

4/8/2013: State of the Big Ten, Volume 94 (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

HawkeyeDrive.com

Although Rutgers University won't officially become a Big Ten member until July 2014, the events of this past week are hard to ignore, partially because of the fact that Rutgers is soon to join the conference.

Last week, videos surfaced into the public eye of the school's head men's basketball coach, Mike Rice, physically and verbally attacking his own players during team practices. His behavior had him suspended for three games by the school, but before these videos were released, that's as far as the punishment went.

Rice has since been fired and the school's athletics director, Tim Perneti, resigned from his position on April 5. There's a good chance more heads will roll at Rutgers over the next few weeks.

The focus here won't be on what happened. How anyone could see those videos and not think Rice deserved to lose his job is mind-boggling and there's no debate about how badly Perneti and the rest of the university completely botched this whole matter. The focus here is going to be on what happens going forward.

Again, this is a school that's soon to join the Big Ten. Now the guy largely responsible for that becoming a reality is no longer there and whoever is hired to take Perneti's place as Rutgers' athletics director has an enormous mess to clean up.

Yes, it might just be one program partaking in the acts of Rice and his staff. But what's not to say this won't have a negative effect on other programs in the Rutgers athletics department? This incident isn't just giving the Scarlet Knights' basketball team a black eye, but the entire university is receiving backlash. What's not to say other sports won't use this in recruiting against Rutgers?

Look at other schools with scandals recently and the effect is there on other sports. A perfect example of this would be right in the Big Ten actually with Penn State. Yes, the crimes committed there were far more despicable because children were involved, but the point is it wasn't just Penn State's football program suffering consequences. Chances are other Penn State teams have had troubles recruiting the last few years because, "Why would any parent want to send their child there?"

That same question could be applied here. Why would any parent want to send their kid to Rutgers right now? Even if other head coaches there like Kyle Flood (football) or C. Vivian Stringer (women's basketball) are known to be nothing like Rice towards their student-athletes, the image of Rutgers as a whole has been tainted.

This has become a situation that everyone in the Big Ten landscape ought to keep their eyes on between now and when Rutgers finally becomes a Big Ten member. Because its long-term future is going to play a heavy role in who gets hired as the new AD, who that new AD hires as the school's new men's basketball coach and what types of steps Rutgers can take from the errors of its ways that have been unearthed over the past week.