

# inspire

fitness for wellbeing



Inspire Fitness for Wellbeing

317 Doncaster Road

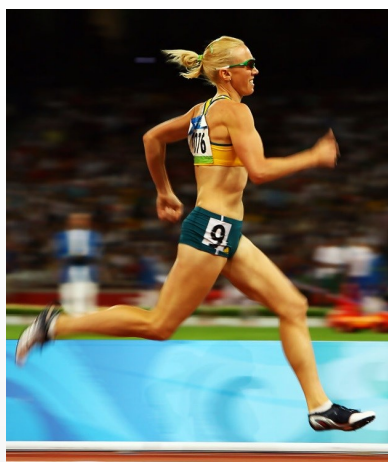
North Balwyn, VIC 3104

Ph: (03) 9857 3007

## Interview with Tamsyn Lewis

How to develop a successful mindset for ultimate health

*Brendan Rigby (AEP), Managing Director of Inspire Fitness for Wellbeing, interviewed 3-time Olympic representative and World Championship gold medallist Tamsyn Lewis on how she achieved sustained success over her 15-year athletics career. This interview captures the mindset of a world champion who reveals how you too can achieve a high level of health and fitness through applying the same principles of success.*



**Brendan (BR):** Today I have the pleasure of introducing someone who is affiliated with St Bridget's, who is from all accounts an overachiever; someone who's achieved an enormous amount in track and field for Australia.

We have with us a 3-time Olympic game representative for Australia, and a 4-time Commonwealth Games representative for Australia. In 3 of those Commonwealth Games, she's won 3 gold medals. She has also represented Australia 4 times in the World Championships. She's won 1 World indoor gold medal, 1 World indoor silver medal, she's been a national champion for the 800 metres 9 times, and 5 times she's been a national champion for Australia in the 400 metres.

Please put your hands together for Tamsyn Lewis. Welcome Tamsyn.

**BR:** How does it feel to stand back there and hear that list of achievements from your career?

**Tamsyn (TL):** It was good. Obviously, I'm getting towards the end of my career at the age of 34, and you know there's things I would have liked to have done a bit more. I would love to get an Olympic medal, but they don't give them away for free unfortunately. So I was happy to make the final in the Olympics and reach top 10. When I hear what I've done, **I'm proud of myself because I did it through hard work and a lot of people around me made sacrifices, so I'm very lucky.** I get to travel the world and represent Australia, which, having travelled, I think it's the best country that you could represent.

Inspire Fitness for Wellbeing  
317 Doncaster Rd, Balwyn North 3104

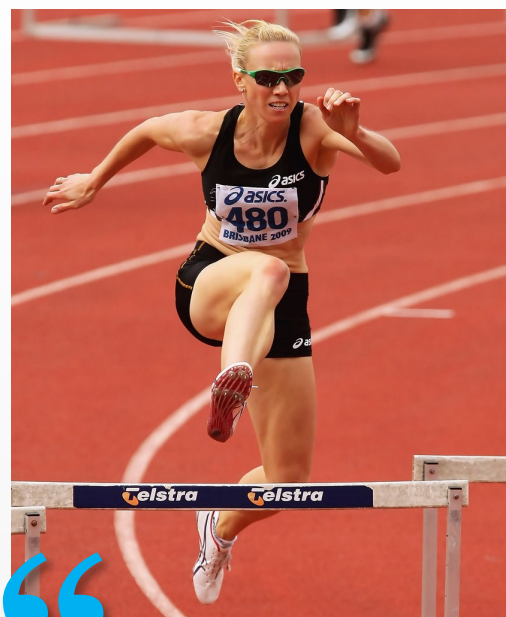
(03) 9857 3007  
[www.Inspire-Fitness.com.au](http://www.Inspire-Fitness.com.au)

**BR:** And we know now it's not luck, we know now it's the hard work and dedication, and we'll get to that in a moment. For the benefit of the crowd and I know that you mentioned you winning medals at Olympic Games, but how many medals, international medals, have you won Tamsyn?

