



Sophie Drakeford Lewis - Alumna of The Abbey  
Vitality Roses Netball World Cup Squad, July - August 2023

gsa



GIRLS GO  
GOLD



The Abbey

Thursday  
14 September 2023

In partnership with



University of  
Reading

CONFIDENCE, PURPOSE AND JOY



# Welcome



## We are delighted to welcome you to the GSA Girls Go Gold Conference 2023 at The Abbey School, Reading.

It is such a pleasure to bring together 550 students and PE staff from 40 schools for a day of inspiration and sports masterclasses with leading UK athletes and coaches.

Women's sport has never had a higher profile nor a larger fan base and it is exciting for our schools to unite for this day of exploration, self-discovery and learning through sport. Experience gained from Girls Go Gold 2023 will help us all play an active role in driving positive change in women's sport into the future - whether as athletes, coaches, decision-makers or advocates. The theme for this year's conference is rooted in our goals and passion at The Abbey: Leading with confidence, Learning with purpose, Living with joy.

Girls Go Gold 2023 brings together elite athletes including alumnae of The Abbey, national sport governing bodies and leading sports clubs in our area, to give a distinctly Reading and Thames Valley flavour. As a town-centre school, we benefit from excellent facilities on our doorstep, from the home of British Rowing at the Redgrave Pinsent Rowing Lake, Palmer Park Athletics Stadium - training ground for elite athletes with Reading Athletic Club - and the Sports Park at the University of Reading. We will be hosting sport masterclasses at all these facilities alongside those at The Abbey.

Our keynote speakers are role models and advocates for women in sport. Dame Katherine Grainger, now chair of UK Sport, was one of the most memorable stories of London 2012, winning Olympic rowing gold. We are also delighted to announce Dame Denise Lewis, President of Commonwealth Games England, and Sarah Hunter CBE, recently retired Captain of England Rugby after the spectacular Six Nations Victory in April, sharing their expertise and experience alongside all our athletes, coaches and sports scientists.

We look forward to welcoming you to The Abbey on Thursday 14 September for a wonderful day of inspiration, learning and joy.

Will le Fleming  
Head





# Overview

Delegates to Girls Go Gold 2023 will experience keynote addresses from leading women in UK sport, one 90-minute masterclass from a selection of 11 sports and a carousel of inspirational talks and sport science seminars.

Students and staff will join together at The Abbey for the keynote speakers at the start and end of the day.

During morning and afternoon activity sessions, students will be divided between either a 90-minute sport masterclass or a carousel of 3 x 30-minute talks, swapping over after lunch.

Some sport masterclasses will take place at sport venues around Reading with student transport provided. Talks and lunch will take place at The Abbey.

There will be a bespoke schedule for each student, informed by the registration information received from schools.

Visiting PE staff will be free to move around The Abbey Campus. University of Reading is a 12-minute walk or a staff shuttle minibus will be available.

# Timetable

07:30 onwards	Registration & Light Breakfast	The Abbey
08:15 - 08:30	Stretch & Conditioning Warm-Up with GoPerform (optional)	The Abbey
08:50	Welcome - Head of The Abbey, Will le Fleming	The Abbey
09:00 - 09:30	Keynote Speaker: Dame Katherine Grainger, Chair of UK Sport & Olympic Gold, Rowing	The Abbey
<b>Group A Multiple Venues</b>		<b>Group B The Abbey</b>
09:40	Depart for Sport Venues	09:50 Talks / Activity 1 (30 mins)
10:00	Sport Masterclass (90 mins)	10:30 Talk / Activity 2
11:45	Depart for The Abbey	11.10 Talk / Activity 3
11:00 - 15:15	Discovery Zone	The Abbey
11:40 - 13:00	'Grab & Go' Lunch	The Abbey
<b>Group A The Abbey</b>		<b>Group B Multiple Venues</b>
13:10	Talk / Activity 1 (30 mins)	12:40 Depart for Sport Venues
13:50	Talk / Activity 2	13:00 Sport Masterclass (90 mins)
14:30	Talk / Activity 3	14:40 Depart for The Abbey
15:20	Guest Speaker: Dame Denise Lewis, President of Commonwealth Games England & Olympic Gold, Heptathlon	The Abbey
15:45	The 'Girls Go Gold' Panel: Audience Q&A with our leading women in sport	The Abbey
16:30	Close	The Abbey



# Introducing our Guest Speakers



Dame Katherine Grainger



Dame Denise Lewis



Sarah Hunter CBE

Photo Credit: RFL collection via Getty Images





## Dame Katherine Grainger

09:00

Main Arena, The Abbey

Dame Katherine Grainger is one of Britain's most successful female Olympic athletes and the first British woman to win medals at five successive Olympic Games, including a memorable gold medal at London 2012.

