

9/16/2013: State of the Big Ten, Volume 98 (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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This past weekend provided plenty of storylines from the Big Ten. Nine Iowa players and coaches had personal property stolen from the team's locker room at Iowa State's Jack Trice Stadium. Minnesota head coach Jerry Kill suffered his fourth seizure during a game as a result of him having epilepsy and on Monday received reaffirmed support from his athletics director.

There was even a controversial ending to Wisconsin's game at Arizona State that resulted in the Badgers losing 32-30 without being given the opportunity to win the game with a field goal. In the aftermath of that outcome, the Pac-12 reprimanded the officiating crew that worked the game.

All of those would've been worth the time talking about. But the situation at Nebraska has (in a way) trumped all here because it has a known long-term effect. The Cornhusker fan base has been slowly aligning against head coach Bo Pelini for awhile now and two events made things more complicated.

Following Nebraska's 41-21 loss to UCLA last weekend at Memorial Stadium – one where the Cornhuskers surrendered 38 unanswered points after being up 21-3 in the first half – former quarterback Tommie Frazier took to Twitter and voiced

his displeasure of the program's direction, particularly on the defensive side of the ball. Pelini dismissed the comments and said he doesn't need Frazier, a line that obviously was going to make headlines in Lincoln.

As if that wasn't enough though, Deadspin dropped a bombshell Monday afternoon when it was tipped off to audio it obtained of Pelini speaking in a negative light about the Nebraska fan base following a come-from-behind win over Ohio State in 2011. Pelini didn't realize a recorder was on him and cursed away.

It's only a matter of time before Pelini's tenure at Nebraska ends and this now might end it abruptly. In all honesty though, what Pelini did has probably been done off-camera/off-mic a bunch by coaches all around the country. And his short fuse back then wasn't a secret.

But here's why this is going to eventually do him in – what he said was directed at the same people who travel across the state to see his football team play in Lincoln on fall Saturdays. From a business perspective, this isn't good for Nebraska's public image.

Add in the fact that he already had detractors that have only gotten louder the past two years since that recording took place and this only adds fuel to their fire. No matter how "fair-weather" Cornhusker fans might actually be, they now have a reason to not speak with the money in their pockets.

The longer Pelini's around as Nebraska's head coach, the more overwhelming the pressure is going to be on Nebraska AD Shawn Eichorst (who by the way, took over for Tom Osborne last year, so he's not the one who hired Pelini in the first place) to relieve him of his coaching duties.

This isn't an indictment of Pelini as a coach because he was exactly what the Cornhuskers needed after the Bill Callahan saga and he is a good coach. He has won games. He just hasn't won enough of them to the liking of Nebraska fans and unlike

Frank Solich, the frustrations with Pelini are going beyond wins and losses here.

And as mentioned here when Eichorst first took over, he owes nothing to Pelini. He's under no obligation to keep him around if he doesn't want to. Before Monday, there was no justification for firing Pelini before Nebraska's season ended. This audio, on top of everything else, now gives Eichorst grounds for dismissing Pelini this week if he wants to and at this point, maybe that's really for the better of all involved, including Pelini.