

Penn State clouds Big Ten bowl picture

Written by Bob Brooks

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There is no doubt in my mind the Big Ten has been wounded by the Penn State and Ohio State messes. A case in point, the 10 teams from the Big Ten that have qualified for bowl games still don't have a solid idea about who goes where.

Behind the scenes, there is the Penn State story. In essence, the bowls do not want to be associated with the Nittany Lions and their problems. So at this hour, we're still awaiting whether or not Michigan can become a BCS-eligible team. And that depends on the outcome of games this weekend.

Around the conference, there is the thought that Big Ten Commissioner Jim Delany would like to find a way to get the Nittany Lions out of the bowl scene. But since this problem has never come up before, it will take a great deal of maneuvering for that to happen.

From the Iowa standpoint, it is still the Gator Bowl, the Meineke Car Care Bowl of Texas and the Insight Bowl that are in play. For a 7-and-5 team it would be unusual for the Hawks to move up to Jacksonville, Fla., for the Gator Bowl, but it sure could happen this time.

It will be one of those three bowls, and it's a chess game as to how this will play out. But from Iowa's standpoint, it is a plus.

If you want to talk about minuses, let's review the last 10 days of Iowa men's basketball. The Hawks have been walloped by the likes of Creighton, Clemson and a team called the Camels. The hole in the middle has been expanded to other problems, those being the lack of rebounding, interior defense and a multitude of other problems that have put second-year coach Fran McCaffery in a quandary.

There is one more chance to get the ship righted against an easier opponent, that being Brown from the Ivy League on Saturday at 2 o'clock in the Hawkeye Arena. After that, Iowa plays road games at UNI on Tuesday and at Iowa State next Friday.

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After that, we'll have a better assessment as to whether this team for 2012 will be close to competitive in the Big Ten. It's not a quick fix, but it's got to be a quick change. It simply gets down to this: Iowa has better players than it has shown in games to date.

As the question evolves, can they make that change almost overnight? One of Iowa's best players, especially on the offense, has been Cedar Rapids Washington grad Josh Oglesby. Josh is not intimidated by a missed shot, it only means he'll shoot more. And that's an attitude that the Hawks in general have got to attain.

That's all on basketball. Best wishes and good luck go out to the UNI football team as the Panthers take on Wofford in the FCS tournament on Saturday.

I like the quote by Coach Farley this week that compared the Division I subdivisions, with 35 bowl games in FBS meaning that 35 teams go home with a win and a trophy, compared to the FCS where there is only one winner.

But it's a true champion and I hope UNI gets a shot at that title.

(Bob Brooks is sports director at KMRY and has been one of the leading voices of college and prep sports in Eastern Iowa for more than 65 years. He is a 10-time winner of the Iowa Sportscaster of the Year Award, and was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame in South Bend, Indiana in 2004. His sports reports can be heard weekday afternoons at 4:30 and 5:30, and Saturdays at 6:40 for the Hawkeye football wrap-up.)