

# SPRINTING TO SUCCESS

FORMER ATHLETE **JAMIE BAULCH** TELLS **ROBERT LLEWELLYN JONES** HOW HE'S REDIRECTED HIS SPORTING AMBITION INTO HIS BUSINESS

**H**istory has confirmed the sporting pedigree of Jamie Baulch.

The 33-year-old Welshman won six medals at Olympic, world, European and Commonwealth levels with the pinnacle being the silver medal he claimed as part of the 4 x 400m relay squad, who finished behind the Americans at the 1996 Games in Atlanta.

He also came away with a medal of each colour in the individual 400m at three appearances at the World Indoor Championships, clinching the gold in 1999 in Maebashi, Japan.

Now the challenges of the track have been replaced by those of trade, in the form of his business, One Vision.

Baulch has the kind of energy that can only be stopped by gunfire and a personality that makes him an extremely marketable and instantly recognisable character.

It was the marketing concept that came to him while living in Atlanta, USA.

Why, he wondered, was it that David Beckham had done so well when it came to endorsements for leading brands and

other, more gifted sportsmen, had been left in his wake?

The answer he came up with was marketing.

Then the thought crossed his mind that he, too, was marketable.

He said: "There is a no more passionate rugby supporter than myself. So I looked at the players in the Welsh team and realised that, with the exception of Gavin Henson, they were not being marketed as they should be."

There is, Baulch argues, a correlation between marketing oneself and the money a professional sportsman can earn. Given the right presentation earnings can be doubled and in some cases even trebled.

Elaborating on this he explained: "All the public sees a rugby player do is play rugby, usually at the weekend and that's it. A few may appear on television programmes like a Question of Sport but what you don't see them doing is being sponsored by fashion houses like Yves Saint Laurent or high street stores like M&S.

"I wondered why this was and came up with the answer that it's because they are not being marketed in the proper way."

In his crusade to change this perception he admits that Beckham is the role model – he wears the right clothes, appears in television adverts and is the subject of numerous newspaper and magazine features.

Consequently he has become a multi-millionaire.

The question Baulch poses is: 'is he the best sportsman in Britain?'



Jamie Baulch alongside his Welsh 4 x 400 relay teammates Matthew Elias, Iwan Thomas and Tim Benjamin, celebrating their silver medal at the 2002 Commonwealth Games

His answer is 'probably not' but he is the richest because of his marketability.

When it comes to drawing on parallel experiences to his own, Baulch is never at a loss.

While contemporaries like Mark Richardson and Iwan Thomas trained away from the glare of publicity, he was seen regularly on television and even had his own show.

"It's more than just being personable. I looked at sport in general and thought that if these people were not being marketed, why can't I do it for them?"

The result was a visit to the WRU and the contract to produce its 2005 rugby calendar.

"We wanted it to appeal to everyone and we wanted to just make it rugged. A lot of calendars are just archive photos taken 18 months previously but we wanted to do it properly," he said.

Baulch believes the pictures taken then secured him a repeat contract for 2007 and rewarded the WRU's faith in him by selling 150,000 copies.

With a background in design and

design of its uniform. This has been worth between £250,000 and £300,000 in sponsorship deals and, he insists, all done to a standard far better than the previous Olympic Games. Even the Queen, he observed, commented on how well the Welsh team was dressed.

Under his direction One Vision has become a multi-faceted company offering a visual service that ranges from posters to website design to television commercials, all of which are aiding the company's expansion from the sporting to the corporate marketplace.

For someone as irrepensible as Jamie Baulch ambition and passion are fellow travellers.

From his base in Newport he is now looking at taking on a world inhabited by the likes of Saatchi & Saatchi and WPP.

"I want One Vision to compete with these and we have the expertise to do it," he said confidently.

"Staff here are amongst the best in the industry and the images they create every bit as good those you see on advertising billboards around our cities and towns."

Then comes his punch line: "Really the only difference is the price tag, which we can do cheaper because we are based here in Wales. With the internet you don't need a London base to be the best, not any more."

He added: "In athletic terms, working with the people here pushes me hard. That always brings out potential and, I hope, talent." ■

## INTERNET MEANS YOU DON'T NEED A LONDON BASE TO BE THE BEST

A passion without boundaries



**Gareth Davies**  
Welsh Affairs director of the Royal Mail Group and former Welsh international rugby player

“For me passion is something you feel internally.

My sporting experience taught me that making a comeback, like I did, rarely works because you don't have the same passion as when you started off.

To be successful, whether it's at sport or in business, you must have passion.

If that's not there, whatever's driving you is a poor substitute.

I have a passion for my work at the Royal Mail. When I go to functions or to difficult meetings, where sometimes I am on the defensive, I couldn't do the job properly if there was no passion.

Of my new role leading a team in Australasia hoping to bring economic benefits to Wales in the form of inward investment, people say, 'oh you're leaving Wales', but I have always wanted to work overseas. I like Australia but I still have a passion for my country. If I didn't have that I couldn't hope to be successful at the job.

There are many obstacles in the way but with my passion for Wales, I will give it my best shot.

My new role requires enthusiasm. The same can be said about helping Welsh companies who trade with Australia and New Zealand. It's about being the focal point for Wales and raising its presence there.

The operation is already a well-run organisation so my role is to raise the visibility of Wales throughout this part of the world.

Other countries are doing this already, which is a mark of the highly competitive world we find ourselves in.

Making people aware of Wales, as a smart and sophisticated nation, is a new challenge.

It's about being a spokesman for the work International Business Wales is carrying out – like the work being done in Techniums and hi-tech companies throughout Wales.

Many people aren't aware of the clever businesses we have here and we, for our part, shouldn't underestimate what is going on in Wales at present.

I'll be working passionately to attract companies to Wales; not the large-scale inward investment we once knew but those jobs that are part of the knowledge economy we have now become. ■