

Tokyo dreams of gold come true for Oliver

OLYMPICS
By **ANDREW BALDOCK**

HUDDERSFIELD'S Oliver Townend has won Olympic gold as part of Great Britain's eventing team.

They produced a dominant display in the showjumping finale at Tokyo Equestrian Park before Tom McEwen secured silver in the individual event.

The trio of Townend, Laura Collett and McEwen led by 17.9 penalties following their outstanding cross-country rounds on Sunday.

And they comfortably retained top spot, with McEwen going clear on Toledo De Kerser, Collett having four faults aboard London 52 and Townend also collecting four with Ballaghmor Class.

It is Great Britain's first Olympic

team gold in eventing since Munich 1972, while Australia took silver and France bronze.

Final British rider Townend had the luxury of knowing he could knock four fences down and still win gold, such was the team's dominance.

All three British riders were making Games debuts, but they delivered high-class displays to end a 49-year wait for team gold.

Britain finished on a score of 86.30, and it is a third equestrian medal in Tokyo for Team GB.

It is only Britain's third Olympic team crown in eventing after Stockholm in 1956 and Munich 16 years later.

And the success continued with McEwen taking silver in the individual competition on Toledo De Kerser after a faultless clear round.

Julia Krajewski took gold, but Townend had two fences down to

finish fifth. Collett, meanwhile, finished ninth.

Townend said: "I didn't know how much we had in hand, so I put myself under a bit of pressure, but these guys made it very easy for me.

"There will be a big celebration and I don't think it will be with a cup of tea and a biscuit.

"Let's hope we can inspire the next generation of kids. We are all from pretty normal backgrounds. It shows that hard work and dedication pays off."

The 38-year-old Yorkshireman now adds an Olympic title to three European team golds and a handful of elite five-star victories.

"It is only three years until the Paris Olympics," Townend said.

"Our two horses will be old enough, they are both very sound, so it is more than possible they could get to Paris.

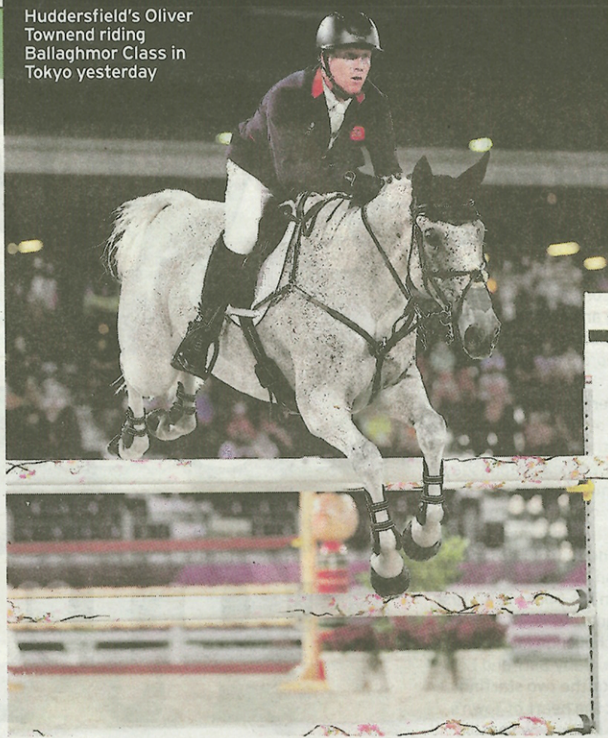
"I have never been as happy or comfortable on a team. We have definitely got a rapport, and we have tried to help each other when necessary."

McEwen said: "They (Townend and Collett) are both brilliant riders, and I had no doubt they would pull it straight out of the bag quite easily and comfortably."

Collett's gold medal comes eight years after she was left in a coma for a week after falling during an event in Hampshire.

It left her with a punctured lung, lacerated liver, a fractured shoulder and two broken ribs, while she also lost the sight in one eye.

She told the BBC: "Just to be here was more than a dream come true."



Huddersfield's Oliver Townend riding Ballaghmor Class in Tokyo yesterday



GB gold medallists Tom McEwen, Laura Collett and Oliver Townend celebrate yesterday

FREE SPINS
Bingo

23RD JULY - 8TH AUGUST

DEPOSIT 10 OR MORE TO