recruit someone they're targeting, otherwise another program placing more emphasis in recruiting is just going to swoop in.

If the conference continues to struggle in terms of recruiting, then the quality of football played in the Big Ten won't improve anytime soon and the results that happen in bowl games or anytime a marquee Big Ten squad plays a marquee SEC squad won't change, either.

Add in the whole dynamic of a football playoff, and it could reach a point where even with conferences expanding, only a select few are going to be able to compete for national

championships on a regular basis.

These next few months are going to be telling because if nothing happens and these changes all go into effect, the Big Ten will have even more of an uphill climb as a conference than it already has right now.