

Paul Whiting

STORY BY Jim Zamichieli

The ball remains in his
COURT



Once a fierce competitor on the basketball court, attorney Paul J. Whiting III now uses that competitive fire in the courtroom.

Attorney Paul J. Whiting III is naturally competitive. It is a trait that has served him well both in work and in life. But that alone is not what has built his reputation as among the top personal injury lawyers in the Detroit area. Instead, it is his rapport with his clients and within his community that has helped to make Whiting Law into the successful practice it is today. Clients find Paul to be approachable and knowledgeable, and he turns his sense of competition to their advantage, working hard on his clients' behalf to reach a balanced solution in court.

While it's common for the media to portray personal injury

lawsuits as a means to getting rich for both the attorney and the client, Paul is quick to correct that misperception. "We're focused on pursuing justice, not frivolous awards," he says. He risks his own financial security so that people can receive the help they need. In his own words, "We don't have the financial backing of billion-dollar companies. What our clients have is us. At the end of the day, I put up money and time and my own resources to represent my clients. I only get paid if I win for them. The fact is that people get hurt, and they need help. It's not about easy money and getting rich as a result of an accident. It's about fairness, responsibility, and justice."

Practicing law was not Paul's only career choice: he could have gone with basketball. He attended Madonna University on both academic and basketball scholarships and then transferred to University of Detroit Mercy, where he helped the Titans clinch their league championship in 1999. Eventually, however, Paul made what he calls a "realistic, adult decision" and chose to focus on law, enrolling at Wayne State University Law School. He's never regretted that choice, and his determination to succeed has seen his practice grow from Paul and two assistants to five lawyers supported by twenty team members.

Paul's background makes his

career path seem almost inevitable. He learned the value of public service and hard work from his parents. His father, a decorated police officer, modeled a life of service to his community, working long hours to help people; his mother, who ran several successful businesses, exhibited an entrepreneurial spirit and a strong work ethic. Paul carries these lessons into his own practice today.

“We do things the right way,” he emphasizes. “I preach this at my office and to my clients. You can push the envelope, but you don’t break the rules.”

Although basketball is no longer at the center of Paul’s life, he sees a clear parallel between those college days and his current job. “In a way, what I do for a living is very much like basketball. It has a very competitive nature to it. Fighting against big companies is like the proverbial David v. Goliath match. I thrive on that kind of challenge because I know I’m fighting for the right party.”

Paul learned early in his career that the systems designed to help the common citizen don’t always function as intended, which is why someone needs to advocate on the public’s behalf. He explains that no-fault insurance “was supposed to allow injured parties to go to their own insurance company for benefits and not have to argue fault...but that’s not the way it really works. Insurance

companies make more money by paying out less. To level the playing field, injured victims need someone by their side advocating for them.”

To understand the struggles his clients face, Paul immerses himself in each case. He witnesses their suffering firsthand by showing up at hospital rooms or sickbeds in people’s homes. He gathers the facts while offering understanding and comfort as well as counsel. Recently he traveled to an injured client’s home. The client had lost an arm as a result of another driver’s negligence. In pain and overwhelmed, the man was focused on getting help for his immediate needs.

“He didn’t trust anyone, and he didn’t know what was going on,” Paul recalls. “I explained the system and what our office was going to be able to do for him.

Everything I was talking about doing—and what he needed to do—wasn’t all just about today but was as much about the future. It was about making sure that all of his benefits are taken care of for life, not just for the here and now.”

Paul reflects on another case where the insurance system failed to help the injured person, a woman who was seriously injured because the car she was driving ended up between a police car and a criminal who was being pursued.

“She was on her way to work in a vehicle her husband was buying,” remembers Paul. “They were still haggling on price, and the vehicle didn’t have insurance yet. The insurance company wanted to argue that she was the owner of the vehicle and was therefore barred from receiving benefits. There she was, in the hospital with a horrific head



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injury, in need of immediate medical care. The insurance company refused to take care of her.”

Unable to work, the woman struggled to make a dent in her growing medical bills. Paul filed suit and ultimately proved that she was not the owner of the vehicle and was therefore entitled to benefits. “We helped her recapture her lost wages,” he notes, “and covered the millions of dollars that her ongoing medical care requires even now, 10 years later.”

Paul believes in giving back to the community, and he takes this beyond his own personal involvement, encouraging his whole firm to help improve the quality of life for area residents. Together, the team at Whiting Law lives out this belief in many ways, from raising funds for Gleaners Community Food Bank of Southeastern Michigan to sponsoring numerous families in need for the holidays.

As for himself, Paul has been active in various roles, including serving on the Board of the Michigan Association of Justice (MAJ) and as their state delegate

to the American Association of Justice. Their mission fits well with Paul’s conviction that attorneys, fighting together for justice, can succeed against profit-driven corporations and insurance companies much more effectively than they could individually.

His pursuit of righting wrongs has earned him recognition as a “Rising Star” by Michigan Super Lawyers and a Top Lawyer by Business Magazine several times. Paul was also named a “Top 40 Lawyer under 40” by the National Trial Lawyers and a 2012 “Up and Coming Lawyers/Leaders for Tomorrow” by Michigan Lawyers Weekly. He lectures widely on Michigan’s No-Fault Law, helping others learn what they need to know. Paul has also established relationships and good rapport with many defense attorneys, judges, and insurance companies, which can help open the lines of communication when it comes time to negotiate fair, appropriate settlements.

In order to take on the large insurance companies and big business, Paul is continually broadening his knowledge base, looking for the competitive edge.

“I can’t just continue every day doing the same exact thing and expect to have continued success,” he says. “The best lesson I’ve learned is ‘know what you don’t know.’ I’ve committed to never stop learning.”

These days, in addition to the learning he does on the job, the former basketball star is learning how to play Legos from his young son, Paul Whiting IV, and trying to keep up with his wife, Kiersten, a Pilates instructor and avid runner. She is also his greatest inspiration, “the best wife in the world.” Basketball, too, remains a big part of Paul’s life; he plays competitively once a week and is teaching the game to his son.

With all of these other claims on his time, Paul still finds the hours needed to read and apply energy to becoming an ever-better lawyer and business owner. This investment has paid off with his successful practice. Perhaps more importantly, it allows him to showcase his competitiveness not on the basketball court but in a court where the stakes are such higher: the courts of law, where the quality of life for his clients is decided.