

From The Long Beach Press Telegram:

Willie McGinest is on the line, and I tell the 36-year-old linebacker from Poly High and USC who played on three Super Bowl-winning New England Patriot teams that it's not a coincidence that his former club hasn't won a Super Bowl since his departure.

"Yeah, people say that to me all the time," says McGinest, who signed a three year, \$12 million deal - \$6 million up front - in 2006 with the Cleveland Browns, with whom he plans to play his final season this fall. "I really didn't want to leave the Patriots. But they never made me an offer, and I got a good one from Cleveland. I understand football is a business, and I wound up making a business decision myself. I didn't wait around to get an offer from the Patriots."

While McGinest has secured his legacy on the gridiron with his achievements - he holds the NFL postseason record for sacks with 16 and played in two Pro Bowls - he also has gained a quite a reputation for his charitable work across the years that was acknowledged by the Long Beach City Council in 2005 when it decreed every May 3rd as Willie McGinest Day in the city.

Well, McGinest Sunday between noon and 4 will be at Legends in Belmont Shore presiding over a silent auction charity event in which a lot of famous other football players will be present to help raise money.

The legendary Hall of Fame runner Jim Brown will be on hand, as will the Kansas City Chiefs' All-Pro tight end Tony Gonzalez, the Super Bowl-winning New York Giants' seven-time Pro Bowl defensive end Michael Strahan, the San Diego Chargers' defensive tackle Luis Castillo, the Oakland Raiders' cornerback Nnamdi Asomugha and the retired Chicago Bears' receiver Curtis Conway.

There will be all sorts of items available for a fee - photos, footballs, helmets, jerseys, etc. - and proceeds will go to the Willie McGinest Charitable Foundation, a non-profit entity in which "no one receives a salary and all the money goes to various Long Beach schools and organizations."

"I try to give back to a city that gave me so much," says McGinest, a Long Beach native whose parents, Willie and Joyce McGinest, and sisters, Tanisha McGinest and Lisa Giles, still reside here.

McGinest also has another charitable, separate outlet called the Willie McGinest Freedom School, a program which provides social and cultural enrichment for neighborhood youth.

During his 12 seasons with the Patriots, Willie McGinest played with three renowned coaches, Bill Parcells, Pete Carroll and Bill Belichick.

"I have great respect for all of my head coaches and also have nothing but great memories of my time with New England," he says.

"I have no complaints. I remember back in our first Super Bowl win against the St. Louis Rams when no one gave us a chance to win. But we did, and I think we changed the format of the sport with that victory.

"We were all about team. We didn't even want to be introduced individually. We were team, team, team. Before that there was a lot of individualism in the NFL, but we changed that concept."

McGinest resides in Santa Monica, has two daughters, and owns two companies, one called 55 Entertainment and another Wilmac Corp.

He owns a piece of Legends, and insists he will hang up his cleats after he completes his 15th season in the NFL this fall.

"I've been very fortunate in my career," he says. "Not many guys can say they've played on three Super Bowl-winning teams."

The feeling here is that Willie McGinest, who made so many game-deciding plays for the Patriots across the seasons, would have played on one, or even two more had the Patriots not let him go to the Browns...