Following a two-year break from the GB Rowing Squad, she decided to return to the demanding training regime and in 2016, became the then most-decorated female Olympian of all time winning a silver medal in the Rio Olympic Games, narrowly missing the gold after leading for three quarters of the race.

Katherine became Chair of UK Sport in 2017, an appointment which requires the approval of the Prime Minister. The mission of UK Sport is to lead athletes from the UK to world-class success.

A graduate of law from Edinburgh University, Katherine later completed a PhD. She is the former Chancellor of Oxford Brookes University and currently Chancellor of Glasgow University.



## Dame Denise Lewis

15:20 & 15:45

Main Arena, The Abbey

Dame Denise Lewis is President of Commonwealth Games England, a former Olympic gold medal athlete and an accomplished presenter and broadcaster.

Denise is a heptathlete, winning gold at the 2000 Sydney Olympics and subsequently being inducted into the UK Athletics Hall of Fame.

Since her retirement from Athletics, Denise has undertaken an array of television work. She is a commentator for the BBC, reporting from all major sporting competitions.

Throughout her career, Denise has used her platform to discuss and promote diversity. Amongst her many achievements, she anchored the Woman of the Year Awards for ITV1, shared her insights into being Black and British in a BBC Two Series and works with Breast Cancer Care.



RFU collection via Getty Images

## Sarah Hunter CBE

13:50, 14:30 & 15:45

Main Arena, The Abbey

Sarah Hunter CBE is the world's most-capped women's international rugby player and England's most-capped player - male or female.

Her journey has taken her from amateur to professional rugby, with one World Cup win and 10 Six Nations titles, including 9 grand slams. Born in North Shields and discovering rugby at primary school, she moved to Loughborough Lightning to take up a player-coach role.

With 141 appearances for England, Sarah retired as co-captain of England Women's Rugby after the opening fixture of the 2023 TikTok Women's Six Nations in her home city of Newcastle. England went on to win the tournament.

Sarah became World Rugby Women's Player of the Year in 2016 and was awarded a CBE for services to rugby union in the King's Birthday Honours list in June 2023.





# A Choice of Sport Masterclasses

## Athletics

Location: Palmer Park Athletics Stadium, home of Reading Athletic Club



### Coaches & Athletes from Reading Athletic Club

#### Jumping, Throwing, Running & Multi-Event

Including:

- Naomi Mitchell, GB Distance Runner.
- Joe Frew, Head Team Manager.
- Terry Rajkumar, High Jump Coach.
- Ian Payne, Throwing Coach.
- Charlotte Payne, GB Hammer Thrower.
- Charlotte Webb, Multi Event Coach.
- Ibrahim Turay, Sprint Coach.

## Aquatics

Location: The Abbey, Pool



### Amy Smith

- World and Olympic Finalist.
- Commonwealth Medallist - European Relay Champion.

### Joe Roebuck

- European Medallist - Olympic Semi-Finalist.
- 10x British Champion - Commonwealth Medallist and Record Holder.

## Badminton

Location: UoR, Sports Hall



### Gail Emms MBE

- Olympic Silver Medallist in Mixed Doubles, Commonwealth Gold Medallist and former World Champion. National Champion in Mixed Doubles and Ladies Doubles.
- Number 1 in the World Rankings Mixed Doubles 2005 - 2006.

## Cricket

Location: UoR, Sports Hall



### Charlotte Taylor

- Spin bowler for Southern Vipers and the dominant bowler in domestic cricket since 2020.
- Regular commentator on BBC Radio Solent.



## Football

Location: UoR, Pitch



**Jon Whittingham**

- FA Women's Talent Technical Coach within the England Talent Pathway. Specifically, working with the WU14 - 16s.

## Hockey

Location: The Abbey, Astro



**Susannah Townsend MBE**

- Olympic Gold Medallist (Rio 2016) and Bronze (Tokyo 2021). Represented Great Britain and England 188 times including medal-winning performances at the Commonwealth Games and European Championships.

## Lacrosse

Location: UoR, STP



**Mike Molster**

- Senior Women's Team Head Coach, England Lacrosse and Head of Lacrosse at Exeter University. Former Assistant Coach for England and U19 Women's Teams.



**Zoe Lovibond**

- England Senior Women's Lacrosse Squad.
- Experiences include winning Home Internationals for both the 10s and 6s format, winning the EuroLax 6s tournament and competing in the BUCS Final for Exeter University.





