Color Erik Cassano a daylong sucker, but while most Browns fans think Randy Lerner would rather be watching soccer, I think he still cares a great deal about the Browns. He thinks this season in particular has gnawed at his stomach like no other. I think the staredown of his team as they left the field at halftime of last Sunday's loss to the Bears was the product of real anger, not something contrived for the cameras. The problem is, emotional attachment alone doesn't make you a good owner. And Randy has just one bullet left in his chamber.

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The problem is, emotional attachment alone doesn't make you a good owner. If it did, we could all own a professional sports team and do quite well at it. The compounding problem is, Lerner doesn't seem to realize that. It's that fact that is killing the Cleveland Browns.

Lerner is stuck between two lines of thinking. On one hand, he's a fan. He's the son of the deceased patriarch of the expansion franchise. He has ties to the Browns going back decades. He has a lot tugging on his heartstrings when it comes to this franchise.

On the other hand, it really seems like he doesn't want to be bothered with the grunt work of organization building. He keeps looking for the one leader who can s inglehandedly
take the Browns, turn them around and make it all better. In his desperate search for that football mind, he's been swayed by the likes of Phil Savage and Eric Mangini
, neither of whom deserved the level of authority they were given.

At this point, it's probably folly to think Lerner is going to reform, that he's going to suddenly develop organizational leadership skills that he hasn't exhibited before. With that in mind, it would appear that Lerner is doomed as an NFL owner, as his Browns continue to sink to horrifying depths that would make an outside observer believe that, sooner or later, something has to give.

But there is one pinhole of light remaining for Lerner. One last stand he can take before casting his ownership regime to the recycle bin of NFL history -- or before someone such as NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell forces him to do it.

And the best news for Lerner is, it involves someone else making the football decisions.

From my seat, I can look past all the ineptitude, bad decisions and muddying of the Browns name that has occurred on Randy Lerner's watch if he will make his last effort to put a winner on the field his best one.

Lerner needs to use his inherited deep pockets to hire an experienced football organization builder. Keep working on Ernie Accorsi if he's not yet entirely open to coming out of retirement for a few years. If you're going to tap the Patriots for anything, tap them for Floyd
Resse
, who reportedly was waiting to hear from the Browns last winter.

There is a method to making this happen, and in principle, it's not all that difficult. You find a football organization leader and roster builder with a track record of being really good at what he does, and you hire him to do that job. You don't hire big names or word-on-the-street up-and-comers, and give them more control and responsibility than they've ever had in their careers. That's not foundation-building. That's dice-rolling.

Once the Accorsi or Reese figure is in place, you give him the authority to hire a former coordinator as head coach, or an uber-scout to groom as his successor, because he'll likely have had success making those kinds of judgments about football people.

Even if the foundation-builder Lerner hires is up there in years and only intends to hold the job long enough to get the wheels of progress turning and groom a successor, it's still miles better than what Lerner has right now. It's still miles better than anything the Browns have had since returning to the league 10 years ago.

Experience and competence at the organization's highest rungs tends to directly correlate with success on the field. The last time the Browns had an experienced football man running the show from 30,000 feet was the last time they fielded a contender. Accorsi was the chief architect of the Bernie Kosar-led Browns of 1985-92.

Now, Lerner has a chance to perhaps reunite Accorsi and Kosar as mentor and protege, if he can do enough convincing and wave enough greenbacks around. Kosar might make a fine NFL executive. He certainly has the brains, coupled with a deep desire to return to football. But if Lerner were to hire him as team president or GM outright, it likely would fall under the same general heading of placing authority in the hands of someone who is not adequately trained to handle it.

The final piece of the puzzle is acceptance on the part of Lerner. If the experienced football operations director he hires wants to dismiss Mangini, or if Mangini himself doesn't want to submit to an extra layer of authority, then Mangini is gone with no questions from ownership. If the incoming leader thinks the system is bad and the roster stinks, and he needs to blow it all up and start from scratch, so be it.

If things need to get worse before they get better, it's still an improvement over things getting worse, then declining even further.

For Lerner, the stakes are even higher than wins and losses and ticket sales. The condition in which Lerner leaves the Browns will determine how the Lerner name is remembered in the high-profile pantheon of NFL owners. For all the self-made

success Al Lerner created, for all of the Lerner family's philanthropic endeavors, if Randy Lerner leaves the Browns as a mess, that's what the public will associate the Lerner name with from here on out.

Randy knows that. That's a big reason why he has been hesitant to cut his losses, sell the team and move on. But it's becoming clear that the Browns cannot continue in their current state of tumult without increasingly severe levels of fallout reaching Lerner. Sooner rather than later, he'll be forced to the crossroads of either improving the organization or letting go.

Lerner almost certainly has only one bullet left in the chamber. He can probably make one more significant regime change before he is forced to sell the team.

He needs to make this one count. He needs to make the hire he should have made in the first place.