



Townend tops the two-star

AMLIN PLUS BRIGHTLING PARK EAST SUSSEX

12-13 July

By Hannah Lemieux

OLIVER TOWNEND proved he was a man on form ahead of the World Equestrian Games by clinching three top placings from his four CIC2* rides.

Producing the section's only sub-40 dressage with a mark of 39, Oliver rode ODT Ghareeb to a "confidence-boosting" win, finishing 71 penalties ahead of his nearest rival.

"He is a very good horse in terms of ability but can be spooky and I just think he needs more outings," said Oliver of the 10-year-old, owned by Kathleen Wilkinson and Rachel Wood.

"This is his first outing since Bramham CCI3* and it was an ideal run. He is a fantastic horse and good in all three disciplines, his dressage felt very smart."

The Ghareeb-sired gelding will now be aimed at a three-star —



WEG-bound Oliver Townend wins the CIC2* by 71pens with ODT Ghareeb

CIC2*

- 1st Oliver Townend on ODT Ghareeb (GBR)
- 2nd Elisabeth Halliday-Sharp on Fernhill By Night (USA)
- 3rd Oliver Townend on Skyhills Cavalier (GBR)

fitting around Oliver's WEG commitments.

Concluding a successful day for the Townend team, Oliver also secured third and fourth riding Skyhills Cavalier and Sandiman II.

Both horses, who Oliver describes as being between two-

and three-star level, posted quick times across country, over an undulating track which saw no one in this section complete under the time.

Second again for Halliday-Sharp
LOCAL rider Elisabeth Halliday-Sharp denied Oliver a one-two-three by taking second on Fernhill By Night, adding 6.8 cross-country time-penalties to a 45.3 dressage — repeating their second-place performance here last year.

"At 16.3hh, he is a big, rangy horse and was up against more nippy, fast horses today. I tried so hard to make the time but the hills here do make it difficult — I am thrilled with second but I was desperate to win," said Elisabeth.

She took over the ride on Deborah Halliday's 11-year-old two years ago when he was competing in Ireland.

"He is a brilliant jumper and

moves very well, but he did have a running-out issue with his previous rider.

"It is no longer a problem and I have worked hard on his straightness. We have done a lot of training over narrow jumps at home and it has paid off — I think of him as a future four-star horse," she added.

Andrew Nicholson completed the top five, taking over the reins on MHS King Joules, usually ridden by Mary King, who is sitting out a suspension (news, 19 June). The combination added 5.6 time-penalties to a 49.6 dressage.

"He is strong to ride across country and I am a very different rider from Mary, but she has trained him well and he is getting used to the change," said Andrew. "We overcame a few sticky moments on the cross-country, and he did manage to jump himself out of trouble a couple of times. He is a very nice horse but it is all about compromise with him."

Increase of prize-money

Organiser Gardie Grissel was grateful to this year's CIC2* sponsor Amlin Plus for offering record prize-money (£2,500). However, Gardie admitted to feeling "disappointed with the up-take" by top riders — having increased the prize-money following riders comments that the sport doesn't offer enough (news, 26 September).

On changes to the cross-country, Gardie added: "We decided to remove the second step at the Warners Lake (16abc) — it never jumped very well and seems to have made a difference. We also altered the CIC* route, which now follows close to the former intermediate track." H&H

THE CIC* WINNER... PARKFIELD QUINTESSENTIAL

THE striking chestnut's immaculate British Eventing record to date is something dreams are made of — having not yet been out of the top 10 in all his outings this year.

Following a triumph in the CIC* at Rockingham Castle in May, the six-year-old gelding was back out winning again with his regular rider Zoe Wilkinson.

On a leading dressage of 38.8 — equal with Andrew Nicholson and Swallow Springs, who finished third — the combination went inside the time across country adding nothing to their first-phase score.

"He is a real goody two-shoes and aside from his ginger strays he is a very straight forward horse. He has a great temperament, very kind and gentle — just like his mum [Carino Biene S.Z.]," said Zoe, who runs EZ Equestrian with business partner Emma Owen.

The gelding by Quicksilver was bred and produced by the Bishop

