

# 4/1/2013: State of the Big Ten, Volume 93 (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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To only have one Big Ten team represented in this year's Final Four probably wasn't what Commissioner Jim Delany envisioned for his conference this season. But after a season full of incredible contests night after night, one Big Ten team remains – Michigan.

Not only are the Wolverines still alive and well unlike the rest of their Big Ten brethren, but Michigan's chances appear to be decent with a match-up against a fellow No. 4 seed in Syracuse in the Final Four, then (should it win) getting the winner of Louisville vs. Wichita State.

It probably shouldn't be too surprising to see the Wolverines get this far. After all, Michigan at one point this season was ranked No. 1 nationally. But over the course of the last two months, to see this team be the only one from the Big Ten still standing is remarkable.

This is a team that caught numerous bad breaks over the final month of the regular season. The Wolverines lost a game to Wisconsin where a 3-pointer from half-court had to be made in order to force overtime. They also blew a double-digit lead on the road against Penn State.

Yet on the season's final day, Michigan had a chance to create a four-way share for the Big Ten crown and missed doing so by inches. Literally, by inches. Instead, the Wolverines finished tied for fourth and because of that aforementioned loss to Wisconsin, didn't have a first-round bye in the Big Ten Tournament and ended up losing to the Badgers again in Chicago.

But here's what makes Michigan special. For one, the talent on this roster is by far the best John Beilein has had in his six-year tenure up in Ann Arbor. There isn't really anything to add to the list of accomplishments for guard Trey Burke, who might probably end up being named National Player of the Year. But the Wolverines are getting big performances from big players.

Whether it's Burke or Tim Hardaway, Jr., or Glenn Robinson III or Nik Stauskas or Mitch McGary (who is on an absolute tear right now), this is a team with big-time players that are stepping up in crucial moments.

And looking at the résumés of the four Final Four teams this weekend, Michigan's is solid across the board. First, it had to knock out Nate Wolters and South Dakota State, then ended up thrashing VCU in a game many thought could be the best of the entire tournament.

Then came the Sweet 16, with Burke hitting that 3-pointer to force overtime with top-seeded Kansas before Michigan pulled away with the win. Finally, this past weekend, the Wolverines pulverized Florida much like they did VCU one week earlier.

Michigan might not end up winning its first national championship since 1989 next week, but the Big Ten has to feel good about this being the school representing it in the Final Four. It's a good story and one that will be told for many years in Ann Arbor should the victors indeed be valiant in Atlanta.