

Townend strikes gold

POPLAR PARK

By Cathy Wood

OLIVER Townend continued the winning ways with which he began 2012 at Ballindenisk with two wins on the UK circuit at Poplar Park.

All eyes were on his new equine partner, Paul Ridgeon's Armada, but the four-star former ride of Andrew Nicholson didn't make it to the cross-country course as his new jockey explained: "I never planned to go across country here as this isn't the sort of course that would suit him. He's just here for an outing and I'm impressed with him in both phases."

The partnership is still very new and while Oliver collected 25.8 in the dressage the exuberant chestnut took out four poles in the show jumping.

"Andrew has done a great job producing him but obviously it takes time to settle him in."

Oliver's run of success began in advanced intermediate section M which suffered from a lack of entries. Nine riders came forward on the day, with seven completing and it was Oliver's experienced ODT Sonas Rovatio ('Goldmine'), owned by Andrew Cawthray, who took the spoils.

"He came from Vere Philipps and Vere thought he was a very good horse," said Oliver of the mount he has ridden for two seasons. "He went to four-star level in about nine months and finished sixth at Kentucky last year with a double clear."

Tight for time

With Jim Hardwick's cross-country track running across varied terrain over sandy going the 5min 23sec optimum time proved tight for many in the intermediate sections. This included Sonas Rovatio who picked up 4.8 faults but that was enough for a runaway victory, 14.3 penalties ahead of Caroline Powell and Boston Two Tip.

Sophie Jenman picked up 22.4 faults for time but still occupied third place with Geronimo, one of five rides she had at Poplar Park.

Diana Grant and Shallys Game finish fourth in the nine-strong advanced intermediate



Oliver Townend's winner takes all strategy continued in the open intermediate which he captured aboard Nina Barbour's 11-year-old mare Pepper Anne.

"She's a fantastic jumper and if she has a weakness it would be her dressage," said Oliver. "She was very fresh and excited to be out but she felt better than ever."

Despite finishing on their dressage score – thus becoming the only duo to complete within the cross-country optimum – Oliver's former employee Angus Smales and it's A



Double winner Oliver Townend

Jackpot had to settle for second place. Jodie Amos and King Albert,

a recent addition to Jodie's stable at Aston-le-Walls, took third.

King Albert came courtesy of Mary King who bred and produced the 10-year-old chestnut gelding herself and Jodie has enjoyed a good start to the season after enduring an enforced break over the winter caused by breaking her leg at Le Pin Au Haras in August.

A Wise move

Jodie found herself even closer to the top spot in intermediate section K, in which she finished the runner-up with Wise Crack behind 30-year-old Richard Skelt and his ex-point-to-pointer Cloudy Bay Boy.

Jodie said of Wise Crack: "He's a machine across country, although this hasn't always been the case. He used to bolt and

it took me a year just to get him to jump knee high. He was an absolute nightmare but now he's a very careful and athletic horse and as he's part Arab he has plenty of stamina. He's my rising star."

"We had a run-out here last year but this time I was more positive with him," said Lincolnshire-based Richard Skelt who trains with Di Lampard, Emilee Chandler and Stephen James. "Cloudy Bay Boy is incredibly nimble and very athletic," added Richard and the twisty course at Poplar certainly seemed to suit his grey gelding by Petoski.

Oliver Townend took third on Cooley Master Class.

"I didn't go flat to the boards as this was his first intermediate," said the jockey.

Poplar Park was blessed with sunshine and unseasonably warm temperatures.

"Thanks to that we had a massive crowd," said organiser Jim

5 Things you didn't know about ...

Jodie Amos

1 Jodie grew up in France and came to England to attend Nottingham University where she studied history, Spanish and French

2 Her best ever holiday was in Kenya where she enjoyed a mix of sun, sea, safari and history

3 If she wasn't a professional rider, Jodie would travel the world doing humanitarian work

4 She likes watching *Eastenders* and has a penchant for chick flicks

5 If she could marry a film star she would pick Jude Law



Hardwick. "Entries, however, were disappointing. The trouble is at this time of year you can't bank on the light being with you much after 5pm. If it had been an abysmal wet day we probably wouldn't have been able to run the last class so we were lucky really."

Sophie Jenman, a former working pupil with Lucy Wiegiersma, finishes third in the AI with her top horse Geronimo

