



Townend Masters the rest

POPLAR PARK, SUFFOLK
13-14 March

By Kate Elliott

OLIVER TOWNEND kept his blistering form of 2009 as he notched up a double of wins at Poplar Park.

ODT Master Rose blazed round between the trees of this heathland venue to take the competitive advanced intermediate (AI) section, which featured several notable names with four-star experience. Despite rolling the last showjump of Lisa Kelly's up-to-height track, the Master Imp 10-year-old looked bang on course for his first four-star run at Badminton in May with the second fastest cross-country round of the day.

Oliver also took Kentucky-bound new ride Ashdale Cruise Master for his first competitive run in this section, but a steady "fact-finding" cross-country round and two showjumps down kept the new combination down in 10th as they seek to build a partnership ahead of Oliver's bid for the Rolex Grand Slam.

Oliver's other win came in intermediate section M with Olivia Tappin's Jeepers Creepers (see First win, above right).

European Championship reserves Clea Phillips and Lead The Way also caught the eye with a smart dressage test and a steady cross-country round for eventual fifth in the AI.

"It was an ideal first run and it felt like coming home," explained Clea, who moved to Leicestershire 10



ODT Master Rose shows he's ready for his first Badminton with an AI win for Oliver Townend

Advanced intermediate dressage leader Drivetime (Emily Baldwin) survived a scary moment at the first water complex when he stumbled on landing and almost gave Emily an early bath. "It was slightly alarming — one

of his cross-country boots is shattered but he has only got superficial grazes," said a relieved Emily, who completed safely to collect third place despite nursing a fat lip.

danger of losing his enormous dressage lead, adding 12 time-penalties across country to his exceptional dressage of 22.3 to finish over four penalties clear of Jo Chipperfield and On Your Marks. Piggy was also third in this section with the sensitive Picasso. "He worries a lot, especially with the flatwork, so I was pleased with him," explained Piggy, who may take the 10-year-old to Bramham.

French on form

SANDWICHED between Emily and Oliver was European silver medallist Some Day Soon, who looked keen on his first pipe-opener of the season with Piggy French.

"I could have done without the herd of deer which came past in the middle of my dressage test, as he can be quite tense anyway," smiled Piggy.

Along with the Midgleys and Piggy's father Wally, Some Day Soon is part-owned by Sue Crane, who also owns Piggy's open intermediate winner Chicago 11 outright.

"Piggy talked me into buying a share in Some Day Soon when Chicago II was off injured a couple of years ago," explained Sue.

Chicago II was never in any

Intermediate runner-up Nat Dixon on Blue Moon III: "He's still green at this level, but never felt like:"



years ago from Suffolk.

Dixon's the dressage diva

NAT DIXON need not worry about flatwork as the former dressage horse Blue Moon III finds this easy.

"He won at elementary level dressage before he converted to eventing, though he still finds the wide open dressage arenas in eventing a bit wild at times," explained Nat, who secured second in the intermediate. "He is still green at this level and found the twisting cross-country course quite challenging as the fences appear quickly through the trees. But he never felt like stopping."

Nat balances her three event