Why financial decision-making can feel like an elite sport

By Nicola Langridge, CFP® FPI Financial Planner of the Year™ and wealth manager at Private Client Holdings | August 2026

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Life has a way of tempting us to believe that success belongs to those who can predict the future. We admire the athlete who lifts the trophy, the entrepreneur who builds a thriving business, or the wealthy family that successfully grows and preserves wealth across generations. From the outside, it can appear as though they simply made better decisions at the right time.

But success is rarely about prediction. It is almost always about having a plan, trusting the process, and partnering with the right people to help you stay the course when uncertainty arrives.

For women, whether they are leading businesses, managing households, building careers, caring for ageing parents, raising children, or navigating major life transitions (or all of these), the pressure to make the "right" decisions can feel immense. Yet the most successful women don't possess a crystal ball, they simply understand the value of preparation.

The Trap of Waiting for Certainty

Many of us delay important financial decisions while waiting for the perfect moment – we want the market to settle, the Rand to strengthen, the geopolitical environment to improve, or uncertainty to disappear. But certainty rarely arrives, and those who spend years waiting for perfect conditions often find themselves further behind than those who committed to a sound plan and started moving forward.

The same principle applies in elite sport. Championships are not won in the final moments of a match. They are won in the months and years of preparation beforehand. Likewise, financial security is not created through one brilliant investment decision. It is built through consistent actions taken over time, often long before the rewards become visible.

Why Every Great Journey Needs a Coach

One of the most striking similarities between elite sport and wealth management is that nobody achieves lasting success alone. Every successful athlete has people behind them; coaches, mentors, performance specialists, people who provide perspective when emotions run high, people who see the bigger picture when the athlete becomes lost in the moment.

The same is true in wealth management. When markets become volatile, families are not simply looking at numbers on a screen. They are looking at their retirement dreams, their children's education, their business legacy, and their future security. Naturally, emotions become involved.

That's where the right wealth manager becomes invaluable. Not because they can predict the future, but because they can help you remember the plan when fear or uncertainty threatens to derail it.

Often, the most valuable role of a coach, or a wealth manager, is not to provide answers, but to ask the questions that bring clarity.

Progress Comes from Trusting the Path

A client of mine recently became consumed by trying to optimise her tax outcomes across multiple countries. After listening carefully, I stepped back and asked a much simpler question: *"What do you actually want your life to look like over the next twenty years?"*

The answer transformed the conversation. Suddenly, the focus shifted from chasing complexity to creating a life aligned with her true goals. Progress comes from consistently following the path and keeping your eye on the goal.

For women especially, who tend to juggle both professional and domestic priorities simultaneously, this lesson is particularly powerful. Financial confidence is simply about taking the next right step, and not requiring every answer today.

Success Is a Long Game

Success does not require perfection. For any professional sportsperson, failure, setbacks and disappointing performances are not exceptions, they are part of the journey.

What matters is commitment to continuing; to learning, to improving, to trusting the process. The same is true for wealth creation; there will be market downturns, unexpected life changes, periods of uncertainty and disruption. However, women who have clear goals, a well-constructed plan, and trusted advisers by their side are far more likely to stay focused on what matters most.