# A Choice of Sport Masterclasses

## Netball

Location: UoR, Courts



**Fran Williams**

- Vitality Roses, England Netball.
- Silver Medallist in the England Netball World Cup Squad 2023.
- Fran is from Reading and was a member of Woodley Netball Club, progressing from county to regional level and then England trails. She had call-ups for England U17, U19 and U21.

## Rowing

Location: Redgrave Pinsent Rowing Lake



**Coaches, GB Rowing Team**

- Rowing is the nation's most continuously successful Olympic sport, having won a gold medal in every Olympic Games since 1984, and six Paralympic golds since the sport was introduced in 2008.

## Rugby

Location: UoR, Pitch



**Ella Lovibond and Jenny Hesketh**

- Ella and Jenny are players for Bristol Bears in the Allianz Premier 15s. Recent international experience includes England U20s and Senior England 7s squad.

## Tennis

Location: UoR, Tennis Dome



**Danny Sapsford**

- ATP Tour player, Men's National Singles Champion, Wimbledon 3rd Round and represented GB in the Davis Cup. LTA National coach and co-founder Bright Ideas for Tennis.



Special thanks to the University of Reading. We are working in partnership, recognising a shared ambition to encourage young women to participate in sport.



# Talks & Activities Carousel

Location: The Abbey

Talks & Activities will run concurrently in 3 venues between 09:50 & 11:40 and 13:10 & 15:00.

In the Main Arena, students will be able to hear athletes talk about their experiences in sport; Sport Science Seminars will take place in the Lecture Theatre; meanwhile, Performance Testing in the Gym will support athletes to optimise their training programme and assess readiness for competition.

## Inspirational Stories

Location: Main Arena, The Abbey



### 09:50 & 10:30 - Success, Setbacks & Resilience: An Athlete's Story

Kelly Simm, GB Gymnast

Kelly is an Artistic Gymnast who has been representing Great Britain for the last 12 years. Balancing undergraduate and masters degrees in sports science, she has won medals across the world. She won 4 Commonwealth Games medals from three consecutive Commonwealth Games, a World Championship Bronze medal, as well as major titles including the British All-Around Champion and a historic World University Games All-Around title.

Kelly's career has not come without its challenges. After returning from multiple career-threatening injuries, Kelly will share her story about what she has learnt from the power of resilience and what can come from never giving up.



### 11.10 - Sport Activism: Leading Change in Women's Sport

Zainab Alema, Trustee of the Muslim Sport Foundation

Zainab is a rugby player for Richmond Women and her dream is to make history by becoming the First Muslim woman to play rugby for England. She was awarded Sunday Times Grassroots Sports Woman of the Year (2020) and Woman of the Future (2022).

Mum of 3 and former neonatal nurse, Zainab is passionate about getting more ethnically diverse people into sport which led her to start 'Studs in the Mud', a charity project which uses rugby to change the lives of women and children in Ghana.





# Talks & Activities Carousel

Location: The Abbey

## Inspirational Stories

Location: Main Arena, The Abbey



### 13.10 - Sport Activism: Leading Change in Women's Sport

#### Jenny Mitton, Director and Women's Sport Lead at M&C Saatchi Sport and Entertainment

Jenny is a leader in sports marketing who is passionate about delivering positive change for diversity and equality. Growing up, Jenny struggled to find female role models in sport and was unable to play the sports she loved at school – football and cricket.

She has now become one of the leading voices in the women's sports space and is setting out to change the sports landscape for women and girls. Jenny led the PR and comms for the UEFA Women's Euros England 2022 and leads Barclays sponsorship of the Women's Super League.



Photo Credit: RFU collection via Getty Images

### 13:50 & 14:30 - Leading England onto the Pitch

#### Sarah Hunter CBE

With 141 appearances, Sarah Hunter is the world's most capped women's rugby player. She has captained England in the Women's Six Nations and the Rugby World Cup.

Sarah has reached 4 World Cup finals, winning in 2014 and losing to New Zealand in 2010, 2017 and 2022 - captaining the Red Roses in the last two. Sarah is passionate about inspiring the next generation to believe that playing for England is possible.





# Talks & Activities Carousel

Location: The Abbey

## Sport Science Seminars

Location: Lecture Theatre, The Abbey



**09:50 & 10:30 - Rehab & Recovery:** Athletes get injured, but what can you do about it to stop it happening in the first place and how do you get back to fitness if it does?

**Louise Sugden, GB Para Powerlifter**

Louise Sugden is a Para Powerlifter - Paralympic Bronze medalist, Commonwealth Games Silver medalist, European & British Champion and British record holder in her weight class. She formerly competed for GB in Wheelchair Basketball.

