Olympic delight for University of Birmingham torch bearers

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Staff members Dr Celia Taylor, Dr Matt Bridge and students Beckie Port and Annabel Fitzgerald and alumnus Mostafa Soleimani will carry Olympic flame through the West Midlands.

Birmingham's Torch Bearers: Annabel Fitzgerald, Beckie Port, Dr Matt Bridge, Dr Celia Taylor

Two University of Birmingham students Annabel Fitzgerald a final year undergraduate and postgraduate cancer scientist Beckie Port have been selected to carry the Olympic flame when the torch relay passes through the West Midlands. They will be joined in carrying the flame by lecturers Dr Celia Taylor and Dr Matt Bridge and alumnus Mostafa Soleimani.

All five were selected from thousands of people who applied to be part of the official torch relay.

The University is already playing an important role in the London games, as the venue for the Jamaican Track and Field Team's pre-Olympic training camp. A number of Birmingham students, staff and alumni hope to be competing for team GB in London.

Dr Matt Bridge is a senior lecturer who specialises in using sports science methods including 3D motion analysis to improve performance, particularly in golf. He is also interested in how coaches should nurture talented youngsters to develop lifelong participation and world class performance. Working with students he helps to run the University Golf Club and works with the Birmingham Golf Development Partnership to promote and develop golf within the city, he also works with local sports clubs including Bournville Rugby Club.

- Dr Celia Taylor is a lecturer in the Medical School, who is particularly interested in improving education for medical students. However, in her spare time Celia is also an outstanding middle distance runner, who is hoping to qualify for the 800m at the London games.
- Beckie Port is a Cancer Research UK funded postgraduate researcher in the school of cancer sciences, whose research looks at how normal cells become cancerous. As well as her research work, Beckie also spends time working in the community with Cancer Research UK to explain the importance of cancer research.
- Annabel Fitzgerald is a final year undergraduate studying Sports and Materials Science. She was awarded the University's Sports Leadership Award for her huge commitment in developing Intra-League sport on campus

Matt comments: *"It's a tremendous honour to be able to carry the Olympic flame when it comes through Birmingham. Much of my work is with athletes, honing and developing their performance. I see the dedication it requires to be successful at the highest level so it is hugely exciting to be carrying the Olympic flame, which represents the goal all Olympic athletes work so hard to achieve."*

Celia adds: *"Competing at the Olympics is the pinnacle of any athlete's career and something that remains a personal dream for me. To be able to carry the Olympic torch ahead of the first games in the UK for 65 years is a huge privilege and a pleasure."*

Beckie comments: *"I was delighted to be offered this opportunity and would particularly like to thank Cancer Research UK for supporting my application.*

As a scientist I want to make a difference with my research. One of the great things about what I do is talking to people across the West Midlands showing them the WOW factor of science and the way cancer research can make a real difference so I'm very proud to be able to carry the flame through the city where I work."

Annabel adds*: "I am excited and proud to be carrying the Olympic torch. Sport is a big part of my life on campus. I spend time encouraging other students to enjoy the health and social benefits of sport, so to be selected to participate in the torch relay is an amazing and unique opportunity."*

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