

Nobleton's Burnett bounces back to top of national podium

By Jake Courtepatte

At 31 years old, Jason Burnett is still proving he can bounce with the best of them.

The three-time Olympian earned double gold at the recent Canadian National Gymnastics Championship in Lethbridge, Alberta, topping the field in both the men's individual trampoline and the synchro competition.

"I'm feeling very happy right now, it was a tough competition," said Burnett. "The young guys have stepped it up and I'm really a happy to see they're pushing the boundaries and starting to test my limits, which is great. But it's always a nice feeling to come back strong as well."

Finishing first in the individual preliminaries, Burnett remained atop the leaderboard after posting a score of 167.185, beating out second-place finisher Keegan Soehn of Alberta by just under two points.

It was Burnett's 11th time atop the podium at the nationals, and his first since 2016, before dealing with an ACL injury: one of many lower-body injuries he has faced throughout his career.

Following a lengthy rehab, Burnett was aware of the changes he would have to make to his routine to finish first on the national stage.

"It was an upgrade, for sure, but it was a very strategic and planned upgrade," said Burnett. "I understood what my progression should be from injury day one up to this point and beyond through the World Championship and potentially up to the Olympic Games in a few years. So I feel like I'm on track and very happy with the progress."

Despite his history of injuries, Burnett said he is certainly keeping his options open for the 2020 Games.

"I'm still playing it by ear. I'm interested in helping Team Canada get a place at the Olympic Games, and I would be more than happy to see one of the young guys in my place as well."

Burnett added he was "very excited to see the next generation of athletes pushing the limits and challenging for top spot."

He topped off his medal count on the final day in combining with 24-year-old Jake Cranham to win the synchro championship, besting their British Columbian opponents by more than 10 points in the final.

Cranham said it was "a lot of fun" working with Burnett on the routine, calling him a "veteran."

"We were talking about it in training," said Cranham. "He's got pretty sweet lifting techniques when we're doing synchro and I have to step my game up and do as well as he does."

"When you're doing your routine you try to lose as little height as possible. So when you take off and maintain your height, it's lifting. So when you're doing synchro it's really important that you lift the same amount. So when you're with someone who lifts a lot, you have to lift a lot."

Burnett added that although synchro usually plays second fiddle in an athlete's mind to the individual competition, synchro can be helpful in providing "exposure" to athletes at high-profile meets.

King City's Rosie MacLennan, reigning two-time Olympic gold medalist, entered the women's finals in the top spot after a strong preliminary, but fell to seventh in the final round with a score of 114.075.

MacLennan, along with fellow Skyriders Trampoline Palace trainee Rachel Tam, earned bronze in the synchro event.