Louise missed the Commonwealth Games in 2022 due to injury. She and the performance rehabilitation team at the UK Sports Institute based at Bisham Abbey National Sports Centre will share her recovery journey.



**Steve Leonard, Senior Physiotherapist**  
**Performance Rehabilitation, UK Sport Institute**

Steve graduated from Cardiff University with a BSc (Hons) in Physiotherapy. He pursued a professional rugby career and worked alongside as a clinical lead physiotherapist supporting GB pathway athletes and academy programmes. He was the lead physiotherapist for the 2020 Men's Olympic Rowing Squad and is now the senior physiotherapist in the intensive rehab unit at Bisham Abbey, working with GB Olympic and Paralympic athletes.



**Roy Barber, Strength and Conditioning Coach**  
**Performance Rehabilitation, UK Sport Institute**

Roy studied at Loughborough University (BSc in Sport and Exercise Science) and has worked with the England and Wales Cricket Board and GB Hockey. Roy joined the Performance Rehabilitation Team in 2022 where he leads diagnostics and training to support athletes' return to sport.





# Talks & Activities Carousel

Location: The Abbey

## Sport Science Seminars

Location: Lecture Theatre, The Abbey



**11:10 & 13:10 - Nutrition with a Female Filter:** Active females have unique energy and nutrition demands compared to their male counterparts. This session provides a practical guide on what foods, vitamins and minerals are essential to support sports performance.

**Ellie Olds**

Footballer for Fulham FC Women & Senior Nutritionist for Holroyd Howe. Ellie has a degree in Sport & Exercise Science.

**Molly Wisbey**

Lead Food & Sports Nutritionist for Holroyd Howe. Graduated with a masters in sports nutrition and has worked with elite athletes including Manchester United WFC.



**13:50 & 14:30 - Performance & The Menstrual Cycle:** The menstrual cycle is more than just a period! What's happening with our hormones and how do they affect us physically and emotionally? How can our cycle be a superpower? And how can we manage troublesome symptoms of the cycle?

**Dr Emma Ross, Chief Scientific Officer at The Well HQ**

Dr Emma Ross is the former Head of Physiology at the English Institute of Sport. She was awarded the Sunday Times 'Women of the Year Changemaker Award' in recognition of her work to improve sport for women.

As co-founder of The Well HQ, Emma seeks to tackle the taboos that exist within sport - topics such as periods and the menstrual cycle, breast health, pelvic floor health and mental health.





# Talks & Activities Carousel

Location: The Abbey

## Performance Testing

Location: Gym, The Abbey

Performance testing, through a variety of tests and assessments, builds a comprehensive physiological profile to optimise training and assess readiness for competition. GoPerform, Reading - a human performance and sports injury centre - will put students through their paces through a series of exercises to test acceleration, lower and upper limb strength and core strength.



**Tristan Baker, Head of Performance, GoPerform**  
BSc, MSc (Strength & Conditioning), ASCC, CSCS

Tristan heads up the athletic performance department. Tristan has coached national and international athletes including in Football, Formula 1, Athletics and Lacrosse.



**Maddie Bennett, BSc Sport & Exercise Science Student, University of Bath**

Maddie is a third-year student working as a Performance Coach during her placement year. Maddie says she has always loved sport and exercise, playing netball throughout school and into university whilst also weightlifting in the gym.





# Talks & Activities Carousel

Location: The Abbey

## Discovery Zone

Location: The Abbey



**Sports Kit:** The colour switch of the Lionesses' shorts from white to blue was a landmark moment in 2023. Choice, period-proof and inclusive are some of the themes informing new conversations about women's sports kit and the future.

**Meet GB swimmer Kate Haywood from Limitless, Sportswear**

Decorated double Olympian, an athlete mentor and an experienced businesswoman. At Limitless, Kate is focused on female sportswear issues in particular, having experienced life as a female elite swimmer and a member of the GB Swim Team for 10 years.



### NETBALLHer

Launched in 2023, NETBALLHer aims to challenge sporting structures to increase participation of women in sport. The industry-leading education programme aims to drive change by normalising conversations on topics around the female body. Meet the team from England Netball, Alice Moger and Debbie Spindlow.



### Body Cast Olympians

Award-winning sculptor Louise Giblin is well-known for her life-casting of Olympians. She uses an athlete's form as a blank canvas on which to create the model's narrative imagery - capturing their achievements, experiences and passions. Meet Louise and see her at work. We are delighted to be showcasing two of Louise's incredible sculptures on stage in the main arena.





