



From Tragedy to Triumph

The Inspiring Journey of Gerrard Finlayson

He's a high-performance trainer to the 1%, working with CEOs, entrepreneurs, and busy professionals globally. Twice named 'Personal Trainer of the Year'

Gerrard Finlayson appears to be living the dream. However, his journey has been anything but smooth.

"My dreams were shattered in an instant," recalls Gerrard. In September 2001, a drunk driver hit Gerrard head-on at twice the speed limit, ending his aspirations of becoming a professional basketball player. "Ironically, I had just started my Sports Therapy degree. The principles I learned were crucial in my recovery from a life-changing back injury," he reflects.

Despite living with a lower back condition for two decades, Gerrard has not let this define him. "I can't run or jump as fast or high as I used to, but I've optimised everything else. Overcoming this challenge has proved invaluable in mentoring my clients. Life isn't about being dealt a good hand. It's about playing a poor hand well."



Gerrard started as a fitness instructor in 2003 at Amida Health Club near Twickenham, London, then as a personal trainer. "We won the UK Flame Awards for the best gym in the UK. I really got a flavor early in my career for high performance, be it in business, personally, or in the fitness space. A lot of the 2003 World Cup-winning England Rugby players were members there. I got to rub shoulders with them every day. I appreciated how they trained, how serious and dedicated they were."

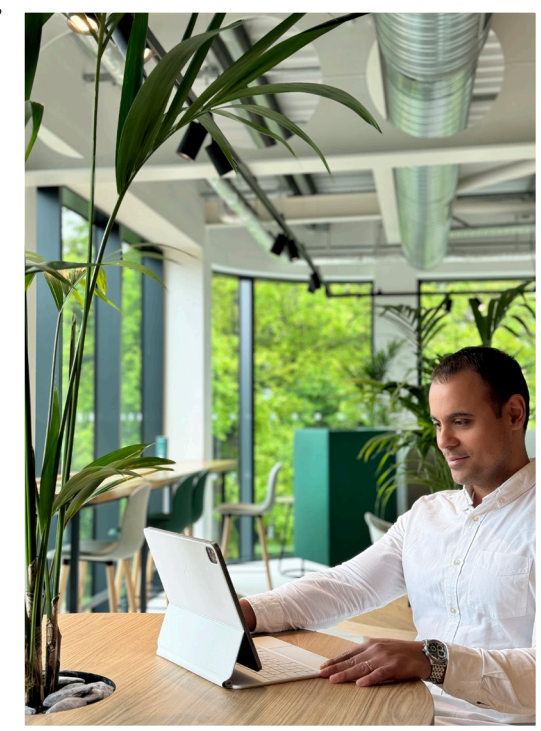
In June 2005, Gerrard set up his personal training business. Since then, he has completed over 30,000 training sessions. From boot camps in the snow and rain in Cobham, Surrey, to training private clients in luxury home gyms that he helps design and supply, Gerrard's journey has been one of relentless perseverance. "I've learned in the fitness business that there are three keys to success. One - first class client experience. Two - results. Three - relationships. You need all three to make it work."

The vast majority of Gerrard's business has grown purely through recommendations. He's fully booked from 6:00 each morning, with a long waiting list. But Gerrard's journey hasn't been without further setbacks. In 2019, Gerrard's son, Jonah, was born with a serious congenital heart defect caused by 22q11 deletion syndrome, or DiGeorge syndrome.

The spectrum of DiGeorge syndrome is large, often including congenital heart defects, facial disfigurement, speech, language, learning difficulties, and compromised immunity. "Life suddenly got put on hold," says Gerrard. "Jonah

had life-saving open-heart reconstructive surgery at just three days old. His aortic arch was not connected, and he had two holes in his heart. The surgeons at The Royal Brompton Hospital, London, were miracle workers."

