



Debut-makers relish Games test

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Excited, buzzing, ready to show what we are made of – the words used by the three able-bodied Commonwealth Games debutants in the Team England squad.

David McBeath, Maria Tsaptsinos and Denise Payet will all be first-timers when the Games get under way next month.

None of the trio plans to be there to make up the numbers, with medal chances very much at the forefront of their thinking.

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“It’s been high up in my ambitions to compete at a Commonwealths, to be part of the team and contribute what I can,” said McBeath, the oldest of the debutants at 26.

“I think we’ve got a very good chance in the team event. The guys have proved with the World Championships bronze and the Team World Cup bronze that they can compete with anyone. I definitely think we can win gold.

“India have strength in depth, Singapore always have good players, Nigeria have (World No 22) Quadri Aruna and some other good players. But England have shown plenty of times we are good enough and have the quality to win gold.”

As well as the team event, McBeath will feature in men’s and mixed doubles and he added: “I’m buzzing and it’s my first time in Australia as well, so I’m looking forward to that.”

Payet is one of the youngest members of Team England and the 16-year-old described her selection as “mind-blowing”.

“It’s amazing, I’m really excited for the experience and really happy that I get to be in the team and hopefully learn a lot from the experience,” said the Enfield player.

"It's a huge event and will be something totally new which I'm looking forward to. I've seen it on TV before but to actually be there is mind-blowing.

"I'm really excited that it's outside Europe and also that the training camp is in Japan. I'm over the moon that it's there because I've always wanted to go to Japan to practise and I idolise their players."

Payet believes England will have a chance of a medal in the team competition.

She said: "Hopefully we can get a medal and I can be part of that. I think we've got a chance as a team, all the girls work hard and I'm really happy I can be with them – I idolised them when I was younger.

"They all look after me and make me welcome like a family, I don't feel left out at all. Having them be so welcoming is great, and comforting."

Reading's Tsapsinos agrees that medals could be in the offing. The 20-year-old said: "We've got a good team heading out there and good preparation coming up.

"I feel confident that we can go out and get some medals and show people what we are made of."

Tsapsinos, a student at the University of Nottingham, where team-mate Kelly Sibley is head coach, has experienced a multi-sport event before at the World University Games in Taiwan last year.

She added: "I've stayed in an athletes' village before and it will be great to do that again. I think I'll enjoy it even more.

"As a geographer it will be nice to see the landscape in Australia and I want to see how the people live. It will be a cool place to go, but we're not there on holiday – we see ourselves as definitely in the mix for medals.

"In the team, I think Singapore will be the main threat. India are also tough competitors, but Singapore have got another level.

"I think we can also get some medals in the doubles. We don't know who we'll be playing with yet, but all our combinations are good."

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