

Britain for gold, but anything can happen

Nine nations are seriously in the battle for medals, says *H&H* eventing editor Pippa Roome, with Britain leading the way

THERE'S no doubt the British trio start as favourites, with the pressure piling on after team gold at the Tokyo Olympics and numerous star combinations left at home following a fierce selection battle.

Team GB perhaps field the only squad with four riders who all have individual medal chances, and the Brits will still merit the favourite rank should Yasmin Ingham and Banzai Du Loir get a pre-competition call-up from the alternate spot.

Once the action starts, we must hope Ros Canter (Lordships Graffalo), Laura Collett (London 52) and Tom McEwen (JL Dublin)



Tom McEwen, Laura Collett and Oliver Townend claim gold in Tokyo – will favourites Britain retain the crown in Paris?



PODIUM PREDICTIONS

1 2 3

INDIVIDUAL

1 Ros Canter riding Lordships Graffalo

2 Michael Jung riding Chipmunk FRH

3 Laura Collett riding London 52

all stay fit and in the race, as a team that has to carry penalties for a substitution is unlikely to take the gold.

Therein lies the danger – there is so much jeopardy in the three-to-a-team, all-to-count Olympic format. A momentary slip or a minor injury could drop a nation from leaders to nowhere in a second.

GERMANY, led by double Olympic champion Michael Jung and Chipmunk FRH – who, at 16, is running out of chances to cap his brilliant career with an individual gold – should provide Britain's greatest challenge. Sandra Auffarth will need to put her 20 penalties in Aachen behind her to show Viamant Du Matz's best; Olympic debutant Christoph Wahler is very able with Carjantan S.

Behind Germany, there are seven nations at the forefront of the fight – on paper, New Zealand, the USA and France hold the edge, with Switzerland, Australia,

Japan and Ireland the next group to watch.

The grit and experience of Tim and Jonelle Price leads me to predict the Kiwis will take bronze, but they were beaten by the US at the worlds in 2022 – and let's not forget the British team went home empty-handed that time. The US's selection decision in bringing the inexperienced but potentially brilliant HSH Blake and Caroline Pamukcu feels like a bold push for medals rather than reliable mediocrity.

As is typical, France's pairs have been under the radar this year, but in Nicolas Touzaint (Diabolo Menthe), Stéphane Landois (Chaman Dumontceau) and Karim Laghouag (Triton Fontaine) they have three riders who can be in the top 10.

Finally, if you want to back an outsider in the team race, I'd go for Belgium.

British fans can have high hopes, but anything can happen in Paris and none of the 16 teams can be ruled out of medal contention. **H&H**