In a somewhat surprising move, Indianapolis Colts owner Jim Irsay canned VP Bill Polian and son/GM Chris on Monday, causing a blizzard of speculation.

Polian is the man that drafted Peyton Manning in 1998, launching a decade-plus of success in Indy. But apparently Manning was the only thing keeping the boat afloat, evidenced by the Colts 2-14 record this year sans Peyton.

Polian has speculated all season about the choices they would have to make with the #1 overall pick, and hinted repeatedly at drafting Andrew Luck. But his release and the reports that Irsay is "very loyal" to Peyton make NFL insiders (and fat dudes on couches) wonder if perhaps this move wasn't made to prevent the Polians from selecting Luck and effectively ending Manning's career as a Colt.

Other speculation has it that Irsay didn't trust a pick this important to Chris Polian, who took over the day-to-day player decisions this season.

Manning is owed a $28 million dollar bonus the 5th day of the league year (early March), and the Colts are not allowed to trade him until that point. If Manning refuses to move the bonus date, the Colts will have to decide at that point whether or not to pay the bonus or release him outright. Theoretically, they could pay the bonus THEN trade him, but they'd still eat that $28 mil against their cap, which would be as constrictive on their cap as a rhino on a Smart Car.

All of this hinges on the health of Peyton Manning's arm/neck.

If Manning isn't healthy enough to play, then it's a foregone conclusion that the Colts take Luck #1 and that's probably the last we'll see of Peyton. But if he is healthy, then the Colts can:

1. Keep Peyton, trade the #1 overall pick (or Luck himself) for a boatload of picks to help rebuild their team and take a last swing at another Super Bowl.

2. Draft Luck, keep Peyton, let Luck sit for a year or two under Manning.

3. Cut Peyton before the bonus, draft Luck.

4. Pay Peyton the bonus, draft Luck, trade Manning.

#1 is the option that will interest NFL fans the most, since, at this point, Andrew Luck will certainly command more trade value than Peyton Manning and his uncertain long-term (and short-term) health. The bidding war for that pick could be unprecedented.

And the Browns, with the #4 overall and another mid-round 1st this year, are one of the teams that have enough ammunition to get it done. Debate amongst yourselves whether they should.