

LAW WEEK COLORADO

The Compleat Lawyer 2010

Law Week Colorado's Compleat Lawyer is the whole package — someone with 10 or fewer years of experience who excels legally, generates business, promotes firm values, stays on top of trends and is a strong personality. | LAW WEEK PHOTO JAMIE COTTEN

Partner After 4 Years John Hughes

By **Matt Masich**
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John Hughes has been a lawyer in the Denver office of Bartlit Beck for just four years, but he's already made partner.

"John is the complete package," said Glen Summers, a partner at the firm who often works alongside Hughes. "They say in basketball that you can't teach height. Well, he's incredibly smart — you can't teach that."

His academic pedigree "is off the charts," Summers said, and includes a clerkship with U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice Clarence Thomas.

But it takes more than a sharp intellect to succeed as a litigator. It takes coolness under pressure, the ability to command a courtroom, and judgment to know when to charm and when to unleash the killer instinct. Hughes has it all, Summers said.

Hughes has been involved in high-stakes litigation from the start of his legal career. In his first year practicing, he was second-chair in a four-week jury trial in Milwaukee. Hughes helped represent NL Industries, a former manufacturer of lead-based paint, in a lawsuit brought by the city, which sought \$150 million in damages from the company, claiming its paint had created a public nuisance. Hughes handled the majority of arguments in trial.

"John mastered the law of public nuisance, gained the respect of the court, and was able to obtain a fair set of jury instructions that helped NL obtain a total defense verdict," Summers said.

Impressed with his work, NL asked Hughes to take the lead role on the briefing and oral arguments at the Wisconsin Court of Appeals. The court affirmed the defense verdict.



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When NL recently became the target of two similar lawsuits in Wisconsin, the company sought out Hughes to take the cases. That's the kind of business development the firm likes to see, Summers said.

"We try to achieve success and market that way rather than with a lot of expensive, fancy, fluffy marketing materials," he said. "Going forward, I see him playing a big role landing significant new matters."

For the past year and a half, Hughes and other attorneys from his firm have represented Bayer CropScience against multidistrict litigation over genetically-modified rice.

"Bayer CropScience has steadily increased John's role in the case, including having him take witnesses in an important bellwether trial and asking him to take the lead day-to-day role in a set of cases" in which the company faces more than \$500 million in exposure.

Hughes has taken close to 100 depositions in the case. He loves having to think on his feet, both in depositions and in trial, and it's then that Summers says his instincts shine through. Hughes is quick to notice an opportunity and exploit it.

"When an opening has come up with a witness, he's jumped on it like a bulldog," Summers said. He's also quick to take control of court proceedings. "If he sees the other side stirring the pot or the judge is confused, he will get it right back to square one and make sure everybody gets back to the issue at hand."

Hughes is "solidly in that second-chair role right now," Summers said, but "with a few more trials under his belt," he'll be moving into the lead role. •

— Matt Masich, MMasich@CircuitMedia.com