

Sally Gunnell OBE

Sally Gunnell OBE is an Olympic champion, former world record holder and motivational speaker known for her achievements in the 400m hurdles. Drawing on a career at the highest level of international athletics, she speaks about resilience, confidence, high performance and wellbeing, helping audiences understand what it takes to achieve goals and sustain success under pressure.

KEY TOPICS

- **Sustaining Excellence**
- **Creating the qualities of high performance**
- **Personal Development**
- **Leaders and Mental Health**

BIOGRAPHY

Sally Gunnell OBE is one of Britain's most successful athletes and remains the only woman ever to hold four major track titles concurrently: Olympic, World, European and Commonwealth.

Raised on a farm in Essex, Sally developed the discipline and competitive mindset that would eventually take her to the highest level of international athletics. Her journey was not without setbacks, but those challenges became an important part of how she learned to prepare, rebuild confidence and perform under pressure. Her career reached a defining moment at the Barcelona Olympic Games in 1992, where she won Olympic gold in the 400m hurdles. A year later, she became World Champion in Stuttgart, setting a new world record of 52.74 seconds in the final. That combination of Olympic gold, a world title and a world record established Sally as one of the leading athletes of her generation. She later added further success at European and Commonwealth level, becoming the only woman ever to hold all four major track titles at the same time.

From Olympic Gold to Motivational Speaker

After retiring from international athletics, Sally built a career as a television presenter, commentator, author and motivational speaker. Her experiences on the world stage gave her a strong understanding of the physical and mental demands involved in performing at the highest level. Today, she uses those lessons to help audiences explore resilience, self-belief, goal setting and the ability to overcome setbacks. Sally's speaking style is down-to-earth and practical. Rather than relying on complicated performance models, she draws on real experiences from elite sport and explains how the same principles can apply in business, leadership and everyday life. Her story also shows that high performance is not simply about relentless effort. Sustaining excellence requires recovery, perspective and an understanding of how to perform well without burning out.

Sally Gunnell OBE as a Keynote Speaker

As a keynote speaker, Sally Gunnell focuses on the mindset behind achievement and the habits that help people perform consistently when pressure builds. Her current keynote topics include resilience, confidence, sustainable performance and navigating change. In *Unlocking High Performance: The Journey to Gold*, she

explores the focus, preparation and mental strength that helped her progress from Olympic hopeful to Olympic champion. Her *Sustaining Excellence* keynote looks at what happens after success has been achieved. Drawing on her transition from Olympic champion to World Champion, Sally discusses how to maintain momentum, manage expectations and continue performing at a high level without burnout. She also speaks about developing physical, mental and emotional strength, particularly when people or organisations are dealing with pressure, uncertainty and change. For event organisers looking for a motivational speaker who can connect elite sport with the realities of business and working life, Sally offers an accessible perspective built on first-hand experience.

Resilience, Wellbeing and High Performance

Wellbeing has become an increasingly important part of Sally Gunnell OBE's work. Through Life's Hurdle, her strength, mindset and wellbeing platform, she supports women navigating midlife and beyond. The programme focuses on sustainable habits, physical strength, confidence and long-term health rather than quick fixes. That experience also informs Sally's work with organisations. She speaks about how confidence, resilience and wellbeing affect performance, and why people are more likely to sustain results when they take care of both their physical and mental health. Her message is particularly relevant to businesses looking to improve performance without creating a culture of constant pressure. She encourages audiences to think about what helps them stay focused, manage setbacks, reduce stress and remain effective over the long term.

A Career Built on Mental Strength

Sally's athletics career was shaped as much by setbacks as it was by medals. Before winning Olympic gold, she experienced disappointment at the 1991 World Championships. Injuries also became a recurring challenge later in her career. Those experiences forced her to rebuild, adapt and develop the mental strength required to keep striving at the highest level. Her journey from setback to Olympic champion gives her keynote presentations a strong connection with audiences facing their own challenges. Whether speaking to leaders, teams or large conference audiences, she focuses on practical lessons around preparation, positive mindset, resilience and overcoming self-doubt. Sally Gunnell OBE brings together the experience of an Olympic athlete, motivational speaker, presenter and wellbeing advocate. Her story offers a grounded look at what it takes to reach the pinnacle of performance and, just as importantly, how to sustain success once you get there.

WHAT PEOPLE SAY

> ""*Sally was extremely natural and engaging which helped our colleagues and clients immediately settle into the event. There was a feeling of familiarity right from the start with Sally but also something very special having a national sporting icon talk to us directly and honestly. The subjects discussed touched diversity, racism, motivation and determination, mental well-being, the Olympics, coming up in sport. Varied and inclusive for all with some nice overlaps into the corporate world. I obviously loved having a special audience for 5 minutes at the start with a sporting heroine from my sprinting days at Loughborough and curly hair chat!*""
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> **— Elena Folkes, Director, Strategy & Market Development at Thomson Reuters**

> ""*Sally is one of the most inspirational and motivating speakers we've ever had join us on our TechWomen programme, one of BT's key diversity programmes. Throughout the past 12 months, Sally has joined us numerous times on our programme and our TechWomen always love her stories. More recently, Sally created a bespoke session for us around*

> *mental fitness which went down a storm. Sally always gets on board with your goals and objectives to make sure your attendees get the most out of their time with her and is an absolute joy to work with!*""
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> **— Rachel Brackenbury, Talent Programme Manager at BT**

> ""*Sally joined us for our 2021 kickoff meeting and it was the perfect way to start the new year with the team. It was over zoom, of course, but that did not take away one bit. She was so engaging, funny, and extraordinarily inspirational. We're an HR tech company but Sally did a wonderful job of tying her Olympic experience to ours as individuals. We highly recommend having Sally join you for a speech!*""
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> **— Amanda Cianni, Project Manager at Apploi**