

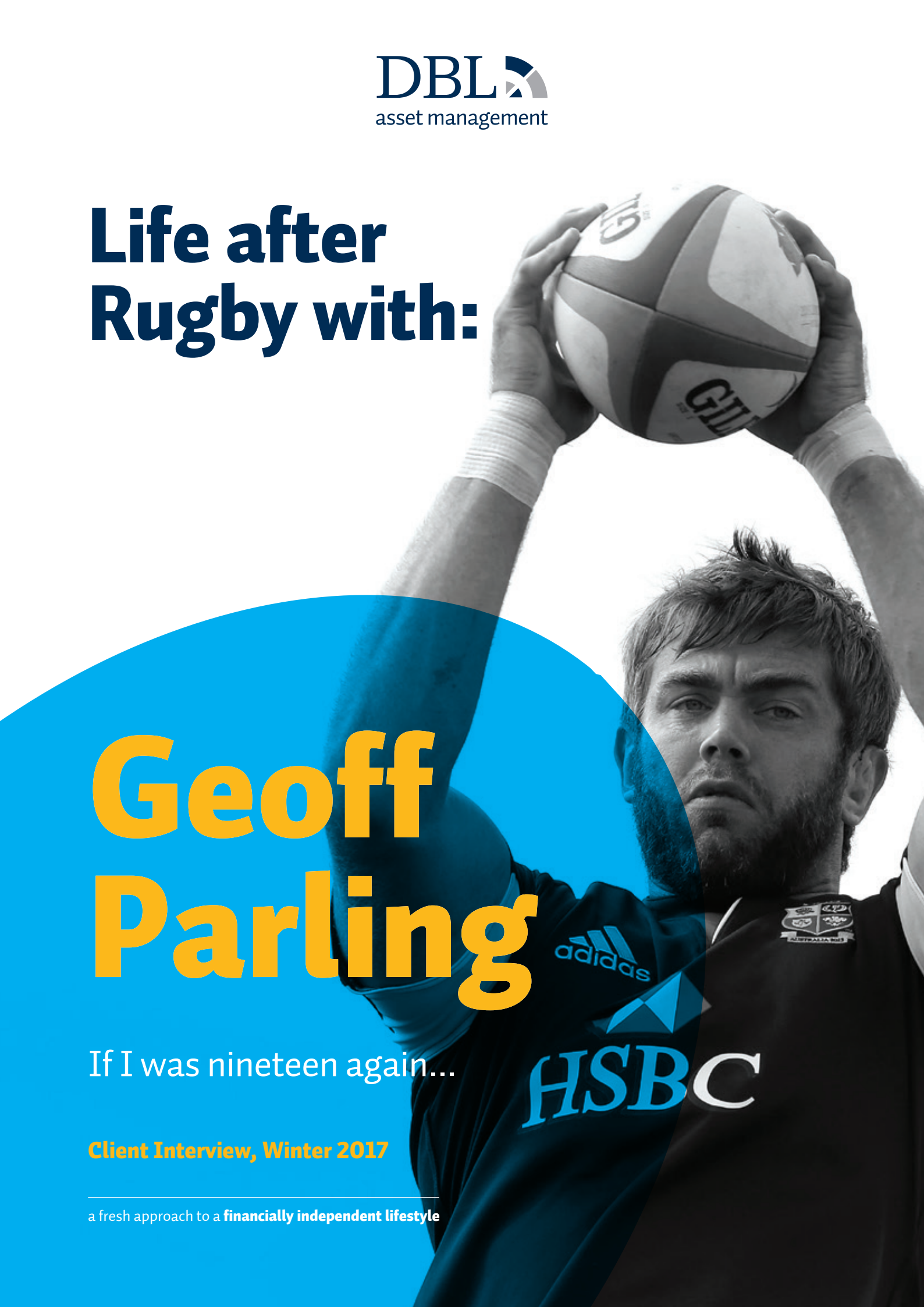
Life after Rugby with:

Geoff Parling

If I was nineteen again...

Client Interview, Winter 2017

a fresh approach to a **financially independent lifestyle**





Geoff Parling plays rugby for Exeter Chiefs in the Aviva Premiership. Geoff has played in all or part of thirteen professional seasons and has been capped multiple times by England and the British and Irish Lions. Geoff has been a DBL client for many years and recently took the time to sit down with Benchmark and discuss what advice made a difference when he was younger, what advice young players receive now and what his plans are for the future.

‘Young players today are picked up at a much earlier age than I was’, says Geoff. ‘I started playing at around eighteen, but nowadays the young players are starting much younger. They spend more time within rugby, increasing their earning potential and also spending more time being catered for by clubs and coaches.’

Geoff believes that the structures young players are exposed to throughout their careers can have a big impact on them and that knowing that there is something outside of these structures was important to him as he made his start in the game.

‘Young players are told where to be, what to eat, what to wear and how to train. The support and rewards are greater and greater, but I am not sure if that makes them better and better. Sometimes when you are growing up it is useful to your learning if your day is not entirely structured for you. If I was nineteen again and starting to play now, I would want to remember that you have to be motivated to step outside of this constant catering.’

In fact, being self-motivated has been important for Geoff throughout his career. Geoff got into rugby because he wanted to find something that he was good at and enjoyed, but he was aware that there were other options out there.

‘You have to appreciate that you only get one career and you have to make the most of it, and the better rugby career you have the greater the reward, but sometimes rugby can be so consuming it can be good to have another focus on a day off. When I was at Newcastle

almost every academy player went to University, or did an apprenticeship, or underwent some form of training. I do not think that is the same for young players now and if I was in their shoes I would want someone to tell me that I can step outside rugby. If the players themselves are not too fussed about doing something else then that is fine, but many perhaps do not realise that they can do more; maybe do something part time, or with a sponsor, or educate themselves for a future career.’

Geoff graduated from Newcastle University with a degree in Economics and Business Management but feels as though fewer and fewer players are as aware that this sort of option exists for them.

‘There is not as much awareness now about the need to plan for the future as there was when I was younger. When I started playing there were players who had been amateurs, so knowing that you needed something else was the norm. Without the right advice there are some of the younger players who are going to struggle. If all you have ever known is rugby and having everything provided for you then it will be tough when your career comes to an end. It is important that younger players know that this could happen at any point. It is up to clubs, agents and us older players to help them with this and point them in the right direction.’

As for his own plans, Geoff is currently enjoying getting involved in the coaching side of the game, but is also keeping his options open.

“ I am enjoying gaining coaching badges and working with up-and-coming players. At the moment my approach is to tick things off that I do not want to do and go from there. I do not think that working in the city is for me, for example, but coaching could be something that I carry on pursuing. ”