



Lawyer Athletes

WORK OUT FOR CHARITY

BY LESLIE A. GORDON

On her thirty-first birthday, Deborah Mosley, a litigation associate at Morrison & Foerster, vowed to complete a triathlon within the year. But instead of swimming, biking, and running, Mosley was forced to face a medical triathlon—a bilateral mastectomy, eight chemotherapy infusions, and twenty-seven radiation treatments, the result of aggressive stage-two breast cancer that, she discovered soon after her birthday, had already spread to her lymph nodes.

Three years later, after experiencing aching bones and abdominal pain, Mosley learned that the cancer had spread to her liver and bones. Today, she receives hormone therapy and monthly bone infusions and immerses herself in complementary medicine including acupuncture and herbs.

“Cancer is a smart disease,” Mosley, now thirty-six, explains. “It can mutate and find ways around drugs. My goal is to survive long enough to receive the next available medical treatment.”

Despite bone and joint pain, a burning sensation in her abdomen, and tingling in her feet, Mosley says she generally “feels pretty good,” so she seized the opportunity to finally compete in a triathlon, five years after her initial vow. With a matter-of-fact bravery, she adds, “I don’t know what my capabilities will be next year.”

In early October, Mosley joined nearly 350 women to compete in the See Jane Tri, a Napa Valley triathlon featur-



Solo Practitioner Joshua Ridless trains for the bike leg of the Treasure Island Triathlon.

ing a half-mile swim, seventeen-mile bike split, and a four-mile run. Mosley finished in two hours and three minutes and in the process raised more than \$31,000 for Breast Cancer Action and the Charlotte Maxwell Complimentary Clinic, organizations that support women with cancer.

“When first I mentioned the triathlon training to my inner circle, they all assumed it would be a fund-raiser,” Mosley explains about her decision to compete in honor of charities. “It was a natural thing.”

Morrison & Foerster, she adds, was “super, super supportive.” The firm’s foundation donated \$10,000 to Mosley’s campaign and matched every employee donation of \$200. A Morrison partner also living with breast cancer threw Mosley a party after the triathlon.

Lawyers like Mosley are among the growing ranks of athletes and novices training for events like century bike rides, marathons, triathlons, and multiday endurance walks with charitable organizations that provide coaching in exchange for fund-raising commitments.

And not every lawyer embarking on such a feat has as



personal a connection to the cause as Mosley. Joshua Ridless, for example, a thirty-three-year-old solo practitioner specializing in corporate transactions, is training for the Olympic-distance Treasure Island Triathlon (a .93-mile swim, 25-mile bike split, and 6.2-mile run) with the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society's Team in Training (TNT) program, one of the largest and oldest charity fund-raising and training programs.

A few years ago, Ridless started running and swimming to help reduce his cholesterol. Eventually he decided to add biking to the mix and attempt a tri. "TNT seemed like a great group to train with," he recalls. "I liked the idea of blending athletics and a cause." In exchange for coaching, Ridless must raise at least \$2,400. A few months into his effort, he'd already surpassed that goal.

"I hit up everyone I ever met," Ridless says. "Some people I expected to give didn't, but people who I did not expect to give actually gave a lot."

When asked whether the training has affected his law practice, Ridless joked, "It's cut down my time to the fax machine by 20 percent." Seriously, he added, "I'm healthy, which impacts clarity and my ability to read longer."

Cancer charities aren't the only organizations to benefit from lawyers' training endeavors. Tiela Chalmers, managing attorney of BASF's Volunteer Legal Services Program, is training for the Honolulu Marathon with coaches from the San Francisco AIDS Foundation.

"Back in June, I was on a camping trip with my daughter's school class," Chalmers, forty-four, recalls. "Her best friend's mom was considering doing it. We were encouraging her, and on a lark we decided to join her. The next day, we all showed up at the first training meeting."

AIDS was already an issue close to Chalmers's heart. A close friend died of the disease after Chalmers spent months taking care of him. "I'm acutely aware of how the AIDS agencies provide help," she explains. The AIDS Foundation asks that marathon training participants raise \$3,000, and Chalmers easily exceeded that by sending just twenty-five fund-raising letters.

Chalmers's coaches prescribe a "very specific routine," emphasizing a run-walk approach geared towards nonathletes. (Chalmers, who calls herself a "slow-plodding tortoise," trains at a 16.5-minute mile pace.)



VLSP managing attorney Tiela Chalmers warms up before a training run.

Although many attorneys generously write checks to charities, Chalmers says doing something more proactive has been empowering.

"There's such power to doing something yourself, with your whole body," she explains. "Running for long distances, you have time to think about your commitment and why you're doing it. Being a lawyer is such a cerebral occupation. Running is exactly the opposite. With this marathon, I can give in a way that isn't cerebral. I can get out of my head."

For Morrison's Deb Mosley, training and fund-raising for the triathlon became a critical tool in battling cancer. "It renewed my faith in my body and its own ability to heal," she explains. "Before, working out was almost fear based—I went to the gym because exercise boosts the immune system. But now I think, 'Look what my body can do despite everything.'"