‘Visibility’ of female athletes

By Olivia Gantzer

AN Olympic silver medallist and two professional footballers will be joining a panel of athletes to discuss the visibility of female athletes in sport ahead of International Women’s Day this week.

Former world rowing champion and Olympic silver medallist Cath Bishop, Reading Women FC team manager Kelly Chambers and Reading Women FC midfielder Fara Williams will join an inspiring panel of female athletes to talk about the barriers and challenges faced by women in sport.

The panel will be joined by University of Reading student and captain of the university’s netball team, Alice Kirkup.

Titled Women in Sport – Overcoming and Succeeding, the free talk will form part of the university’s International Women’s Day celebrations which, every year, centre around a lecture in memory of former Reading student Edith Morley, believed to be the first woman to be appointed a professor in a British university in 1908.

Cath Bishop won a gold medal at the World Championships in partnership with Katherine Grainger in 2003, before the pair went on to win a silver medal at the 2004 Athens Olympic games.

The former University of Reading PhD student went on to carve out a successful career working for the Foreign Office in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Iraq, before becoming a motivational speaker.

Speaking of the upcoming talk, Cath said: “I’m really looking forward to taking part in the university’s annual Edith Morley Lecture.

“We will be discussing some of the challenges and opportunities that women’s sports have faced, and are facing, and how our experiences, what we’ve overcome and how we can see things developing in a much stronger way going forward, is also of use to people in all walks of life, fighting barriers, making things different and changing the future.”

As well as playing for Reading FC since 2017, Fara Williams has appeared for England a total of 172 times, making her the highest capped player in English football history.

She was named in the Team GB squad for the 2012 London Olympics and was awarded an MBE in 2016.

Reading Women FC team manager Kelly Chambers previously captained the team, until an injury in 2012 ended her playing career.

Alice Kirkup is a final year French and International Relations student at the University of Reading and captain of the Netball 1st Team. The Edith Morley Lecture takes place this Thursday, March 5 at 7pm at the Henley Business School, Whiteknights campus.