

Trading Peterson isn't far-fetched notion

• The Vikings made a huge commitment to the star runner, but is his expiration date near?

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Warning: What you're about to read could cause incessant laughter and eye-rolling so severe you might be mistaken at Thanksgiving for Michele Bachmann. Before proceeding, please grab a chair.

OK. Here goes.

The Vikings need to trade Adrian Peterson. Soon. While he still has premium value.

To be clear, this is not my suggestion. I, too, have experienced laughter pains and headaches of disbelief just hearing those words.

So why does that recommendation keep surfacing from a horde of disgruntled but oh-so-serious Vikings fans?

The proponents of the "Pitch Peterson" campaign insist they're not shouting without thinking.

Some express sympathy for Peterson.

Why let one of the game's all-time greats waste precious years of his prime lending his efforts to a team with so many fatal flaws it will never win big? Others believe the Vikings need to adopt daring business savvy in order to build a champion. Trade Peterson to a team on the brink, they say, and receive a treasure chest of talent and potential in return.

Somehow, the discussion isn't totally baseless.

Even NFL Network analyst Charles Davis delivered a bewildered laugh when first presented with the idea of abandoning A.P.

But then he took a deep breath and saw a few ounces of logic.

"With a running back like that you think every carry could be his last," Davis said. "It's that simple. The odometer starts on those guys

quickly. And Adrian is an old-style banger. To get maximum value out of him, he has to carry it 20 times. That's not really the NFL now, is it?"

Just to nip this in the bud, Peterson is not going anywhere. The asking price would be far too extreme. And in a pass-happy league, teams are addressing other parts of their wish lists.

Breaking the bank to nab Peterson? "That means I'm retooling my entire offense in all likelihood," Davis said. "That means I need different-style blockers up front. Which means I need a different-style quarterback, a game manager who will have to throw it on third downs when it's tough. See where I'm going?"

Let's also not forget the Vikings gave Peterson the combination to their bank vault in September, committing to their headliner with a steadfast belief he will one day shower in Super Bowl confetti.

But how many roster moves must be made around Peterson to transform such grand dreams into a

real-life "Going to Disney World" commercial?

And what exactly is Peterson's expiration date?

The latter is both difficult to answer and uncomfortable to consider. No Vikings running back has ever been as entertaining or prolific. So shouldn't we all just appreciate Peterson's greatness without trying to schedule his retirement news conference?

Still, reality has delivered an imposing challenge to owner Zygi Wilf, coach Leslie Frazier and even rookie quarterback Christian Ponder. They're all spoiled to have one of the all-time greats working beside them.

How tragic it would be if they couldn't capitalize in a big way before Peterson's time ran out.

Peterson is now 26 and in his fifth NFL season. Yet given the Vikings' exaggerated struggles, the big fear is his gas light will be illuminated by the time the rest of this mess is cleaned up.

Sure, maybe Peterson has six stellar, injury-free seasons left. Realistic? Heck, Walter Payton rushed for 1,551 yards and won a Super Bowl in his 11th season in Chicago.

But isn't it also possible Peterson might only have two great years left and a couple of decent seasons beyond that before the decline begins?

Barry Sanders stepped away from football at age 30.

Emmitt Smith, the NFL's all-time leading rusher, hung around until he was 35. Yet the final four of his 15 seasons were pedestrian at best.

LaDainian Tomlinson? His last 1,000-yard rushing season came when he was 29, a birthday Peterson will celebrate a few months after the 2013 season ends.

That sound you hear is a ticking clock.

Feel all that laughter turning into paralyzing anxiety? Now you know how the others feel.