

RUN like a GIRL

Keely Hodgkinson

Full name: **Keely Nicole Hodgkinson**

Sport: **Athletics**

Birth date: **March 3, 2002**

Place of birth: **Wigan, UK**

Team: **Great Britain**

Best achievement: **Olympic silver medalist and British record holder**

“JUST REACH FOR THE STARS AND BACK YOURSELF.”

Did you know...?

- ★ Keely is the first junior woman in the world to run the indoor 800m in less than two minutes.
- ★ She is friends with England soccer player Ella Toone: they used to do cross-country together at school.
- ★ She balances her training with studying for a degree in Criminology.

The 800m race is one of the toughest Olympic distances: it tests an athlete's ability to combine speed, endurance, and tactical racing strategy—and middle-distance runner Keely Hodgkinson excels at it.

Keely's favorite sport was swimming when she was younger, but out of the pool she was really fast. Coaches Margaret and Joe Galvin spotted her at a cross-country race when she was in elementary school and were amazed by her speed, but her commitment impressed them even more. They encouraged her to sign up to her local athletics club. She didn't like the early morning training sessions, but she turned up anyway. Every week, regardless of the weather, Keely was there, and this relentless dedication to get better fueled her unstoppable rise to success.

When she was thirteen, Keely was forced to take a short break from running because she needed an operation to remove a tumor from behind her ear. The surgery left her 95 percent deaf in one ear and it took her months to recover, but when

she returned to the track she was running faster than before. Titles soon stacked up as she became the fastest junior girl in the country, and she set her sights even higher. Could she make it all the way to the top?

The COVID-19 pandemic delayed the Tokyo 2020 Olympics by a year. This worked in her favor, because it gave her an extra year to prepare for the Games. In 2021 she flew out of the starting blocks, winning gold in the senior category at the Indoor European Championships and later earning her spot for the Olympics in Tokyo at the National Championships. Nobody expected her to win a medal at the Games because she was only nineteen, but Keely focused on each race at a time and made it through to the finals. As she took her place on the start line, she was determined to make every stride count and ran as hard as she could. She won the silver medal, smashing the national record that had stood for 26 years.

Keely is still hungry for more. She has continued to go from strength to strength, winning medals at the Commonwealth Games and World Championships, and shows no sign of slowing down.



SAVE like a GIRL

Mary Earps

Full name: **Mary Alexandra Earps MBE**

Sport: **Soccer**

Birth date: **March 7, 1993**

Place of birth: **Nottingham, UK**

Team: **England and Great Britain**

Best achievement: **Winner of UEFA**

Women's Euro 2022 and named

FIFA's best goalkeeper twice

Did you know...?

- ★ In 2023, Mary won the BBC's Sports Personality of the Year Award, which celebrates the best athletes in the UK.
- ★ She was named Vice Captain for the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023, working alongside teammate Millie Bright.
- ★ She is interested in business, earning a degree in Information Management and Business Studies, and has recently launched her own clothing company, MAEZ7.

Mary Earps is one of the most recognized goalkeepers in the world, but not everybody has believed in her potential. A tremendously talented soccer player, she kept turning up and playing from her heart until her awesome abilities were impossible to ignore.

Mary's dream to become a professional soccer player began in her backyard after spending hours kicking a ball around with her dad and brother. When she signed up to a local club she was put in the goal. She wasn't happy as she wanted to be tearing up and down the pitch with the rest of the team. But she saved a penalty shot and fell in love with the position. From that moment she began to perfect her craft.

She made her Women's Super League debut for the Doncaster Belles when she was seventeen, and Mary worked six different jobs to pay for the gas to drive to matches. She signed her first professional contract six years later, moving to different clubs before finally settling at Manchester United.

In 2018, Mary made her England senior debut, but after only eight international appearances she was dropped from the team. More bad news followed when her new Manchester United contract came

through: the money they offered her wasn't enough to cover her bills and she almost quit the sport she loved. With the support of her family, she decided to keep going, but her confidence was shredded.

In September 2021, England got a new manager, Sarina Wiegman, and she asked Mary to come back to the team. Under Sarina's guidance Mary rocketed from outsider to number one goalkeeper. She played every minute at the UEFA Women's Euro 2022, helping to win England's first major soccer trophy in more than sixty years. She was also a starring player at the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023. Even though England narrowly lost in the final, Mary won the Golden Glove Award for the tournament's best keeper.

