University of Birmingham athletes on the road to Rio

One current student and eight alumni athletes from the University of Birmingham Sport have now been confirmed for the 2016 Rio Olympic Games. This is a record breaking number of Birmingham educated athletes to be selected for the Olympics, showing that the sport programme at Birmingham continues to thrive.

Lily Owsley, who currently studies Sport and Exercise Science has already made headlines worldwide this year. She was part of the England hockey squad who won the European Championships, as well as being named Rising Star of the Year by the International Hockey Federation. Owsley has achieved all this in a year where she was taken ill with meningitis and fractured her collar bone in a match against Australia.

Also joining Lily on the Team GB women’s hockey squad at the Rio Olympics will be University of Birmingham alumni Sophie Bray and Ellie Watton (reserve).

Simon Mantell, who graduated from the University of Birmingham in 2007, has been selected for the Team GB men’s hockey squad as a reserve.

One of the University of Birmingham Sport’s most successful alumni of recent years, Non Stanford, who took up triathlon in her second year at University and then went on to become ITU World U23 Champion in 2013, will also be representing Team GB. Stanford, who trains alongside the Brownlee brothers, has been marked as a medal contender making Team GB’s triathlon team a force to be reckoned with.

Non Stanford’s University housemate, Sara Treacy, has also been selected to represent Ireland in the 3000m steeplechase. Treacy is a doctor at Alexandra Hospital in Redditch but she has taken a sabbatical year to focus on her Olympic dream, which in recent weeks has included successful races at the European Championships in Amsterdam and Muller Anniversary Games in the London Olympic Stadium.

2013 Physiotherapy graduate, Ciara Horne, has been named as one of the riders in Team GB’s women’s track team. The Wales-born cyclist is no stranger to winning medals internationally as she was part of the team who won gold in the 2014 UCI Track Cycling World Cup Guadalajara and silver at the 2016 UCI Track Cycling World Cup Hong Kong.

Seasoned Olympic archer, Naomi Folkard, who graduated from the University of Birmingham in 2005, will be attending her fourth Olympic Games this summer. Her highest Olympic finish to date was 11th in the 2004 Athens Olympics.

Birmingham-based James Rodwell, who graduated in 2005, will be a valuable member of Team GB’s Rugby Sevens Team. Rodwell set a new world record earlier this year after playing in 69 consecutive World Rugby Sevens Series’ tournaments! After University, Rodwell played for Moseley RFC for five years where he made over 100 appearances and worked in the community programme.
The University of Birmingham Sport wishes all athletes good luck at the Rio Olympic Games.

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For further enquiries contact: April Shacklock – Sport PR Executive
a.shacklock@bham.ac.uk / 0121 4147143 / 07786336634

Notes to editors:

• The University of Birmingham is ranked amongst the world’s top 100 institutions, its work brings people from across the world to Birmingham, including researchers and teachers and more than 5,000 international students from over 150 countries.
• The University of Birmingham is currently ranked in the top five universities for sport in the UK.
• Lily Owsley competes for the University of Birmingham Sport Hockey Club in the British University and Colleges League and the Investec National Women’s Division. Owsley is also a member of the senior squad for England Hockey.
• Sophie Bray graduated in 2011 with a degree in Psychology. She played alongside Lily Owsley in the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games to win silver for England.
• Non Stanford graduated in 2012 with a degree in Sport and Exercise Science
• Sara Treacy graduated in 2013 with a medical degree, however, she continues to train at the University of Birmingham as a graduate scholar alongside Hannah England and Alison Leonard.
• Naomi Folkard graduated in 2005 with a degree in music. Her achievements include a gold medal at the 2013 World Archery Games and a silver medal at the World Field Archery Championships in 2010.