**TL:** Gosh, I'm not really sure, because you run on the circuit so you win medals quite a few times before the majors. For me, I think the best international medal I won was definitely the World indoor gold in 2008 which I won when I was 30. A lot of athletes retire sometimes too young, they retire before they get to 30, but for me **that medal was reward for sticking at it for so long and for the people around me really believing in me** and keeping me in the zone. That was definitely a huge achievement. I knew as soon as I'd won it that I'd beaten an Olympic gold medallist, so then I could retire happy.

**BR:** Probably one of the finest things as an Australian Olympic athlete has to be representing your country at a home Olympic Games, which you had the opportunity to do at the Sydney 2000 Games. Tell us about what it was like to walk out at the opening ceremony, and then to compete in front of a home crowd.

**TL:** Well I recently watched my nephews Lachlan and Euwen competing in their school athletics day, and it's exactly the same as that. When I got into athletics, I never did Little Athletics, so I got into it through zones and districts through my primary school. I think about how nervous I was when I was competing at my school athletic day for primary school, and it's exactly the same nerves that I had when I was competing in front of a home crowd at the Olympics. It's just the level of your ability that has gotten a bit better and you're a bit older and a bit wiser. But that was pretty amazing; I was in the first event of the whole Olympic Games in Sydney for track and field, the first heat, and it was nerve-wracking! There were 110,000 people in the crowd, so being the home girl, they were all cheering for me which is fantastic and I loved it. **It's a moment that I'll always cherish.**



*There were 110,000 people in the crowd, all cheering for me which is fantastic and I loved it. It's a moment that I'll always cherish.*

**BR:** We have a lot of kids in the crowd here that are from St Bridget's Primary School. When did you first realise that you wanted to be an athlete, that you had that burning desire to represent Australia at an Olympic Games?

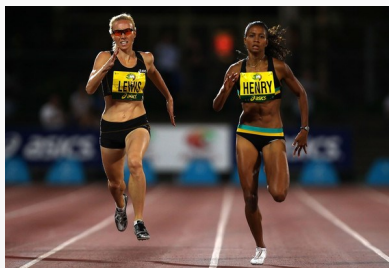
**TL:** I think it happened pretty early. I remember watching the Olympics on TV when I was a kid. I'm sure these guys did a lot of school projects around the Olympic Games this year. When I was doing those projects, I started to really love the whole concept of the Olympics, all the different countries coming together to compete against each other. For me, that's probably when it started, when I was at school. And for athletics, my PE teacher saw that I could run when I was playing "chasey" in the school yard! I started racing against the boys because I could beat them off the same mark. They started handicapping me back so I would have to run the boys down, which I often did! It made me love athletics even more because, as a girl, it felt good to beat the boys...

**BR:** We have a number of mums and dads in the crowd who are health and fitness enthusiasts, and certainly at Inspire Fitness, we encourage people to achieve their goals whatever they may be. Do you have any tips that you can pass on to them as to how you have maintained such high motivation levels for such a long period in your career?

**TL: Goal setting is really important.** As an elite athlete, it's probably been easier because your goal is to make an Australian team which makes you get out of bed to go for that run! But as I'm drawing to the end of my career, there was a point when I was overseas this year where I thought, "Okay, this could be it. I may not be racing anymore." But I know that every day, I got up and I still went for a run. So for me, it's a health issue, but it's also the motivation of being able to wear - it's very girly - but being able to wear a tight pair of jeans, you know?!

