

## Paul Tetlow

### Tour de force

Hunton & Williams corporate partner Paul Tetlow, 40, is a former professional footballer, international athlete and sub-three-hour marathon runner. Here, he explains why sometimes you have to drop deals, why City life is a young person's game, and why lawyers aren't overpaid

**When I was a schoolboy I was fortunate enough to play against Paul Gascoigne.** I played for England schoolboys alongside future professionals Stuart Ripley and Mark Atkins, who went on to win the Premiership with Blackburn Rovers. They were no different from the rest of the team, but that's the interesting thing about professional football – some people get picked up, others don't. It's not much different from the law.

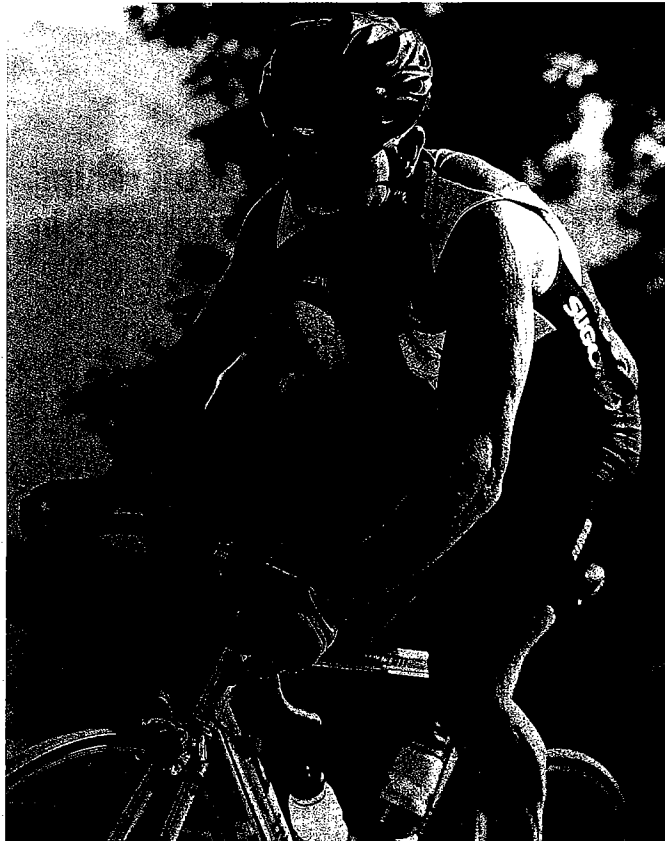
**A coach from an American university saw me playing for England schoolboys** in a tournament and offered me a scholarship. I thought I was going to be doing physical education, but I ended up doing a history and politics degree. I had intended to stay in the US post-graduation, as I was playing professional football for a New York team called the Albany Capitals. I was also coaching at the university, working in the accounts department and doing an MBA part-time in the evenings, as university employees get free classes. After my MBA I couldn't squeeze any more free education out of the States, so I came back home to study law.

**Law was in the family and around me.** My college roommate's father was a speaker of the New York State Assembly and a lawyer for the New York Yankees baseball team. My brother was a criminal barrister in London with 5 King's Bench Walk.

**My footballing life ended in 1997** when I was playing in a representative game for the Amateur Football Alliance against the Sussex County Football Association. Due to a really bad tackle, I tore my cruciate ligament and dislocated my knee. I didn't have private medical insurance at the time, so I had to wait three years to get it fixed on the NHS. That was it.

**As a result I took up swimming, started running and trained for the marathon,** which I have done quite a few times now. My best time is just under three hours. After having got through a few marathons I took up triathlon. At first I was doing short distances, but I realised that because my swimming was comparatively so poor, I would have to move on to longer distances – which are more about endurance – to be competitive. So I moved on to Olympic, half-Ironman, then full Ironman, which is a 2.5 mile swim in open water, 112 miles on the bike and then you run a marathon. I did my first Ironman in Austria four years ago. Because I did quite well, I qualified for the Great Britain team in my age group, and competed in both the World and European long-distance championships.

**I've also done the E'Tape du Tour – the stage of the Tour de France open to the public.** Last year I did the 120-mile stage that finished going up Alpe d'Huez – the famously steep hill climb. I did that on Monday and



then went straight to Austria and did the Ironman on the Sunday. I could barely walk the following week.

**Recently there has been some criticism of City lawyers making too much money,** but nine times out of ten, those who earn the big sums have damn well earned it. They have probably had to make significant sacrifices and compromises in their lives in so many other ways – through lost relationships, not seeing their families, endless hours spent travelling or in the office – in order to achieve that success.

**We've all done deals that we wish we hadn't been involved in.** There have been deals that I have turned down because I didn't feel that they were right, either legally or morally. Producing and recovering fees, as some would have us believe, is not the be-all and end-all of the legal profession. It's far more important to give the right advice at the right time. It's a question of telling a client what they need to know, not what they want to know. Often it's a bit of a bitter pill for the clients to swallow, but I've never regretted this policy.

**Twenty years in the law is probably enough.** Even if I am still in the law in ten years' time, then I doubt I will be doing the same thing. It requires enormous energy and commitment. To the extent that it ever was, it's no longer an old boy's club. It's not: casual lunch, bit of chat, deal done anymore; it's pretty intense. I think you perhaps need second careers these days – at some point you need a change of scenery and a change of environment.

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