

KATIE MCVEAN TOSSES WORRIES ASIDE TO WIN BELL TEA OLYMPIC CUP AT THE KELT CAPITAL HORSE OF THE YEAR SHOW

By Diana Dobson

Katie McVean is an old hand at winning.....but she's never had her name on the Olympic Cup for showjumper of the year.

That all changed today (Sunday) when the 21-year-old from Mystery Creek rode the big grey Dunstan Forest II to victory in the Bell Tea Olympic Cup at the Kelt Capital Horse of the Year Show in Hastings.

In an edge-of-your-seat kind of finish, McVean was the last to go in the second round of the \$500,000 event. She was the only clear of the first round from the 20 starters, and last of the 14 through to the second round to go.

Ahead of her former Olympian Maurice Beatson (Dannevirke) on My Gollywog and Sue Thompson (Hastings) on Air Hill the Rajah had both gone clear bringing their totals to four faults each.

Around 20,000 spectators rode every fence with McVean and it was a hushed crowd that led her into the final fence. And it erupted when they cleared it. There were tears of joy from her family, supporters and friends, but McVean just sported a grin from ear to ear.

McVean won the British Young Rider Championship, rode for New Zealand in five Nations Cups in the build-up to the Athens Olympics.

She and 15-year-old Forest only teamed up at Christmas time when his previous rider Lisa Coupe headed offshore.

McVean and Forest have quickly bonded – largely due to her rather unique ability of letting her horses be themselves. And that's just what Forest needs.

Earlier in the show both BBC commentator Michael Tucker and celebrated British rider John Whitaker singled McVean out as a rider of the future – their belief was vindicated with her result.

"I just wanted to go out there and do my best," she said. "It was tough to go back out (for the second round) and do it all again but I knew he could do it – it was just a matter of getting it all right."

Forest loved the attention the crowd poured on him after the win.

Their efforts bagged them \$120,000 which McVean plans to spend on "something to do with horses" – just what she hadn't decided.

"I never expected to come out and win this today."

It was the sixth time she had ridden in the class, and her biggest win to date.

Last year she scooped the Lady Rider of the Year on Dunstan Hairy McClairy, but she has been coming to the show for longer than she can remember.

McVean is from the blue blood of showjumping – dad Jeff rode at three Olympics for Australia and was in the top 10 in Europe for three years. He won the Horse of the Year crown in 1978 on Claret.

He and wife Vicki are Katie's biggest supporters.

She's on the long list for the Olympics but says the only way she would want to be at the Olympics is on a horse she was confident could be absolutely competitive. Finishing second were Beatson on his home-bred My Gollywog and Thompson on Air Hill the Rajah – Beatson has won the class four times, and finished second six times. The elder statesman of New Zealand showjumping also placed fourth equal.

Defending champion Oliver Edgecombe (Waipukurau) finished seventh equal with both his horses – JJ Freelance and Vancouver.

In dressage Angela Fergusson (South Island) and Monique III were cool as could be in winning the Hatton Estate CDI grand prix freestyle title, edging out several far more preferred combinations. New Zealand has won this leg of the Tri Nations, after a fantastic final round today. The next leg is scheduled for South Africa. The grand finale classes marked the end of a very successful five-day show.

Results –

Bell Tea Olympic Cup: Katie McVean (Mystery Creek) Dunstan Forest II (owned by Natasha Slavich) 1, Sue Thompson (Hastings) Air Hill the Rajah, Maurice Beatson (Dannevirke) My Gollywog =2, Maurice Beatson (Dannevirke) Zibbibo (owned by Sally Clark), John Whitaker (Great Britain) Dunstan Hairy McClairy (owned by Chele Clarkin) =4, Robert Steele (Hawera) Gospel 6, Oliver Edgecombe (Waipukurau) JJ Freelance, Anna Trent (Auckland) Cortaflex Muskateer NZPH, Oliver Edgecombe (Waipukurau) Vancouver =7, Catherine Cameron (Cambridge) Kahurangi Valentino, Ellen Whitaker (Great Britain) Kiwi Brave (owned by Molly Saville) =10.

Hatton Estate CDI W FEI grand prix freestyle: Angela Fergusson (Blenheim) Monique III 1, Bill Noble (Waikato) Vincent St James 2, Jody Hartstone (Raglan) 3.

Tri Nations showjumping, third round: New Zealand 10 faults 1, South Africa 29 faults 2, Australia 33 faults 3. After the New Zealand leg: New Zealand 10 points 1, South Africa 6 2, Australia 5 3.

Premier stakes: Catherine Cameron (Cambridge) Kahurangi Tardak 1, Maurice Beatson (Dannevirke) Kiwi Relic 2, Claudia Hay (Mosgiel) Valentino Rossi 3, Emma Power (Ashburton) Longridge Maverick, Tessa Williams (Gisborne) Walnut Brown, Maurice Beatson (Dannevirke) Jedi Warrior, Vicki Wilson (Whangarei) Wurlitzer, Rachel McGregor (Auckland) Premium Kabo Benny =4.