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# Cardinals' Will Clark retires

■ A six-time All-Star and career .303 hitter, Will 'The Thrill' calls it quits after strong 2000 season

By David Scott  
 Associated Press Writer

ST. LOUIS — Cardinals first baseman Will Clark, known for his intensity and sweet left-handed swing, retired Thursday, ending a 15-year career that began in San Francisco and included stops in Texas and Baltimore.

The announcement was a surprise, considering the way Clark played during the final two months of the season while subbing for Mark McGwire.

"In every player's career, sooner or later, you're going to have to make a decision to move on," Clark said. "The first part of my life was based on being a baseball player. The second part of my life is going to be based on being a daddy and a husband."

Clark, 36, hit .345 with 12 home runs and 42 RBIs for the Cardinals, who acquired him July 31 from Baltimore.

"We were looking forward to having Will come back," Cardinals general manager Walt Jocketty said. "Everyone knows what he added to our club the second half really put us over the top."

Clark lived up to his nickname, "The Thrill," in his first at-bat with the club, hitting a pinch-homer. He then homered in each of his first four starts.

He also hit .345 in the post-season, and his three-run, first-inning homer off Atlanta's Tom Glavine in Game 2 of the NL division series helped send St. Louis into its first

NL championship series since 1996.

"I just want to say thank you to the Cardinals organization, which allowed me to have a lot, a lot of fun the last two months of the 2000 season," Clark said.

While Clark said he'd been thinking about retirement for some time, he made the decision last weekend after talking to his family, Jocketty and manager Tony La Russa. The rigors of traveling and playing the game every day, combined with having 36 bone chips removed from his left elbow from 1996 to 1999, led to Clark's choice to leave the game.

"I can still hit, I can still play, still field my position," Clark said. "But also at the same time, this is the right time for me to exit."

McGwire underwent knee surgery last month and hopes to be ready for spring training. Even if he's not, Clark said he won't be back.

"I'll come in and shake his hand and give everybody high-fives and pump them up, but I'm not going to run out there on the field," Clark said.

Clark admitted he was tempted to stay with the Cardinals, who lost to the Mets 4-1 in the NLCS. The Cardinals are expected to push for free agent pitcher Mike Hampton, and with a healthy McGwire, should be a World Series contender in 2001.

"The one thing I played this long for was to get a World Series ring. That was my ultimate goal," Clark said. "I wasn't able to achieve it, but I've been close."

Clark spent eight years with the Giants before moving on to Texas in 1994 and Baltimore in 1999. He

ends his career with a .303 batting average, 284 home runs and 1,205 RBIs.

"I admire Will for making a tough decision at a time when he clearly had other baseball options," said Clark's agent, Jeff Moorad. "I had two other teams who asked why we hadn't filed for free agency, because they were interested in Will."

While looking forward to his first summer off since 1980, Clark made it clear Thursday he planned to stick around the game, although he didn't express much interest in managing.

Jocketty said Clark would be welcome in the Cardinals organization, and Clark, who will be put on the voluntary retired list, promised Jocketty he'd call soon.

"I would say I'm pretty much committed to the Cardinals, and that's about it," Clark said. "From what the Cardinals showed me in my short 2 1/2 months with them, believe me, they deserve all my loyalty."

A six-time All-Star, Clark was the MVP of the 1989 NL championship series for San Francisco.

A first-round selection from Mississippi State, Clark homered on his first minor and major league at-bats, on his first swings both times.

The home run that came off Nolan Ryan in his first at-bat, and getting a base hit off Mitch Williams to win the '89 NLCS, are at the top of Clark's favorite moments in the game.

Right behind are the 51 games he spent in St. Louis.

"It was just an absolute joyride," Clark said.

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