# Talks & Activities Carousel

Location: The Abbey

## Discovery Zone

Location: The Abbey



### Female Nutrition

When it comes to sport, consuming the right nutrients at the right time can help boost performance, by increasing strength and endurance, aiding recovery and delaying the onset of fatigue.

Talk to Molly and Ellie, Senior Nutritionists at Holroyd Howe, and find out more about how to harness sporting success through nutrition. You can even have a go at making your own fruit smoothie!



### Drop-in Lunchtime Talks

GB Gymnast Kelly Simm, The Well Hq and sculptor Louise Giblin will offer informal talks during the lunch break. Full details will be advertised on the day.





# Schools Attending

- The Abbey
- Badminton School
- Bedford Girls' School
- Bolton School Girls' Division
- Bulmershe School
- Burgess Hill Girls
- City of London School for Girls
- Cobham Hall
- Emmbrook School
- Godolphin and Latymer
- Headington School
- Heathfield School
- Henley College
- Langtree School
- Malvern St James Girls School
- Manor House School
- Marist
- Mayfield Girls School
- Merchant Taylors School
- Northwood College
- Pipers Corner School
- Queen Anne's
- Queen Margaret's
- Queen's College, London
- Redmaids High School
- Rye St Antony
- Sherborne Girls
- St Francis' College
- St Helen & St Katharine
- St Mary's School, Cambridge
- St Mary's School, Gerrards Cross
- St Teresa's School, Effingham
- The Holt School
- The Lady Eleanor Holles School
- The Maynard School
- The Piggott School
- Wimbledon High School
- Withington Girls' School
- Wychwood School
- Wycombe Abbey



The Abbey is delighted to bring together GSA schools and our partner schools in the Reading area to develop aspiration and self discovery, as part of our ARCH programme. ARCH is a hub bringing together individuals and organisations across Reading to provide opportunities and learning experience for young people and young women in particular.





# Global Role Models in Women's Sport Exhibition at Girls Go Gold 2023

The Abbey is delighted to be partnering once again with M&C Saatchi Sport & Entertainment and Getty Images to present the ground-breaking exhibition 'In Focus: Women's Sport Through The Lens'.

The exhibition is a remarkable collection of photographs charting iconic moments in women's sport over 50 years. Brilliant trail-blazing female role models overcoming the challenges and raising the profile of their sports and achievements of women athletes in every field. It was first presented at the Saatchi Gallery in London in April 2022 and loaned exclusively to the Reading Festival of Sport @ The Abbey in June 2022.

The exhibition will be displayed on digital screens around the Girls Go Gold 2023 campus.



Tanni Grey Thompson, 2004 Athens Paralympic Games 2004



Dame Sarah Storey celebrating with her daughter, Para-cycling Track World Championship in Netherlands 2015



Jessica Ennis, London Olympic Games 2012



Olympic Rower, Polly Swann training at home during lockdown 2020



Simone Biles after pulling out of the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games 2021



Serena Williams, French Open 2018





# Body Casting Olympians



World-leading body cast sculptor Louise Giblin will be exhibiting two of her sculptures of Olympians at GSA Girls Go Gold.

Louise worked closely with leading British double Olympic gold medallist Dame Kelly Holmes and world champion gymnast Beth Tweddle MBE as part of a series of sculptures. Each sculpture uses narrative imagery to reflect a medal win of the greatest personal significance to the athlete along with the city in which it was won.

Olympia: Features Dame Kelly Holmes and her double Olympic gold win at Athens and depicts ancient Athens temples and sculptures, The Elgin Marbles, the goddess Nike and the gold medals themselves.

Beth Tweddle MBE: Features her gold medal win at the World Championships in London. Her torso includes The River Thames, St Paul's Cathedral, The O2 Arena, the London Eye and the London skyline.





# Supporters



*Thank you for leading change in women's sport*

From the students & staff of The Abbey





**Marianne Clarke**

Director of Engagement & Development



**Julie Penhaligon**

Director of PE & Sport

We would like to express our sincere thanks to the many athletes, coaches, sports clubs, sports governing bodies and change-makers in women's sport who have joined with students and staff of The Abbey to make this day possible.

Your collective skills, determination and dedication is inspiring a new generation of athletes and advocates in women's sport to challenge, persist and stand together. In the process, we are reminded of the power of sport to build communities, to strive for personal best, to change society for the better and to have fun.

Our special thanks to the University of Reading for supporting GSA Girls Go Gold 2023 and as part of The Abbey's ongoing multi-award-winning work to help girls and young women find belonging in sport.

To find out more, please email  
**[GirlsGoGold@thebbey.co.uk](mailto:GirlsGoGold@thebbey.co.uk)**

