



Oliver Townend, winner of the CIC*** and CCI**

BALLINDENISK

By Sally Parkyn

OLIVER Townend renewed his love affair with Ballindenisk when he landed

the star-filled CIC*** and at the same time strengthened his bid to pocket the Goresbridge Go For Gold €50,000 bonus. Having won the inaugural leg last September, the Shropshire rider is now unchallenged for the grand slam and has two chances of winning at the final in September.

"It's a fantastic incentive and that's why it has drawn so many top riders and horses," said Oliver. "Douglas and Imperial Master have gone well here so the two of them will be back in September."

Douglas's victory in the CIC*** was not the prettiest of performances but Oliver admitted that he was taking no risks with the holding ground.

"It was the ugliest round I've ridden on him but because of the going I let him run away with me and lost a bit of jump."

As the class unfolded overnight positions changed with regularity and it was Sam Watson who moved into eventual second spot with Horseware Bushman from Joseph Murphy aboard the equally smooth Electric Cruise.

Despite the mud, Andrew Fell's clever cross-country track rode

On fire Townend pulls off a double

well but was hugely influential. While the new fences caused only a few problems, some of the established features proved extremely costly.

In second spot overnight, Zara Phillips and Lord Lauries glanced off at the hedge and ditch (fence 17), while dressage leaders Nicola Wilson and Annie Clover clocked up 20 penalties at the bullfinch double at 7.

"She didn't register there was another fence," said the event first timer who later piloted Beltane Queen into fifth place.

The show jumping was equally significant and not for the first time proved expensive for Geoff Curran and The Jump Jet. They toppled three poles before producing the fastest time in the country for eventual fourth.

Tina Cook and Miners Frolic accumulated the same score, dropping to seventh as a result.

"I thought that Ballindenisk would make a lovely pre-Badminton run," said Tina. "Although my horses didn't show jump as well as they might the cross-country was fantastic."

A Master Class in winning

The CCI** was another Oliver Townend benefit, with Cooley Master Class and the New Zealand import Black Tie filling the top two places after dressage on Saturday and remaining there until after the final show jumping phase on Monday morning.

Chasing the Townsend duo was Co Down professional Steven Smith, who filled third with Richard Irwin's classy

Coolnacran. Steven, who runs a training and dealing yard with his brother Trevor, described this son of Limmerick as: "The real McCoy by a mile. He's the best I've had for a long time."

The nine runners who pulled out on the final day remained largely in their overnight order, with Co Meath rider Tony Kennedy, 19, holding on to fourth with Westeria Lane. The son of veterinary surgeon Con Kennedy, Tony picked out Westeria Lane as a four-year-old from Goresbridge Sales and has produced him throughout his career.

"He lost his eye as a five-year-old but luckily it has never fazed him," said Tony.

Camilla Speirs pipped fellow Olympian Nicola Wilson in a hotly contested CIC**. Riding her own BT Border Bandit she enjoyed a blistering round in the country,

moving up from third place overnight in the process.

"He's so fast that I never need to take a pull," said Camilla of the son of Warcraft.

Less than two marks adrift, Nicola was happy to fill second with the Dutch-bred Watermill Vision, a new ride for her this year.

A Night to remember

After a series of incidents befell the overnight leaders, the top spot in the CIC* went to Ciaran Glynn and November Night.

"She has been quite backward but recently she has really matured mentally and physically," said Ciaran who sourced the mare from the Goresbridge/Monart select sale in 2010.

Junior European silver and individual bronze medallist Harold Megahey and pony individual gold medallist Cathal Daniels battled for the honours in the CNCJ*. In the tightest of all finishes, the pair shared the same mark throughout with the former just getting the nod on the time.

Nessa Briody and Rathnaleen Dark Secret took the CNCPP**.

OVERSEAS STAR | NESSA BRIODY

ALTHOUGH Co Kildare-based Nessa Briody, 15, winner of the CNCPP** only took up eventing last season, she has a wealth of competitive experience in other spheres. She sourced her potential team pony Rathnaleen Dark Secret from his breeder as a four-year-old and has produced him herself to win the combined training at the Dublin Horse Show last year as well as the Cossack Dressage Cup at the Pony Club Championships.

A pupil at Dominican College in Newbridge, she took up riding at the age of eight and with help from trainer Jane Kinsella is aiming for a team place this year.

