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Willing to help others...

Perry Bender, and Frank Fioello, (l-r front) the captains of the Chicago Pacemakers wheelchair basketball team, (standing in rear, middle two) are John O. Cooper and Gene Blackamore of the Prince Hall Shriners of Chicago and two referees during a recent game won by the Pacemakers 48-35 over the Rockford Chariots. The Pacemakers were sponsored by the Arabic Temple number 44. The proceeds from this affair will be used to

host a dinner for under privileged children during the Xmas holidays at the Washington Park Field House, Saturday Dec. 22, from 2-5 p.m. In right photo, pictured is William Gilmore III, holding an award for his heroic deeds in saving the lives of four children in a fire on the southeast side of Chicago last May. Boy Scout Gilmore is from Troop 1540. Gilmore received an award from the Prince Hall Shriners of Chicago.

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Like an old master, Willie Lanier will stroke the finishing touches Saturday to his pro football career as a member of the Kansas City Chiefs.

The 29-year-old Lanier, considered by many to be the finest middle linebacker in the National Football League, is quitting while he's on top. At least, he's quitting the Chiefs. As far as playing for another team, Willie says that is a "hypothetical situation" and will deal with it if the need arises.

Lanier is retiring as a professional football player to become general manager of a tobacco plant in Washington, D.C., for the Phillip Morris Company.

Lanier's sincerity about retirement is unquestioned. He's already sold his home in Leawood, Kan., and will leave immediately after Saturday's finale against Minnesota for Washington, where he will look for a house next week.

Lanier announced in May this would be his last season and he hasn't wavered from the position.

It seems likely Chiefs coach Hank Stram will attempt to make a trade, either with the Washington Redskins or Baltimore Colts, in order to get something in return for the possibility of



Willie Lanier

Lanier renegotiating his contract with one of those teams.

Lanier currently has one more year on a three-year contract and says he definitely will play under those terms.

"I wouldn't say I was dissatisfied here or I don't believe I would have played as well as I have this year," Lanier said. "But there have been situations in the past that I haven't cared for."

What it boils down to is that Lanier has a better offer in private business, especially considering the potential longevity that professional football players don't enjoy.

As Lanier said of professional football!

"I've seen guys hurt on Sunday, undergo an operation on Monday and Tuesday their lockers are cleared out like they've never even existed. It's a cold-hearted business."

Lanier, a second-round draft choice in 1967 from Morgan State, has worked himself into a unique situation.

"I've been in the process of hoping to be in a position to make such a decision for a long time," said Lanier. "I wanted to do it this way rather than be forced out by injury or poor play. It just so happens that the proper situation came along at a time when I happened to be playing as good as ever."

Lanier was a head-hunter of the first order when he first arrived in the pro game. Not only was he a human dynamo on the field, but he speared ball-carriers with his head as well. As a result, he suffered a head injury in his rookie season, 1967.

But he altered his tackling style and has missed only one game in the past seven years, that time with a slight knee injury.