

GOLDEN TRIO: GREAT BRITAIN'S EVENTING TEAM TRIUMPH IN TOKYO



LAP OF HONOUR: Oliver Townend, Laura Collett and Tom McEwen, of Team Great Britain, celebrate with their gold medals at the Equestrian Park, Tokyo. PICTURE: JULIAN FINNEY/GETTY IMAGES

Another Yorkshire victory at the Olympics

TRIUMPHANT RIDERS Oliver Townend, Laura Collett and Tom McEwen showed their class by winning Great Britain's first team gold in eventing at an Olympic Games since Munich in 1972.

The trio beat off stiff competition from Australia in second and bronze medallists

France, with McEwen, whose yard is based on the Princess Royal's Gatcombe Park estate, also winning an individual silver.

Huddersfield-born Townend, 36, the world number one, adds the Olympic title to three European team golds.

He said: "It is only three years

until the Paris Olympics. Our two horses will be old enough, they are both very sound, and Laura's is younger, 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. We will find a way to celebrate – and it definitely won't be with a cup of tea and a biscuit!"

Collett, 31, who only eight years ago was in a coma after a bad fall which also cost her her sight in one eye, said: "I could only have dreamt of being here,

let alone stand here with a gold medal around my neck."

The rider, who taught two-time Cheltenham Gold Cup winner Kauto Star dressage, added: "Standing on the podium, it makes every bad day worth it. It was an incredible experience."

Gold medallist Townend hopes first victory in 49 years can inspire new generation of riders

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HUDDERSFIELD'S Oliver Townend hopes the gold medal won by Great Britain's eventing team can 'inspire a new generation of kids' into his sport.

The 38-year-old world No 1 was part of the GB team with Tom McEwen and Laura Collett that produced a dominant display in the showjumping finale at Tokyo Equestrian Park.

It was Great Britain's first Olympic team gold in eventing since Munich 1972, while Australia took silver and France bronze.

Townend was unable to follow that up with another medal in the individual event, slipping from second to fifth, while McEwen took silver.

But it was the team event where the glory was for Great Britain, with their final rider Townend having the luxury of knowing he could knock four fences down and still win gold, such was the team's dominance.

Townend said: "I still put myself under a bit of pressure, but these guys made it very easy for me.

"It has not sunk in. We have got another round to jump, so we focus on that, but there will be a big celebration and I don't think it will be with a cup of tea and a biscuit.



LAURA COLLETT: Her gold medal in the eventing comes eight years after she was left in a coma.

"I know there'll be a bit of partying going on in Yorkshire and I can't wait to join them."

He added: "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."

Gloucestershire-based Collett's gold comes just eight years after she was left in a coma for a week after falling on cross-country during an event in Hampshire.

She suffered a punctured lung, lacerated liver, a fractured shoulder and two broken ribs, while she also lost the sight in one eye.

Collett said: "I could only have dreamt of being here, let alone stand here with a gold medal around my neck.

"Standing on the podium, it

makes every bad day worth it. It was an incredible experience.

"At the moment, I feel like it is all one big dream. I have been dreaming of this moment, just to be at an Olympics. There have been some tough days too.

"I was lucky to survive, and now I am lucky to win a gold medal. Roll on the next rollercoaster in my life!"

McEwen secured Britain's highest individual eventing finish since Leslie Law won gold in Athens 17 years ago.

The individual title went to Germany's Julia Krajewski, who became the first woman in Olympic history to be crowned eventing champion, while 62-year-old Australian Andrew Hoy took bronze.

McEwen added: "It is not really hitting me at the moment. It has all been so special.

"It's why I get up every morning, and I have loved it that there has been pressure on us." For Yorkshireman Townend, he now adds an Olympic title to three European team golds and a handful of elite five-star victories at blue riband competitions like Badminton and Burghley.

"It is only three years until the Paris Olympics," said Townend. "Our two horses will be old enough, they are both very sound, and Laura's is younger, so it is more than possible they could get to Paris."

Olympics: Page 22



JUMPING STANDARD: Great Britain's Yorkshire-born world No 1 Oliver Townend riding Ballaghmor Class during the eventing at Equestrian Park in Tokyo yesterday. Townend added Olympic gold to his long list of accomplishments. PICTURE: ADAM DAVY/PA WIRE