

9/2/2013: State of the Big Ten, Volume 96 (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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The following might seem petty, but the topic of depth charts is actually worth discussing this week because there has been quite a bit of gamesmanship recently from multiple Big Ten schools.

Sure, a weekly depth chart isn't the be-all, end-all for what fans should expect to see when they watch their favorite team that coming Saturday. After all, injuries could take place in practice during the week when things are happening behind closed doors.

But much like there were suggestions being made last year about conferences mandating injury reports, having a conference like the Big Ten mandate weekly depth charts be released by a specific time isn't too much to ask for.

Last week, Ohio State (who usually releases a depth chart on Mondays before its media gathers for Urban Meyer's weekly press conferences) held off a day on releasing its depth chart. Michigan State released its depth chart and listed four starters at quarterback, only for Mark Dantonio to start his press conference by saying point blank that Andrew Maxwell was starting the Spartans' opener against Western Michigan.

On Monday, Northwestern opted to have its depth chart released following team meetings in the afternoon instead of in the morning prior to Pat Fitzgerald meeting the media.

This isn't asking coaches to rid of their gamesmanship. It's understandable why maybe there are co-starters listed at given positions. There's also waiting to see results on MRIs with specific injuries that maybe aren't released right away.

This isn't to say schools shouldn't be allowed to dictate when their coaches hold weekly press conferences or shouldn't be allowed to dictate what names get listed where on a weekly depth chart. But is it really too much to ask that schools don't universally release them at a certain time on Monday before any coaches meet the press?

The bottom line is fans want to know something, no matter how much validity there actually ends up being to it. It'd also be beneficial to media knowing that there's a certain time on Mondays to expect this type of information to be released so that the rest of their day and week can be planned.

Routine is a good thing. Coaches have routines, players have routines, media who cover these schools have routines. It allows for all parties to be as productive as possible during the week. Not having a set time for something simple, even something as simple as what time a depth chart is supposed to be released, throws off routine.

If everyone knows that, for example, a team's depth chart will be released by 11 a.m. on Monday, then coaches can go on with the rest of their days, media know when they need to be on the lookout for emails and fans will know when they could expect to be on social media awaiting to hear this information be disseminated.

Again, this probably reads as petty. But this is only a story because schools like Ohio State and Northwestern have thrown curveballs that all those who pay attention to them.