



A CUT ABOVE: Hairdresser Tina Silk tackles a tricky Oriental style

TAIWANABEE NUMBER ONE

BRITAIN bagged a hodful of Olympic medals last week.

But Linford Christie, Sally Gunnell and the rest were nowhere to be seen.

It was a case of "Up the workers" as the nation's top tradesmen and women took on the rest of the world at the Skill Olympics in Taiwan.

The event tests ability in many practical events — and our true Brits scooped nine of the

coveted medals. For many of the 31-strong team, their only previous experience of the East had been a chow mein at the local Chinese takeaway.

So to celebrate their success, they downed tools and sampled a taste of the Orient on a flying tour of the Far East, posing for pictures outside Taiwan's tourist landmarks.

Leeds wall and floor tiler, Steve Connell, 19, and turner Mark Sunderland, 19, couldn't believe they were in Taiwan.

Proud

"I'd never even had a Chinese meal before I came out here," says Mark. "I'm proud to be flying the flag for Britain."

"But, to be honest, I can't wait to get home and have some proper English food!"

Mark, from Sheffield, had never even flown before being selected for the UK Skills team as Britain's No 1 turner.

And bricklayer Ian Reeve, 22, had never left the UK before being chosen from 612 hopefuls to fly out with the team.

The youngster, who builds at a rate of 500 bricks a day, won his medal after constructing an elaborate stone wall during the four-day competition.

But Ian, from King's Lynn, Norfolk, only took up bricklaying because his father forced him to get a job.

Ian says: "I wanted to work on Dad's farm, but he told me to go and get a trade first."

"Now I'm so glad that I did. I've always wanted to represent my country at something."

"But I never imagined I'd end up humping bricks on the other side of the world. The competition was great fun because I got the chance to build something much more elabo-



TRUE BRIT: Top turner Mark flies the flag

From **SUE CRAWFORD**
in Taiwan
Pictures: **TONY FISHER**

rate than I normally would."

Hairdresser Tina Silk, from Bristol, was awarded a diploma for her Olympic efforts.

The 20-year-old had to cut and perm eight different styles on volunteer models.

"The models were from Taiwan and their hair is much stronger and thicker than the hair I normally cut," she says. "But there aren't many Chinese living

in Bristol so I didn't get much chance to practice!"

Britain's skillful Olympic team were all selected a year ago to give them time to train for the event.

And many were released by their employers six months ago to practice full-time.

For painter and decorator Brian Taylor, who once painted a whole room the wrong colour as a trainee, it's been a chance to show the world just how good he really is.

Brian, 20, from Edinburgh, explains: "Everyone desperately wants to do their best."

"And this is your chance to be a star."



EASTERN PROMISE: Brian Taylor, Ian Reeve and Steve Connell