Everybody has different levels of motivation, you just have to find what it is and then when you work out what your motivation is, you just keep it in the back of your mind. That's the reason why, when it's raining, you get yourself up and you go out there and you go for that run. It feels unreal after you've done a bit of exercise, you feel so much better when you're fit and healthy than you do when you're just sitting around being a sloth. With kids these days, I notice that there are so many distractions; everyone's always playing their Playstation 3's, their Wii's, their X-Boxes...and I'm guilty, I have a PS3 and a Wii and I love playing them as well, **but it's a balance.**

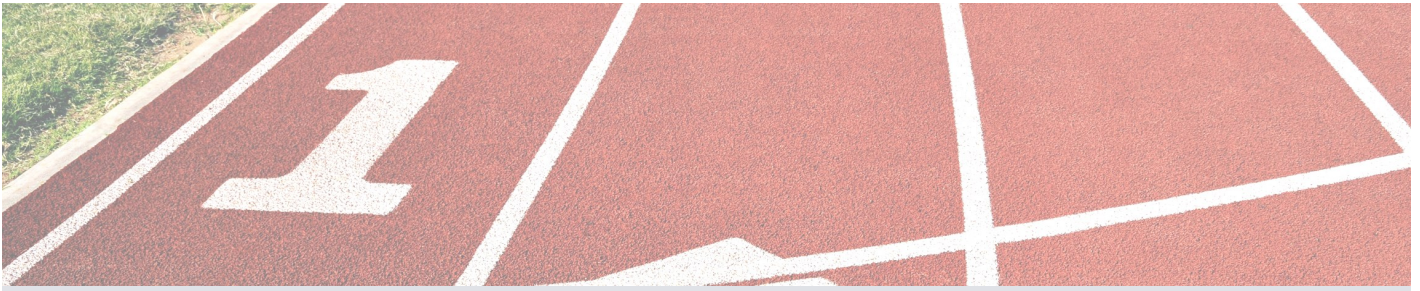
*The beauty of sport is that there's always something you can do.*



I went out to Little Athletics this morning to watch some kids run, and I was trying to encourage them to make sure they continue with sport well after they've progressed beyond those tender years. I think even while you're in school, exercise helps you maintain a good balance in life as well because it's good for the brain, it really is. And as an adult, when you have so many different commitments, people are busy, the mums here especially! So it's a time management issue when you just have to fit things in. But the beauty of sport is that there's always something you can do. You can do lunges in front of the TV! Even with housework, there's things you can do to keep fit, so it's just about working out the time and having the energy to do it, I guess.

**BR:** One of the perceptions out there in the general public is that it's easier for an elite athlete to stay motivated and hyped up. But we all know you're human. What are some obstacles you've overcome to achieve those magnificent achievements in your career?

**TL:** The obstacles that you face as an elite athlete are similar to the ones that "everyday people" face. **There are days when you wake up sore and tired and you just can't be bothered, so you need to find a way to motivate yourself.** It might be waiting an extra half hour, or **just getting out there and taking that first step**, because often in a run, it's the first 5 minutes that hurt the most. I've faced critics and that's hard to take sometimes when you hear negative comments directed towards you and what you're trying to do. At the end of the day, what you do is **surround yourself with really positive people and you fall back into their arms when you're struggling.** An athlete is only as strong as their team around them. Fortunately for me I have a great family, I have a great coach (my brother coaches me), and I run for a great club that feels like a family club. So yeah, I'm really lucky; I surround myself with positive people, and when I'm having a bad day, I rely on them to get me up.



**BR:** That's a wonderful piece of advice. And I've read before that some of your coaches have been some of the best track and field athletes in the world. First of all, tell me who they are and how they have made the difference in your career to take it to where you wanted to get to.

**TL:** *(speaking to her brother and coach Justin Lewis)* I'm pretty sure they're talking about you when they're saying the best in the world!

My brother coaches me. He coached me to my World Indoor gold and he has definitely got the best out of me out of all the coaches that I've had. But I'm guessing that you're referring to the fact that I was also coached by Sebastian Coe and Daley Thompson. Sebastian and Daley won Olympic gold medals at the 1980 and 1984 Olympic Games, and they're still great friends of mine. Actually, Sebastian Coe just ran the whole London Olympics (in his role as Chairman of the London Organising Committee for the Olympic Games), so he's a pretty special person and I am very fortunate to not only have met them but to call them my friends.

