

Sport, extreme or otherwise, is seeing its stock rise in the City, both as an antidote to burnout and as a company asset. SUE CORBETT meets sportsmen from the Square Mile

MARTIN HUNT

JOB: Chief operating officer at Winton Capital Management

SPORT: Shooting

MOST LIKELY TO SAY: 'Have you put the beaters through this hedge fund?'

Sport alleviates stress and helps people to enjoy work more,' states Martin Hunt, 45, who works for one of the UK's 10 largest hedge-fund management companies. 'They come back to the office after a day on the grouse moor or the riverbank, feeling both rested and invigorated, and that can only be good for business.'

Mr Hunt would probably endorse research carried out in 2006 by Standard Chartered Bank with Sheffield Hallam University, which indicated that physically fit staff are more likely to stay in their jobs and achieve a higher output. 'It's important that people who work hard should have some sort of release—doing things they're good at and enjoy,' he comments.

Mr Hunt takes shooting days as leave, but he also shoots in the firm's time with clients. 'We take four or five business contacts from New York on a long weekend's shooting in Dorset each year. They absolutely love it, because they experience a sporting tradition of a kind that none of their other contacts anywhere else in the world could arrange for them. And chats between drives or while walking back to the bus can be just as useful and insightful as an entire evening's debate over dinner. Okay, you mustn't answer your mobile phone when you're actually game shooting, but—and I know keepers may curse me for saying this—a few moments spent furtively glancing at your BlackBerry are perfectly acceptable in between drives. If you can bang off a few replies to emails, your absence from the office is noticed less, and business goes on.'

BRIAN MOODY

Winton Capital's Martin Hunt believes that shooting alleviates stress



A man in a dark suit is shown in profile, holding a shotgun high above his head with both hands. He is looking upwards and to the right. The setting is a control room or office with multiple computer workstations. In the background, other people are seated at desks, working. The room has a modern, professional feel with glass partitions and track lighting on the ceiling. The overall tone is dramatic and unexpected, contrasting a traditional hunting weapon with a modern office environment.

BIG BANG
RETURNS TO
THE CITY



Andy Worth, of Ernst & Young, fits in three fly-fishing holidays, one stalking trip and up to 12 shooting days per year

Last year, Mr Hunt was invited by Withers, the solicitors, to join a team at the City Championships' clay-pigeon shooting at Highclere Castle. The prize was a day's partridge shooting in Spain, to which he invited his senior partner. 'I introduced him to shooting some years ago, and he's become almost as keen as I am.' This year, Mr Hunt is hoping that Winton Capital can enter a team of its own.

ANDY WORTH

JOB: Account manager for Ernst & Young

SPORT: Shooting, fishing and stalking

MOST LIKELY TO SAY: 'Has the bag been audited?'

Andy Worth, 38, puts three fly-fishing holidays, one stalking trip and up to 12 shooting days into his diary each year. 'These days are a wonderful release from the pressures of work, the equivalent of someone else's holiday

in the Mediterranean. I go back to the office feeling a bit more alive.'

Last year, he organised clay-pigeon shooting at the Royal Berkshire Shooting School for colleagues and their clients, both shooters and non-shooters. 'I got a lot of support, because, unlike other corporate entertainment, this was something in which people could actively participate. It also gave them a chance to meet people on a relaxed basis, and have the sort of wide-ranging conversations you don't necessarily get at a formal meeting.'

'We called it Big Bang 2007, and now, not only is there to be a Big Bang 2008, probably on a much larger scale—Bigger Bang, perhaps—but a colleague and I are talking about doing a fishing day. I guess we'll have to call it Big Fish.'

Last month, Mr Worth got married, having made what he describes as 'the best catch of my life' when he proposed to his wife on the banks of the Dee last year.

NICK BROTHERS

JOB: Derivatives trader with Deutsche Bank

SPORT: Hockey

MOST LIKELY TO SAY: 'Someone's been moving the goalposts'

Nick Brothers' employer more than tolerates his sporting interest—it positively encourages it, and it even got him the job. 'Sport was my only real asset, apart from A-level maths. As goal-keeper for the England hockey team and for my club side, Reading, the bank knew I had a track record for communication, commitment and teamwork—and all of those things are important in my job.'