From reserve to international superstar, Mary has received world-record bids from other clubs who want her talent and work ethic on their team.

Clinging onto her career when all seemed lost was hard, but her journey proves that success doesn't always happen straightaway and pushing through difficult times can take us to incredible places.

SCORE like a GIRL

Marta

In team sports it is often difficult for one player to shine, but Marta Vieira da Silva—known worldwide simply as Marta—is an exception to the rule. Regarded as one of the best soccer players in the world, she is admired for her unparalleled ability on the pitch and her determination to excel.

Marta comes from one of Brazil's poorest regions. Her father left when she was a baby, so Marta's mother worked long hours. Her older brother José introduced her to soccer and they played barefoot in the streets. Every day people told her that soccer wasn't a girls' sport and that she wasn't going to make it. Even her family doubted her ambitions. But Marta had a dream of making it to the top and this was far greater than any criticism. Her talent got her on the boys' team, but even then she wasn't fully accepted. She still received hurtful comments, she was still treated differently, and she was pulled from tournaments for no other reason than she was a girl.

Marta's tenacity paid off. At 14 she took a three-day bus ride to Rio de Janeiro where the coach signed her as soon as she saw her play. The women's national league was newly formed in Brazil and the money wasn't great. She sent what little she earned back to her family,

but faced a big setback when her team was cut a year later. She kept playing and people started to take notice. Three years later Marta received a phone call that changed her life. She got a transfer to Umeå IK in Sweden, where women's soccer was much more established. She stayed there for six years, proving to be a top scorer and helping her team win three league titles and a UEFA Cup. Everybody wanted the best player in the world and Marta played in the USA, Brazil, and Sweden, before finally settling with Orlando Pride, where she has been voted Most Valuable Player.

On the international scene, Marta won silver in Athens 2004 and Beijing 2008, and carried the Olympic flag in her home games in Rio 2016. She is best known for her goal scoring. In fact, her record of a whopping 17 goals at World Cup tournaments is unbeaten, and she's the first soccer player ever to score at five different World Cups and five consecutive Olympic Games.



“BELIEVE IN YOURSELF AND TRUST YOURSELF.”

Did you know...?

- ★ Marta is a UN Goodwill Ambassador for girls and women in sport. She wants to inspire girls to challenge stereotypes and achieve their ambitions.
- ★ Marta has been named FIFA World Player of the Year six times, winning from 2006 to 2010 and again in 2018. No other soccer player has this many wins.
- ★ An imprint of Marta's feet was set in cement outside the Estádio do Maracanã in Rio. She was the first woman to be awarded this honor. In Brazil it was illegal for women to play soccer until 1979.

Full name: **Marta Vieira da Silva**

Sport: **Soccer**

Birth date: **February 19, 1986**

Place of birth: **Dois Riachos, Alagoas, Brazil**

Teams: **Orlando Pride and Brazil**

Best achievement: **Two Olympic silver medals**

WINDSURF like a GIRL

Emma Wilson

Full name: Emma Wilson

Sport: Sailing

Birth date: April 7, 1999

Place of birth: Nottingham, UK

Team: Great Britain

Best achievement: Bronze Olympic medal at Tokyo 2020

**"THE MORE FUN I
HAVE, THE BETTER
I SEEM TO DO."**

Did you know...?

- ★ Before she got super serious at windsurfing, Emma played hockey. She was good at it too, making the regional team.
- ★ Emma was fifteen when she took part in her first senior World Championships. Her competitors were much older, but her mom sneaked under the barrier so that she didn't have to walk out to her board alone.
- ★ Emma won four World Champion titles as a junior and came second place in the 2024 Olympic test event.

Whatever level an athlete gets to, it's important to focus on having fun. Passion for sport is the driving force behind any extraordinary achievement, and when Emma Wilson is out on the water, her joy for windsurfing is clear to see.

Emma's mother Penny was on Team GB's windsurfing team in the Barcelona 1992 and Atlanta 1996 Olympic Games. When she had children, she shared the sport she loved with them and taught Emma and her older brother Dan how to windsurf. But when Emma was at the beach, she wanted to eat ice cream and play in the sand rather than cruise the waves.

