



The world loves its yearly dose of Nick Gilbert.

It's become an annual ritual, at the conclusion of every abysmal post-LeBron Cavs season – three in all. Cavs owner Dan Gilbert rounds up a contingent of famous Clevelanders and heads to New York. At the center of the contingent is Gilbert's son, Nick.

A 16-year-old who suffers from a disease called neurofibromatosis, Nick Gilbert has used his series of 30-minute turns in the spotlight to raise awareness about his disease. Which was kind of the original reason for Dan Gilbert to put his son in the Cavs' chair for the 2011 lottery. Nick gets to ham it up like all teenagers love to do, a worthy cause gets some much-needed publicity, and maybe the Cavs sell a few extra t-shirts.

But, things happen. And things happened for Nick Gilbert. He posed a philosophical question to the world on the subject of likability. Then the lotto balls turned a midseason trade with the Clippers into the No. 1 pick that would become Kyrie Irving. And Dan Gilbert, with his marketing radar ever-rotating, apparently made a silent declaration that his son would become the Cavs' Mr. Lottery from that day forward.

Last year and this year, everyone in the Cavs contingent wore thick-rimmed glasses and bowties to match Nick's trademark lottery look. To be fair, results are results. Last year, the

Cavs were a coin flip (ironically, a flip they won) away from winning the lottery. They ended up picking fourth, where they took Dion Waiters.

Tuesday, Nick Gilbert got to celebrate in front of the cameras again. For the second time in three years, he was on the stage for a Cavs draft lottery victory.

Hey, it's fun. It's worthwhile. And maybe, as his father has repeatedly said, Nick is a walking good-luck charm.

But it's also getting old. Father and son Gilbert both said as much on Tuesday.

Nick Gilbert was 14 at the 2011 lottery. He's 16 now. It's going to be a lot less fun if college-age Nick is still popping up to represent the Cavs at the lottery, still sporting the bowtie and glasses. Once Nick is fully an adult – it's just going to be creepy.

The solution for that, as anyone with ties to the Cavs organization mentioned this week, is to make sure the Cavs are not back in the lottery for a long time.

The burning question is, how can they do it?

The news of the Cavs lottery victory was met with a very Cleveland response among the fans and media, as countless armchair pundits started concocting scenarios in which the Cavs could get rid of the first overall pick, hours after winning it.

It's because the 2013 draft is, according to widespread opinion, going topless. There are no apparent franchise-changers in the draft this year. The top prospects all come branded with large question marks.

Kentucky center Nerlens Noel, at the top of a lot of draft boards, is recovering from ACL surgery, and likely won't be ready to play until December. Even with two healthy knees, he's going to need some substantial muscle gain and some kind of offensive game to succeed in the NBA.

The top wingmen prospects – Kansas' Ben McLemore, Georgetown's Otto Porter and Indiana's Victor Oladipo -- all have size and skill issues that are worth red-flagging. Anthony Bennett of UNLV has an NBA body at 6'-7" and 240 pounds, but he's a textbook 'tweener who might be too slow to play small forward and too short to play power forward.

In short, all of the top prospects in this year's draft are either projects, or have some kind of physical limitation that is worth noting. That alone shouldn't chase the Cavs away from using the pick. But GM Chris Grant also has to consider his team's situation.

The Cavs have lost 166 games in three years since LeBron left. They've finished with the league's second-worst record once and third-worst record twice. That's a lot of losing for ping pong balls. In the process, through a series of trades and careful financial management, Grant has amassed an extensive collection of draft picks and cap space.

With Irving blossoming into a star, and Waiters, Tristan Thompson and Tyler Zeller rounding out a solid – at times impressive – core of youngsters, it would appear that the time is now for Grant to make some impact moves to put the Cavs back on the NBA map.

Rookies generally don't make the kind of impact the Cavs will need next year. But if the Cavs were to trade the No. 1 pick, they can't force-feed a trade in the name of getting their hands on whatever veteran players they can find.

It's still the first overall pick. It still has to pay big dividends, no matter how Grant uses it. Therein lies the inherent problem with the Cavs' current situation.

Knowing that his team needs to make a big splash for win-now talent this offseason, Grant will almost certainly hunt big game. He'll call Minnesota about Kevin Love. He'll call Sacramento

about DeMarcus Cousins. But both of those franchises are undergoing regime changes, and neither figures to peddle major assets in the near future. The Timberwolves even sent Love to represent the team at the lottery, perhaps an olive branch from new GM Flip Saunders to his star player, who had developed a strained relationship with the club's former leadership.

Grant will make phone calls. The odds of those calls yielding the type of blockbuster trade he's looking for? Virtually nil.

Grant could fall back and take a more conservative approach, perhaps pawning off the first pick for supporting-cast players and/or future picks. Assets are assets. But if this draft is as weak at the top as all the scribes and talking heads think it is, what incentive does a team have to pay the price to move up? If the distance from Porter to Oladipo is barely noticeable, the teams sitting between Nos. 6 and 10 aren't much worse off than the lotto's big winners in the top three.

The next month could consist of Grant exhaustively exploring every avenue that doesn't involve phoning in the first overall pick to David Stern on draft night, only to stare down an endless series of dead ends.

Ultimately, Grant might have to use the pick and simply take who his scouts and metrics say is the best player on the board, which is likely Noel. Certainly, you could do worse than take Noel at 1. He could be in for a rather steep learning curve in the pros, but he's a tremendous defender who averaged nearly a double-double for Kentucky this past season, and blocked shots at an unreal clip -- almost four and a half per game. A Year Three or Year Four Nerlens Noel, with 30 pounds of added muscle and some clue of what to do at the offensive end, could be a force in the league.

But as far as making the playoffs in 2014, Noel probably isn't going to help much, if at all.

The good news is, the fate of the No. 1 pick isn't necessarily tied to the moves the Cavs need to make in order to bolster the roster for a playoff run next season. Grant could take Noel, Porter or anyone else at the top of the draft, and make short-term moves later in the summer -- or even later on draft night.

Once the first pick is accounted for, the Cavs will still have Nos. 19, 31 and 33 to utilize in subsequent trades. They also have three potential first-rounders in 2015 (their own, Memphis' and Miami's), and a Sacramento first-rounder that is still floating around out there, provided it gets used before 2017.

Using the first overall pick on a longer-term project player isn't necessarily a bad thing, given the additional bartering pieces Grant has at his disposal. And using the first pick on a high-upside player is always better than trading it for pennies on the dollar in the form of players with less upside.

That's as long as Grant somehow, some way, spends the remainder of the summer making the moves to ensure that Nick Gilbert, and the rest of his dad's band of merry lottery men, can retire the bowties and glasses for good.