Jonah's recovery was a challenging time for Gerrard and his family. "It really took its toll. I prioritised my son and family, often not knowing how we would get through each day. But I am so proud of Jonah. He's a real





fighter who has taught me to dig deeper than ever. Carissa, my wife, is an absolute rock, too. We grew closer together during the ordeal, but things were starting to crack at the seams elsewhere.” Jonah has gone on to flourish, impressing his medical team with his progress. “To me, he is a modern-day miracle.” The prolonged and heavy life-and-death nature of Jonah’s difficult start to life not only affected

Gerrard’s business but also his physical and mental health. “I kind of forgot about myself. I became depressed and found myself in the worst shape of my life. It’s not easy to share this, especially as a personal trainer. There’s an expectation that we should always be in peak condition, but the reality is that we’re human, too. It can happen to anyone, and it happened to me. It was a tough period.” Despite these challenges, Gerrard is now in the best shape of his life at 41, and his business, GF Fitness Limited, has become a multi-award-winning enterprise. He’s also been voted ‘Personal Trainer of The Year’ two years in a row.

A major catalyst for his resurgence was the development of his online coaching platform and private app. “A person changes when the pain of remaining the same is greater than the pain of change. For me, it was that time for change.” Gerrard’s online coaching platform and private app have transformed how he engages with clients globally, particularly busy professionals looking to integrate fitness into their demanding schedules. “I’ve created a system that delivers bespoke training programs, nutrition plans, and real-time support. This platform allows me to mentor clients no matter where they are in the world, ensuring they achieve transformative results. My industry-leading personal training experience ensures that clients tick all the right boxes, integrating essential fitness and wellness habits into their lives.”

Gerrard’s clients can seamlessly incorporate fitness into their routines with a user-friendly interface and personalised touch. “The results have been astounding. Clients not only see physical changes but also experience profound mental and emotional growth. It’s about creating a lifestyle that promotes total well-being. For busy professionals, this means efficient, impactful workouts and sustainable nutrition plans that fit their hectic lives.”

Since hitting his 40s, Gerrard has felt a burning desire to continue his personal growth. “You can either be judged because you created something or ignored because you left your greatness inside of you,” he says, quoting James Clear. I now feel like I’m just getting started. The fears and limiting beliefs I had before hitting rock bottom are gone.



It’s time to do something special.”

Gerrard is excited to announce the launch of a unique Wellbeing Retreat in partnership with Daunara Safari Camp in the heart of the Okavango Delta, Botswana. The retreat combines the raw beauty of a bespoke safari experience with a unique synergy of body and mind. “This is totally organic, not artificially created. The power of nature and its restorative powers are incredible.”

The camp is opulent, designed by award-winning architects Fox Browne Creative to make it feel like your dream home away from home. Together with your bespoke and exclusive safari experience, you will be personally trained by Gerrard every day in their luxury Technogym-equipped wellness studio. “I will push your body safely and effectively, but also provide you with the tools to continue your fitness journey for life. You’ll often see the elephants visiting to say hello with each rep or step, and we’ll have fun while we’re doing it!”



According to Gerrard, nutrition is a fundamental wellness pillar. “Unlike other retreats, we don’t skimp on food. You’ll be fed mouthwatering, vibrant, and wholesome flavors of the delta, passionately prepared by our Michelin-star chefs, leaving you feeling utterly nourished. Every bite is a taste of adventure amidst nature’s splendour.”

Exciting times lie ahead. This is the culmination of years of dedication, setbacks, 4:30 am alarms, and real-world experience being fed into this next project for Gerrard. He feels he’s only getting started, so we look forward to seeing his journey continue.

Gerrard Finlayson’s story serves as an inspiration to us all. He has empowered himself and others to achieve physical and mental transformation, helping them consistently integrate the right fitness and lifestyle choices for the long haul. Even though Gerrard works with many influential individuals from all over the world, he remains grounded, with a quiet confidence and a clear, burning drive to be and do better. As his story signifies, and as he has so openly shared, it is okay to fail. It isn’t OK to not try.

Wellbeing Retreat, in partnership with Daunara Safari Camp in the heart of the Okavango Delta, Botswana

