

## Apprentices win medals for skills

TWO Yorkshiremen are among a winning British Olympic team who return home today with medals from a tough competition in Australia.

Gary Taylor, 18, an apprentice men's hairdresser, from Brighouse, West Yorkshire, won a silver medal and Mathew Rohan, 20, an apprentice joiner, of Norton, near York, won a bronze in the 29th International Youth Skills Olympics in Sydney, Australia.

They were part of a 26-man British Olympic team to scoop ten medals in the testing international competition in which they took on the rest of the world to bring home two gold, three silver and five bronze medals.

The competitors, all apprentices, were tested on their professional skills, ranging from heavy engineering to dressmaking.

Gold medallists were Paul Blake, 21, from Staple Hill, Bristol, who triumphed in the stonemasonry competition, and Andrew Delaney, 21, of Sutton Coldfield, in the auto mechanics section.

Silver medals went to Jonathan Firth, 21, of Nantycaws, Camarthen, (plastering); Anita Khandke, 18, of Lidlington, Bedford (women's hairdressing); and Gary Taylor, 18, of Delamere, Slead Avenue, Brighouse, West Yorkshire (men's hairdressing).

Bronze medal winners were: Ian Smith, 21, of Donington, Lincolnshire, (plumbing); Andrew Fitch, 21, of Lowdham, Nottinghamshire, (electrical wiring); Graham Russel, 19, of Musselburgh, East Lothian, (painting and decorating); Mathew Rohan, 21, of Langton Road, Norton, North Yorkshire (joinery); and Katherine Forster, 21, of Hitchin, Hertfordshire (garment production).

A spokesman for Skill-UK, which organises the British entry, Mr Alan Hughes, said the triumph was the best overall performance by a British team for 20 years.

"The British team generally perform well but to have such a rash of medals is outstanding," he said.

"The idea is to encourage the highest possible standards in industry and commerce training and test those skills against 20 different countries. This proves that we can match those skills."

Next year's Skills Olympics will be held at the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham.

"Being on home ground the determination will be there to improve on what has been a very good performance," said Mr Hughes.