

2/24/2014: State of the Big Ten, Volume 121 (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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Normally, getting personal and using first-person references is something that is usually avoided in this weekly column. But in light of what happened in Bloomington, Ind., last week and the direct impact it has had on HawkeyeDrive.com, this week's edition will be an exception.

As you know by now, No. 20 Iowa had its game at Indiana postponed last week due to a 50-pound piece of metal falling from the ceiling of Assembly Hall and damaging seats. The game is being made up Feb. 27 in that very building. Unfortunately, I won't be making the return trip to Bloomington to cover it.

I'm bringing this up for two reasons: First, I want to make clear that this isn't an issue with access. I was in Bloomington last week and checked into my hotel minutes before an announcement was made. In fact, after an announcement was made, I made the decision to stick around – since my room had already been paid for – and cover the press conference that happened there explaining what occurred. If I wanted to make the trip and cover the make-up game this week, I could without issue. But this is one time I'm electing to cover from home. It was a decision I was reluctant to make this week, but one that needed to be made.

(I guess now's also a good time to make clear to everyone here I will still be in Minneapolis covering Tuesday's game between Iowa and Minnesota for this site and plan to make all remaining trips going forward sans Thursday.)

The other reason I'm bringing this up here is because it leads to a bigger issue I believe when it comes to the conference. This game could've been made up last week and had it been (in Bloomington or Indianapolis), I would've been there covering it. Like the Hawkeyes, I was already there in the Hoosier State. Having to attempt going to Bloomington after going to Minneapolis here within the next 24 hours just didn't make logistical sense, especially since I was just in Bloomington.

Before Iowa's game against Wisconsin over the weekend, I was talking with one of my sources who had an interesting idea that I want to share here because I not only think he was onto something, but I really think the Big Ten needs to give this some thought during the off-season.

His idea was this: That every league game have a contingency plan in case a game gets postponed like the Iowa-Indiana game last week did so it can be made up right away.

Now this doesn't seem realistic for two reasons. One is the role of television in the decision-making process. The other is whether nearby venues can be used. Places near pro markets might have trouble because venues in places like Chicago, Indianapolis, Detroit, Milwaukee, etc., have current tenants that aren't going to re-schedule around a college basketball game.

But the fact that the Indiana Pacers offered both teams to make the game up the following day in Indianapolis and that it didn't happen remains mind-boggling. I understand why Indiana wanted to do what was necessary to have a game at Assembly Hall, but if safety was that much of an issue, then why try to play a game in a place where something hazardous just

occurred.

Thankfully, the incident happened before any fans were let inside. But what if it didn't? What if that piece of metal fell hours later before or during the game and injured or even killed the fans sitting in that area? Then there's absolutely no way Indiana would've been able to play another game there this season.

Again, the idea of being able to make up games almost immediately might not totally work on the surface, but it ought to at least be discussed. When Maryland and Rutgers both join the conference next season, scheduling is only going to become more complicated and more games are going to feature single-plays.

There are a lot of thoughts on this matter that I have, but I've said enough. The main thing here was to inform all of you who are subscribers to this site what my intentions are travel-wise for the rest of the season. I hope you understand where I'm coming from in the decision I had to make here about not going to Bloomington a second time.