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Colts' Peyton Manning Underwent Surgery Today to Fuse Neck Bones, NFL Says

By Eben Novy-Williams - Sep 8, 2011

Indianapolis Colts quarterback [Peyton Manning](#) underwent additional surgery this morning to stabilize bones in his neck and is out indefinitely, team owner Jim Irsay said in an e-mailed statement.

Manning, 35, had vertebrae fused in his neck and will remain on the team's active roster until his prognosis becomes more clear, Irsay said. The National Football League team yesterday ruled the 11-time Pro Bowl quarterback out for the team's season-opening game against the Houston Texans, ending his streak of 227 consecutive starts, the second longest for a quarterback in league history.

Manning's absence means [Kerry Collins](#), who came out of retirement to sign with the Colts on Aug. 24, will be their starter at quarterback. The team is a 9-point underdog to the Texans, according to Las Vegas oddsmakers, who had the teams even in the opening line.

Manning hasn't missed a start since his freshman year at the [University of Tennessee](#) in 1994. His 227 consecutive starts since joining the Colts in 1998 are the most among active players and the second-longest for a quarterback in NFL history behind [Brett Favre](#)'s 321. The last Colts player to start at quarterback other than Manning was [Jim Harbaugh](#), who is now coach of the [San Francisco 49ers](#).

"To say I am disappointed in not being able to play is an understatement," Manning said in a statement yesterday. "It will be tough not to be out there playing for the organization and our fans. I simply am not healthy enough to play, and I am doing everything I can to get my health back."

Fusing Procedure

During cervical fusion surgery, doctors relieve pressure on the nerve roots and spinal cord by fusing two vertebral disks together, according to the [Texas Back Institute](#). The process can take as long as four hours and is often combined with a procedure to enlarge the spinal canal, which holds the spinal cord.

There is no timetable for Manning's return, Irsay said in the release. Two former Colts had the same procedure last winter and both have resumed playing, according to the release, which didn't identify either player.

A four-time NFL Most Valuable Player, Manning has missed only one snap because of injury during his NFL career, in 2001 when he broke his jaw. His streak of 208 straight regular-season starts is the longest to begin a career, topping the previous NFL mark of 207 by offensive lineman Gene Upshaw for the [Oakland Raiders](#) from 1967 to 1981.

"It's going to be a little different playing without Peyton," Colts coach Jim Caldwell told reporters yesterday. "He's obviously one of a kind."

Previous Surgery

Manning had surgery in May to repair a bulging disc in his neck, two months before he signed a five-year, \$90 million contract. He was cleared to practice on a limited basis on Aug. 29 before experiencing pain.

Manning's 54,828 yards passing, 399 passing touchdowns and 4,682 completions are all first among active players.

The 38-year-old Collins is second to Manning among active players with 40,441 passing yards. He'll become the sixth quarterback to take a snap for the Colts during Manning's NFL career, joining [Steve Walsh](#), Mark Rypien, Brock Huard, Jim Sorgi and Curtis Painter, who will be the backup this week.

"I expect to run the offense, bottom line," Collins, who faced the Texans' defense as quarterback for the American Football Conference South-rival [Tennessee](#) Titans from 2006 to 2010, said yesterday. "That's to make the plays when they are there, be smart with the ball, make good reads, good decisions, get us in the right plays when the situation calls for it."

Eli Manning's Streak

Manning's younger brother, Eli Manning of the [New York Giants](#), now has the longest active streak for quarterbacks at 110 straight starts, including the playoffs. Eli Manning said yesterday that he hasn't spoken to his brother in the past few weeks, though they've exchanged [text messages](#).

"If you can go through 13 years without missing a game, that's impressive no matter what position or what sport," [Eli Manning](#) told reporters yesterday. "I know he wants to be out there and he's going to give it his all to get back out there."

After playing in Houston, the Colts, who have made the playoffs 11 times in the past 12 years, host the [Cleveland Browns](#) on Sept. 18 and the Pittsburgh Steelers on Sept. 25.

“The team will do fine without me,” Peyton Manning said in his statement yesterday. “I know for sure that I will miss them much more than they will miss me.”

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