Deutsche Bank agreed to support Mr Brothers, 24, with paid leave whenever he was playing, or training, for England, and in 2007, that amounted to about three months. Although Mr Brothers has decided to step back—only temporarily, ➤

England goalkeeper Nick Brothers brings his teamwork skills to his job at Deutsche Bank

*'Thanks to sport, I'm coming
into work fresh, fit and
relatively free from stress'*

Nick Brothers





he hopes—from the international game, in order to progress his career, he's still goalkeeping for his club side. 'If I manage my working day rigorously, I can get to Reading twice a week after work for training. So, I'm coming into work, fresh, fit and relatively free from stress. And in two years' time, I'll make myself available to the England selectors for the 2012 Olympics. I'm desperately keen to compete in the London Games, and I feel the bank is absolutely behind me in that.'

JULIAN DRAKE

JOB: Support director at Barclays

SPORT: Polo

MOST LIKELY TO SAY: 'You've got seven minutes to secure this deal'

Another sportsman encouraged by his firm is Julian Drake, 35; his boss and colleagues even watch him play. 'My work is pretty demanding and the hours are long—I'm responsible for business strategy and planning, and delivery of major business-transformation projects—but I can fit in polo if I manage my time. And I do it because it's important to have a balance. A passion for sport is a great outlet. I definitely feel I perform better in the office as a result.'

In 2007, Mr Drake captained Barclays' winning team in the polo tournament organised by City Championships at Coworth Park. He was the only player in the side actually to work for the bank, but the number of polo-playing colleagues he has since discovered gives him reason to hope for a more substantial Barclays input in future. 'The championships did involve two afternoons off work, but, other than that, I haven't needed to take any time off [for sport], and I wouldn't expect to.'

In his own time, however, it's a different story. There's arena polo during the winter, playing in Argentina at Christmas, and tournaments most weekends between April and the end of September. 'I also play chukkas at my club most Tuesdays and Thursdays, arriving at the office at 7.30am so I can leave at about 5.30pm or 6pm. That makes for a pretty full day.'

CHARLOTTE STRICKLAND

JOB: Investment-bank trader

SPORT: Ski racing

MOST LIKELY TO SAY: 'Is this just a bubble?'

Charlotte Strickland, 27, has less time for ski racing than she did when a member of Bristol

In 2007, avid polo player Julian Drake led Barclays' City Championships-winning team



Investment banker Charlotte Strickland is returning to Courmayeur, Italy, next month to defend her City Championships skiing title

University's prize-winning snow-sports team. But skiing holidays still form a major part of her annual leave, and in 2007, at her first attempt, she became the ladies' skiing champion in the City Championships at Courmayeur, Italy.

'I'll definitely be back there in March, defending my title,' she says, 'and if I don't win again, I'll obviously be disappointed, because I'm very competitive at work, and that spills over into my sport. But, whatever the result, I'll still feel energised when I get back to the office. I always do after skiing. As it's such a physically demanding activity, it recharges the batteries in a way that a beach holiday, say, can never do.'

Photographs: Brian Moody.

SPORTING OPPORTUNITIES FOR CITY WORKERS

THE CITY CHAMPIONSHIPS, created in 2003, attract some 3,000 competitors in polo, shooting, skiing, sailing and classic-car rally events. 'From 2008, we'll be rolling out the formula beyond the UK to financial communities worldwide,' says creator Simon Jacot de Boinod (020-7863 8813; www.citychampionships.com).

THE CITY SPORTSPERSON OF THE YEAR AWARD honours well-known sporting personalities, as well as a City employee who has achieved the greatest level of sporting excellence. The 2007 City winner was Sue Day (KPMG), England's highest ever try-scorer in women's rugby

union, and shortlisted athletes included amateur jockey Sam Waley-Cohen (Louis Dreyfus Commodities), cross-country runner Phil Wicks (Legal & General) and Nick Brothers (020-7240 7700; www.squaremilesport.com).

THE GREAT CITY RACE is a 5km road event for City workers, which this year will be held on July 17 (020-7902 0200; www.cityrace.co.uk).

THE REAL FIGHT CLUB, founded in 2000, is for City professionals who both train and fight. All events are fundraisers, with more than £800,000 raised so far (020-7247 2358; www.trfc.tv).