

# 3/18/2013: State of the Big Ten, Volume 91 (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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A 13-year era came to a halting conclusion over the weekend when Northwestern decided to fire it's head men's basketball coach, Bill Carmody. The decision came two days after the Wildcats were eliminated by Iowa in the first round of the Big Ten Tournament and finished 13-19 with nine straight losses to end the season.

The decision to rid of Carmody has been a hot topic of discussion in the Northwestern community, in part because he arguably had as much success there as any coach the school has ever had. Keep in mind, the Wildcats have never played in the NCAA Tournament and prior to this season, Northwestern had made three straight NIT appearances under Carmody.

There was also some controversy in that the Wildcats' season fell apart in large part because of injuries. Northwestern lost its best player, Drew Crawford, to a season-ending injury and also lost Jared Swopshire to a season-ending injury right when the nine-game losing streak began. By season's end, the Wildcats were a shell of the team some thought it had the potential to be when the season began.

Yet it seemed painfully obvious as the season winded down that this was the direction Northwestern would go. In what ended up

being his final game, Carmody coached like someone about to lose his job, burning timeouts left and right and not just taking players out when they got into foul trouble.

Now that athletics director Jim Phillips has made this move, attention shifts towards hiring a new coach, someone that could achieve what Carmody and no one else before him has. This is going to be complicated in the sense that Northwestern won't be in a position to upgrade facilities anytime soon. It's also a challenge in that Northwestern has higher academic standards than the majority of Big Ten schools being the conference's only private university, so recruiting challenges are also different and unique from other teams.

Whatever route Phillips takes, he needs to hit this hire out of the park. It's not so much the Wildcats needing a Pat Fitzgerald clone to take over, but they need to hire someone as their basketball coach with similar traits to that of their football coach. Someone who will express vibrant enthusiasm toward turning Northwestern into a contender and could be active in the university community.

All it takes is to look at recent hires made by other Big Ten schools to show this trend is one that would pay off long term. Schools like Iowa (Fran McCaffery), Penn State (Patrick Chambers) and Nebraska (Tim Miles) have all gone this route. Penn State suffered a serious injury like Northwestern did this past season, but the future there is bright.

It might take some time, but the right hire can have success at Northwestern. For all of his faults, Carmody came awfully close to winning with what was in front of him there. There's no reason to think someone else can't do it, so long as Phillips makes a smart hire.