



Orla Comerford

DE&I and Paralympian



Orla is a three-time Paralympian, having won a bronze medal in the 100m S13 category (for visually impaired athletes) at the 2024 Paris Games with a time of 11.94 seconds. In 2018, she also secured bronze medals in both the 100m and 200m events at the Para-Athletics Championships.

After facing a challenging period due to injuries, Orla made a strong comeback in 2023 by placing fourth at the Para Athletics World Championships, which earned her a qualifying spot for the Paris 2024 Games. In 2024, she was in the best shape of her life, achieving personal bests in the 60m and 100m events, culminating in her bronze medal win at the Paralympics.

Orla was always active as a child and began running with her club, Raheny Shamrock, at the age of six. However, her vision started to deteriorate around the age of 11. She was later diagnosed with Stargardt disease, a degenerative condition that affects her central vision.

She made her Paralympic debut at the age of 18 during the Rio 2016 Games and served as one of Ireland's flag bearers at the opening ceremony of the 2024 Paris Paralympics.

In addition to her athletic pursuits, Orla is a talented artist with a BA in Fine Art Media. She works part-time at the Irish Museum of Modern Art, drawing inspiration from her unique visual experiences.

Speaker Topics

Orla is an inspiring speaker with a powerful personal story of perseverance, resilience, and creativity. She shares her journey through sports and overcoming challenges, delivering engaging and motivational talks that not only inspire audiences but also empower individuals to embrace their obstacles and pursue their passions.

Resilience in the Face of Adversity:

Orla discusses her experiences with injuries and setbacks, emphasizing the importance of mental strength and determination in achieving one's goals.

Living with Visual Impairment:

She shares insights into her diagnosis of Stargardt disease and the adaptations she has made in both sports and daily life, aiming to promote awareness and understanding of visual impairments.

The Importance of Inclusion in Sports:

Orla advocates for greater inclusion and opportunities for athletes with disabilities, highlighting the benefits of diverse participation in sports.

Goal Setting and Achievement:

She discusses strategies for setting achievable goals and how to work towards them, drawing from her own experiences leading up to major competitions like the Paralympics.