



Toyko success is a gift to 'grab with both hands'

The industry looks at how the buzz from the Games can help boost our sport in years to come

BRITAIN'S superb performances at the Tokyo Olympics have presented the horse world with "an amazing gift" that it "must grab with both hands".

British riders took five medals at the Games, equalling, in numbers, the London 2012 tally.

"We knew the names way before us who had been successful at the Olympics. So for our names to be added to that list is a huge honour and achievement. But we are all normal people," Tokyo eventing team gold medalist Oliver Townsend said.

"We are not all posh horse people, we are all from normal backgrounds. I hope it allows kids also from normal backgrounds who have a dream to [realise it] it is possible. If you have that dream and you're willing to dedicate your life to it, it can happen. It has happened to us three."

The industry saw a boost after British equestrian success at the 2012 Games, and there are hopes these results can build on that.

As well as an increase in sporting bodies' membership figures, the impact hit across the



By LUCY ELDER

Laura [Collett] and Oliver have presented our sport with an amazing gift, one we must grab with both hands," she said. "Harnessing the positivity around these medals will be crucial, and you can be sure it will be a major focus for all of us at BE."

She added: "We need to champion the fact that we have a network of fantastic riding establishments across the UK that are there, ready to offer opportunities to those who want to experience that unique

weekend following Tokyo you could compete alongside [the likes of] Oliver in a BE100 section at your local event."

OLYMPIC BUZZ

THE participation drive is echoed by the British Equestrian (BEF) and the British Horse Society (BHS).

BHS director of business support Sara Dale told *H&H* the charity has seen an increase in participation in riding schools nationwide since lockdown lifted.

"We hope this continues with the success of Team GB's equestrians at Tokyo, and the Paralympics, and that people have been inspired to get into or back into riding," she said, adding that the BHS has 447 approved centres, and schemes such as its challenge awards and Pony Stars campaign (news, 24 June) to help with real ways to get involved.

The BEF told *H&H* the Olympic buzz is "more important than ever" as centres rebuild after Covid, and are ready for demand.

"Every four years we get the chance to showcase our sports on the global stage to an audience who may be seeing them for the first time, or just have an interest having watched previous Games.

"The importance and impact of that can't be underestimated, and it's why we work tirelessly to keep our standing as an Olympic sport,

Oliver Townsend (left) hopes his, Laura Collett's and Tom McEwen's team gold will inspire

and collectively we must continue to do so," a BEF spokesman said.

Interest in dressage took off on social and traditional media, with the hashtag "dressage" generating more than 1.3bn views on TikTok, and high-profile fans such as golfer Rory McIlroy saying he finds it "mesmerising".

"You can't generate this sort of publicity easily but each cycle, this is the sort of unique, feel-good fun that comes from the Olympics," the BEF spokesman said.

"The build-up and immediate post-Games period also gives us a shot at media coverage in outlets we might not normally feature.

"The Paralympics give us a platform to showcase the Riding for the Disabled Association and its amazing work, which feeds into British Dressage and British Showjumping as riders transition from riding for therapy to being bitten by the competition bug."

She added that the medals "gave everyone a buzz".

"So much history was made at a time we needed it most; that's the power of the Olympics; stories and results to inspire us all," she said. "Here's to the Paralympics having a similar impact and continuing the feel-good factor."

"If you have a dream, it can happen. It happened to us"

OLIVER TOWNSEND

industry. *H&H* reported record ticket sales and crowds at Olympia and Badminton respectively. Some colleges said the Games inspired more students into the industry, with a surge in applications (news, February 2013).

British Eventing (BE) CEO Helen West said Olympic inspiration is key to encouraging new talent into the sport.

"There is no doubting that the achievements of Tom [McEwen],

experience of learning how to build a partnership with a horse.

"If this summer has reminded us of anything, it is just how special our sport is - where women compete on a level playing field with men, a sport for all ages and a sport where two hearts come together to compete as one, based on unity and trust.

"Eventing is a sport like no other and now is the time to shout about it. It is also unique that the