

# 12/2/2013: State of the Big Ten, Volume 109 (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 is a week that should be spent focusing on a very fascinating match-up in the Big Ten Championship Game between No. 2 Ohio State and No. 10 Michigan State. The Buckeyes have one of the nation's best offenses, while the Spartans possess the nation's best defense.

It should be spent talking about how Ohio State has a chance to play in the BCS National Championship Game with a win Saturday night or how Michigan State might appear in its first Rose Bowl in 26 years. There's actually a chance both of these things can happen if the Buckeyes win Saturday (the Spartans for sure go to the Rose Bowl with a win, obviously).

But there were two events over the weekend that led to public reprimands from the Big Ten offices Monday and in this space, are probably worth addressing. The first occurred Friday during Iowa's 38-17 win at Nebraska, one that featured antics both during the game and postgame from Cornhuskers head coach Bo Pelini that didn't go unnoticed. The second was an altercation during the second quarter of the Ohio State-Michigan game, one the Buckeyes won 42-41. The fracas led to three players – one Wolverine, two Buckeyes – to be suspended, and in the case of Ohio State's Marcus Hall and Dontre Wilson, there was speculation of either or both being suspended for

Saturday's title bout in Indianapolis.

Let's start with Pelini. Quite honestly, it's surprising that his antics didn't get him fired over the weekend. In fact, Nebraska athletics director Shawn Eichorst issued a statement that basically read as a vote of confidence in Pelini. This came after drawing an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty after swinging his hat toward an official, followed by a profane criticism of officiating in his postgame press conference, which is obviously a no-no.

On Monday, Pelini was given a public reprimand and Nebraska was fined \$10,000 as a result of what Pelini said Friday. It's not surprising this was the final outcome. One had to figure there would be some sort of monetary fine that came from what was said. The relationship there in Nebraska remains dicey and while Pelini might still be the head coach today, one can't help but think it's only a matter of time before something goes down in Lincoln.

Now, the fight in Ann Arbor. There were punches thrown. Hall, one of the two Buckeye players ejected, raised both middle fingers while exiting through the Michigan Stadium tunnel. Watching it live, it was amazing there weren't more ejections from both teams.

Everyone loves the rivalry between the two iconic programs and the name-calling between Brady Hoke and Urban Meyer is all well and good. But what happened in Ann Arbor on Saturday crossed the line. The conference handed down reprimands here as well and no suspensions were handed out since the ejections took place during the second quarter.

This, is a bit surprising. Yes, by rule, additional suspensions aren't necessary. But things like taking swings at opposing players or flipping off the fans shouldn't be condoned. The whole point of not wanting additional punishment impacting the Big Ten's championship game is valid, but if

this happened in an NFL game, the fines and possible suspensions would be more severe.

Now let's revisit the whole thing about public reprimands. Yes, the Big Ten's in a tough bind with both instances and obviously needed to take some course of action. That there was an additional fine with Pelini leads to me to think the conference did everything it could do with that. But when players are involved, it's obviously more dicey. Which goes back to the question about where the line should be drawn going forward.

Because now if there's a future game where a similar skirmish takes place, the conference has to display consistency with its punishments.