

## Bo Ryan is unfair to Uthoff

Written by Mark Dukes

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Wisconsin evidently wants it both ways.

When Cedar Rapids Jefferson's Jarrod Uthoff requested his release last week from the Badger basketball program, Coach Bo Ryan placed restrictions on him. Uthoff could not transfer to another Big Ten school, Iowa State or Marquette without paying a price. Ryan added the entire Atlantic Coast Conference to that list on Monday.

Yet when Ben Brust wanted to get out of his commitment to Iowa two years ago after Hawkeye Coach Todd Lickliter was fired, Brust was allowed to transfer to Wisconsin without having to sit out a season. Brust won an appeal to the Big Ten Conference after Lickliter was released and Fran McCaffery was hired. Reports were that Ryan was one of the coaches that stirred the appeal process.

Brust played in 15 games in 2010-11, then was Wisconsin's top reserve last season. Brust averaged 7.3 points per game and twice tied the school record with seven 3-pointers in a game. Wisconsin went 26-10 and reached the Sweet 16 of the NCAA Tournament.

The Big Ten has a rule that prevents scholarship athletes from transferring within the conference. Athletes can still transfer within the league but have to pay their own way to the new school. You'll remember that was the case with Luke Recker, who landed at Iowa after starting at Indiana and transferring to Arizona, where he attended school one semester.

This brings up the age-old question of whether a high school recruit signs a letter of intent with a school or a coach. By ruling in favor of Brust, the Big Ten essentially said he had signed with a coach (Lickliter) when in actuality athletes sign with schools.

Bo Ryan is worried about Uthoff burning him down the road, but Ryan could take another job tomorrow and leave an entire team in the lurch. Does that make sense?

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Maybe Wisconsin is smarter than the rest of the Big Ten schools. Badger football coach Bret Bielema has found a way to get some pretty good quarterbacks the last couple years. He has done it by the way of a rule that says a graduate student with eligibility remaining can transfer to another school without sitting out a season.

The Badgers landed Russell Wilson from North Carolina State last year. Wilson had a phenomenal season, passing for 3,175 yards and 33 touchdowns and was intercepted only four times. The Badgers won the Big Ten championship game and lost to Oregon in the Rose Bowl.

In the offseason, Bielema was at it again. Danny O'Brien transferred from Maryland to Wisconsin this spring and will have two years of eligibility remaining because he graduated from Maryland in three years. O'Brien was the 2010 Atlantic Coast Conference football rookie of the year.

The Big Ten's in-conference transfer rule makes some sense but not when the league already has established precedence in allowing Brust's transfer to Wisconsin. Just because Bo Ryan isn't going anywhere, does that mean Uthoff can't choose a new school freely without Ryan's arbitrary restrictions?

Maybe Uthoff has no desire to play at another Big Ten school. Problem is, he has little choice.

*(Mark Dukes is former sports editor of the Cedar Rapids Gazette. He is co-host of The Gym Class radio show weekdays from 3-4 p.m. on KGYM-AM 1600 and FM-106.3.)*