And for those who don't know, my husband (Graham Manou) was the captain of East State cricket, the Redbacks, and he played a test match in the Ashes in 2009 when he was in England. He's a wicket keeper and he's played for Australia in one-dayers, as well. So I think one of my greatest accomplishments would have to be that I own a baggy green, because you know when you're married, it's 50/50!



**BR:** Does that mean he owns a few World Indoor gold medals and Commonwealth Games medals?

**TL:** You're married, aren't you? Isn't it, "What's mine is mine, and what's yours is mine as well?"

**BR:** I guess there's one last thing I'd like to ask. In addition to fitness, one of the big things that we work with our clients on is their nutrition. We have a real emphasis on making sure that people are eating correctly, not only for achieving their health goals but also for optimal performance while at work and what have you. How important is nutrition in your life, as an elite athlete?

**TL:** Yeah, I actually really struggled with the nutrition side of things when I was a teenager. If anyone has watched track and field, (you would have noticed that) we get around in not very much! We wear a two-piece so your "abs" are always showing, and athletes are meant to be lean all the time. But I worked out that, **as long as you eat the right foods and you do the right training, your body finds where it's meant to be.**

Everybody in athletics comes in all different shapes and sizes, just like in life, and all I can tell myself is to make sure that I eat all those foods I'm supposed to, that I get enough iron, that I eat my fruits and vegetables. I still do treat myself, but I keep it in moderation and I think that's the main emphasis that you put into your diet. You have to have a well-rounded diet, eat well, but you can have those treats as long as it is in moderation.

**BR:** Now that you've achieved such wonderful things in Track and Field, what does life hold for you now? What's your goal and what are the sights that you're setting for yourself currently?

**TL:** That's pretty hard. **You spend your whole life doing one thing, and when you're an athlete you tend to be so "in the zone" that you put your head down and all you focus on is that next race, the next main goal, the next Olympic Games. For me, it came to an abrupt end this year.** I thought that I would have made the Olympic Games and I wasn't picked, and that was pretty heartbreaking. So you find yourself trying to work out what you're going to do next in life. But I was fortunate enough that straight out of school, I got a university degree; I've got a science degree, so I'm kind of looking forward to working! Most of my friends are saying, "Hold off as long as you can, full-time work is hard." **But you know, it's another challenge for me.** I haven't exactly decided what I'm going to be doing, but I'm looking forward to it because it will be quite nice to get a regular pay packet too, as athletics doesn't really pay the bills...



**BR:** So not only have you had an accomplished Track and Field career, but you've also got a university degree. Wow, that's pretty impressive!

Tamsyn mentioned it there: she narrowly missed out on being selected for the Australian Olympic team in 2012, which would have made it her fourth Olympic Games. She actually qualified under the International Qualifying Time, but the Australian selectors chose not to take her along to the Games. So she put in all the hard work, she's been dedicated and achieved the required standard. Tamsyn, tell us about your feelings at that time and how you overcame that disappointment.

**TL:** It hurt, it definitely does hurt when you set yourself a goal and you don't achieve it. **But I guess what you have to do is think, "Did you do everything that you possibly could?" And I did.** I won the national title, and I understand that the International Athletics Federation would have accepted me as a representative for Australia, but my country decided that we didn't want anyone in my events, so unfortunately I had to sit and watch what would have been my fourth Olympic Games. But it is really hard because you do spend four years focusing on that one goal, and that's a long time to be doing a lot of hard work. If anyone has run 800 metres, the training really hurts. But at the end of the day, since Beijing, I've got a few more national titles and I've run for my club and I've supported the domestic scene. **I've given everything I possibly can and it was all I could have done, so you have to look at things as though sometimes there's going to be disappointments, but ultimately I am proud of what I have achieved.**

Watch Brendan's interview with **Tamsyn Lewis** on the **Inspire Fitness Youtube Channel!**



[Click here for Part 1](#)

[Click here for Part 2](#)

**BR:** And so you should be and we congratulate you for that. Thank you for giving us a little bit of insight as to what it's like to be an elite athlete, and thank you for being such an outstanding Australian. Thank you very much Tamsyn.