

## Rider takes \$3,000 cab ride just to make horse event

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Oliver Townend of Great Britain can earn \$350,000 this weekend if he wins the Rolex Kentucky Three-Day Event in Lexington, Ky.

With such a payday looming, who wouldn't invest \$3,000 in a taxi ride?

Townend, a 26-year-old rider from Shropshire, England, was among thousands of travelers affected by the volcanic ash that has paralyzed air travel in Europe.

By winning this weekend, Townend would become only the second rider to achieve the \$350,000 Rolex Grand Slam (three straight victories in the series). So he needed to get across the Atlantic, and soon.

First, he took a train to Paris. Then he paid \$3,000 to ride a taxi from Paris to Madrid. There, he caught a flight to Miami. He arrived in Lexington just after 11 a.m. Tuesday, about 48 hours before he begins the competition, which involves dressage,

cross country riding and show jumping.

Another leading British rider, William Fox-Pitt, missed his train to Madrid but persuaded a neighbor to give him a ride in his private plane so Fox-Pitt could catch a U.S.-bound flight.

At least the British riders made it to the United States. The same can't be said for several officials scheduled to work the event, which runs Thursday through Sunday at the Kentucky Horse Park.

One judge each from Denmark, Great Britain and Switzerland couldn't make it; they have been replaced. Only Ulrich Schmitz of Arizona is among the original officials who will work the event.

Two other attractions, the Kentucky Cup Dressage Test (Tuesday-Thursday) and the Kentucky Cup Jumping Test (Friday-Sunday) are similarly affected and will use some alternate officials.

Both those competitions are previews of the World Equestrian Games, scheduled for Sept.25-Oct.10 in Lexington.