When her older brother Dan started going to windsurfing competitions, Emma decided to pick the sport back up, and she fell in love with how fast she could travel over the water. She was too nervous to do competitions to begin with, but as she improved people began to take notice of her talent and encouraged her to see how far she could go. At the age of twelve she won her first World Championship title.

More medals piled up in quick succession on the junior scene, and she smoothly made the shift to the senior team. Her brother Dan narrowly missed out on selection for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, but Emma made the team. Before she left for the Games, her mom told her to enjoy every moment of it: Penny had put too much pressure on herself in her own Olympic

journey and came home without a medal or fond memories of the competition. It was good advice. Enjoying every second she was out on the water helped Emma deal with the pressure and she swept across the finish line to win the bronze medal.

Emma knew that if she wanted to compete at another Olympic Games, she needed to switch disciplines. In Paris 2024, windsurfers would be required to use a completely different board called an iQFOIL. The entire board lifts up and flies above the water at rattling speeds. Other athletes had a huge head start: they had been using this equipment for years, but Emma stayed positive as she made the switch and learned how to master it.

Emma was ready to show the world what she could do, but two weeks before the 2022 World Championships she broke her big toe in a training accident. Even though it was incredibly painful, it wasn't going to stop her from giving it her all, so she taped her toe up and got back on her board. With this injury, she still managed a respectable fourth place and came back stronger the following year with a bronze medal.



SUCCEED *like a GIRL*

Katarina Johnson-Thompson

Did you know...?

- ★ Katarina also competes in the indoor pentathlon and has won a World Championship title in this discipline.
- ★ In Rio 2016, she jumped 6½ ft (1.98m) in the high jump. This would have won her gold if she were competing in the individual high jump rather than the heptathlon.
- ★ Katarina has won ten gold medals from major championships over her career.



Full name: **Katarina Mary Johnson-Thompson**
Sport: **Heptathlon and pentathlon**
Birth date: **January 9, 1993**
Place of birth: **Liverpool, UK**
Team: **Great Britain**
Best achievements: **Three-time World Champion and double Commonwealth gold medalist champion**

“I WANT TO LAY ALL MY CARDS OUT ON THE TABLE AND WALK AWAY WITH NO REGRETS.”

Turning a colossal setback into a comeback requires unshakable stubbornness, strength, and courage—qualities that Katarina Johnson-Thompson is bursting with.

Every weekend Katarina turned up to ballet classes. Her mother was a professional dancer and hoped her daughter might follow in her footsteps—and it looked promising! At the age of eight, Katarina secured an audition with the Royal Ballet School, but she hated dancing and quit before it took place. She found sport far more exciting, and when she learned that a friend was joining an athletics club, she wanted to sign up too.

The high jump was the first discipline that Katarina tried, and she was good at it. Next came long jump, and then running. With so many different events to choose from she couldn't decide what she liked best, so in the end she picked them all. She took up the heptathlon, a sport that requires athletes to run, jump, and throw in seven different events. It's made up of the 100m hurdles, high jump, shot put, a 200m sprint, long jump, javelin, and the 800m race.

Katarina was very good at it. She won a gold medal in the 2009 Youth World Championships when she was fifteen and represented TeamGB at the London 2012 and Rio 2016 Olympics. Senior success unfolded with a Commonwealth Games gold in 2018. A year later she pulled off

a spectacular performance at the World Championships, trouncing her competition in a move that propelled her into becoming a crowd favorite.

She was in great shape as she prepared for her third Olympics in Tokyo 2020, but bad news struck: the Games were to be delayed because of COVID-19. In December that year, Katarina injured herself badly in training and recovery was slow and painful. She was determined to be on the start line in Tokyo and worked incredibly hard to get there. After Day 1 it looked like she was heading for a medal, but in the 200m, she tore a muscle in her calf. As she hobbled to the finish line in agony, Katarina knew her Olympic bid was over, and she was forced to withdraw.

Very few people fully recover from injuries this serious. There were whispers that this was the end of her career, but Katarina was determined to prove the doubters wrong. After a shaky start to the 2022 season, she was back in fighting form at the Commonwealth Games where she won gold. In 2023, she pulled out all the stops in a dazzling performance that saw her crowned World Champion, a fitting reward for her indefatigable dedication.