



BY JOSH HARVEY

# BO PELINI: *"It's ridiculous"*

## IF BO PELINI WAS IN CHARGE OF THE NCAA, WHAT CHANGES WOULD HE MAKE TO THE RECRUITING PROCESS?

LEON HALIP-GETTY IMAGES

In late July, the University of Washington made national headlines when the Huskies were able to land a potential five-star quarterback who's been labeled by some scouts as a can't-miss prospect.

The San Diego product's name is Tate Martell – and he's 14. The eighth-grader can't sign with Washington until the year 2017. He's probably not even shaving yet, but Martell is just a part of a long list of examples of how football recruiting has changed over the last decade.

With an increase in social media and "TMZ"-like media coverage of recruits, more and more high school prospects are speeding up their recruitment and committing to schools early. While Martell might be an extreme case, there are a number of high school juniors and even some sophomores right now currently committed to BCS programs.

Ask Nebraska head coach Bo Pelini, and he will tell you it's a problem.

"It's ridiculous, it's not good for the kids," said Pelini. "It's not good for them academically, it's not good for them financially...I could sit here and give you 50 reasons why it's not good; it's going towards basketball, which is a mess!"

In June of 2010, the NCAA passed a rule stating that colleges were not allowed to send official football scholarship paperwork to a prospect until August 1<sup>st</sup> of their senior year. The rule was

supposed to help slow the recruiting process and to avoid more and more underclassmen committing early to programs.

It didn't work.

Now, Nebraska must change its recruiting tactics.

"We don't know the answer. We want to slow this thing down. We don't want to offer a ton of sophomores right now, but guys are starting to trim their list down. So we kind of have to," said Nebraska recruiting coordinator Ross Els. "When you watch a great guy as a sophomore you think, 'I would love to watch him as a junior,' but now we have to get in on him, because he's going to narrow his list down and we won't even get a shot or a visit."

So why is the rule not helping the problem?

Els says it's because most programs offer a player through their high school head coach – similar to what Nebraska does. While the offer can't be official, a head coach tells his player an offer will be coming down the road from the program.

The rule also doesn't stop a college coach from verbally offering a player prior to August 1 of their senior year, but technically a verbal is just that. It's been reported before that a player thinks he has a certain offer from a program, but it never actually arrives in the mail.

"We would love to slow it down, but no one has come up with a good way to do it yet, so until then, we are going to

speed up ours," said Els.

Fox Sports NEXT shows Nebraska has extended 40 known offers to class of 2014 prospects as of August 10, with many more likely not reported.

Because of the Huskers' location, Nebraska is at a major disadvantage vs. programs such as USC, Texas, Ohio State and Florida. Because of a lack of quality Division I players in the state of Nebraska, the Huskers are forced to look out-of-state for recruits.

Here is the problem.

Official visits, which are visits paid by a school, cannot happen until September 1 of a prospect's senior year. While schools like USC can get the L.A. prospects to hop on a bus or Ohio State can ask a kid from Youngstown to make a short drive on his own dime, to get a player to Nebraska from the five major recruiting states can be expensive. It's why official visits were created, but if players are committing before schools can dish out the money so the player can see a game-day atmosphere, it doesn't really do any good.

"You're going to get five (officials) either way, so why not let them take them when they want to take them?" said Nebraska head coach Bo Pelini.

"To me they should be trying to slow it down, and if you are going to try to get kids to do it earlier, let's let them take visits when they are sophomores or when they are juniors. So we can pay for them and get their parents out there."

Until the rule is modified, if at all, Nebraska will continue to recruit kids who are committed to other programs, but are looking, in hopes they will take an official visit despite their commitment.

"If he wants to visit he ain't committed anywhere, whether it's us or somebody else," said Pelini. "Now you see different

types of commitments - a solid commitment, a soft verbal, what does that even mean? It's ridiculous, you are either committed or you are not. It's like you get engaged but are still looking around; it doesn't work that way."

The Nebraska head coach also would like to see the NCAA loosen up its policy regarding how much can be paid for by a school on an official visit.

Currently, rule section *B13.6.2.2.1* reads like this: "Friends or relatives may not receive cost-free transportation unless they accompany the prospect at the time the prospect travels in an automobile to make an official visit."

Pelini's thoughts, "You see a kid going around on campus without his parents, be it our place or some other place, and he gets caught up in the emotion of it and he says, 'I'm committing,' He gets home and his parents say, 'The heck you are.'

"Who would let their kid go see where they are going to spend the next four years of their life and not be a part of that? It's crazy. But a lot of them can't, because they can't afford it. So if the NCAA would let you, at the very least, fly one parent with the kid, you would have less of the situations that we see."

So, under NCAA rules, can anything help Nebraska have an easier time on the recruiting trail? A talent increase in the state would help.

"If you could just get five kids versus two, it would be huge. I think there are some kids that are coming down the road, but it hasn't been real solid lately," said Pelini. "It seems like maybe the way Omaha has gone a little bit hurt us. When you don't have a big population base to start with you are going to go through some years like that. At the same time, though, we have brought in some walk-ons that have been big contributors." ■

hey husker fans

preserve and enjoy those husker memories  
with framing from hangups gallery!

hangups! gallery

Best LINCOLN

71st & pioneers    www.hangupsgallery.com    402-486-4066

The advertisement features a red background with white and yellow text. At the top, it says "hey husker fans" in a large, white, sans-serif font. Below that, in a smaller white font, is "preserve and enjoy those husker memories with framing from hangups gallery!". On the right side, there is a logo for "hangups! gallery" with a stylized red and white graphic and a circular "Best LINCOLN" seal. At the bottom, there are four framed items: a Nebraska pennant, a Nebraska license plate (DARRA 2410), a Nebraska jersey with the number 5, and a Nebraska jersey with the number 20. At the bottom of the ad, the address "71st & pioneers", the website "www.hangupsgallery.com", and the phone number "402-486-4066" are listed in white text.