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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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After pulling a stunning 60-51 upset of No. 9 Michigan State over the weekend, Nebraska has suddenly put itself in the discussion of being a possible bubble team for the NCAA Tournament.

Yes, the Cornhuskers. In just the second year of the Tim Miles era, Nebraska is sitting at 6-6 in the Big Ten with two-thirds of its league schedule complete and given the remaining schedule, there's a possibility now of the Cornhuskers playing their way in.

Nebraska plays four of its final six regular season games at Pinnacle Bank Arena. The following teams still to visit Lincoln are Penn State, Purdue, Northwestern and No. 16 Wisconsin. While the Nittany Lions and Boilermakers both have wins over the Cornhuskers already to their names, Nebraska is currently in a better position than both. It also has beaten Northwestern once already and the match-up with Wisconsin is the lone regular season game against the Badgers.

Meanwhile, the two road games are Illinois and Indiana, two teams the Cornhuskers have already beaten.

But there's more to it than the schedule. Let's consider what

Nebraska has already done besides doing the unthinkable inside the Breslin Center. It also has wins already over Minnesota (who it only played once) and Ohio State.

Two of their non-conference losses came on the road at Creighton (currently ranked 11th) and Cincinnati (currently ranked seventh). Three of the Big Ten losses have been to No. 20 Michigan twice (including the lone home game Nebraska has lost all season) and at No. 15 Iowa in a game where the Hawkeyes were held to their lowest point total to date this season.

The Cornhuskers also have a star in Terran Petteway, who redshirted last season after transferring to Nebraska over from Texas Tech. Petteway is currently the Big Ten's second-leading scorer behind Indiana's Yogi Ferrell and he has become a serious candidate to be first-team all-Big Ten after the regular season concludes on March 9.

Nebraska has a very real shot at finishing with a winning record in Big Ten play after being considered by most preseason to finish dead last in the conference. The job Miles has done with that team is nothing short of remarkable considering how little it had last year and how much in shambles the program was before he arrived from Colorado State.

Miles has turned "Nebrasketball" into a worthwhile product that attracts fans and TV viewers alike. Now throw in how it's winning road games at places like Michigan State and it's becoming clear that the Cornhuskers deserve to be taken seriously.

Whether or not Nebraska actually makes the NCAA Tournament remains to be seen because even with the easier sledding ahead, the Big Ten has proven to be a brutal conference this season. At the very least, the Cornhuskers are a team that has the capability of making a deep NIT run should they not be

among the Field of 68. But by being in a position where it has won five of its last six, Nebraska has a chance to potentially make it 11 of 12 heading into the Big Ten Tournament and should that occur, the Cornhuskers would absolutely merit being a NCAA Tournament team.

Keep an eye on what's happening there in Lincoln. Not just in terms of this season and whether or not Nebraska's able to play its way in, but also with the long-term in mind, knowing that as long as Miles is in charge, the Cornhuskers are going to warrant discussion.