

Catch ride is on Fire for Oli

ASKE (2)

OLIVER Townend, one of Aske's sponsors, and his former stable jockey, Angus Smales, kept the red roses to themselves at the second Aske fixture of the season.

Oliver's winning run continued when he took both the OI and one of two intermediate sections. His winning partner in the OI was Lazy Acres Firestorm, on whom he was deputising for owner/rider Sarah Stretton while she was absent at the Young Rider Europeans in Kreuth (report, page 48).

"Sarah decided that he needed another run before Weston so she asked me if I could take him. I'd ridden him once before, when we won at Tetton in July. He's a straightforward horse, so I just get on the day before. Sarah was planning to be back on board at Weston," explained Oliver.

Oli's second victory came in intermediate section C aboard his own and Andrew Cawthray's ODT Rabble Mac Fly, who was contesting an intermediate class for the first time.

"He's a lovely, talented horse," said Oli of the seven-year-old who was produced by Northumberland-based Martyn Johnson, the rider who has now taken over Oli's former four-star partner, Topping.

"Rabble Mac Fly has been sold to contacts in Australia on the strength of this win," said Oli.

With the usual battle raging between Oli and Matthew Wright, the latter ended up in the runner-up spot in the OI with John Peace's If You Want It, a mere 0.8 of a penalty drift. Both had started the class on identical dressage scores of 29.1.

"On another day I'd have won the class," announced Matthew. "Oli galloped around the cross-country as he'd had one show jump down, but my horse is going to Boekelo and I took it more gently with him.

"I'm delighted that he's returned to form following his wind operation after Badminton," added Matthew. "Hopefully he'll be back competing at four-star level next year."

Caroline Powell, third and fourth with Got The Look and Apapa, was also Boekelo bound.

"I had a great run. The going was fantastic and the organisers improve this event every time," she said.

A surprise victory

Angus Smales described his win in intermediate section B on Tina Sharp's eight-year-old Ballyvooney as "a bit of an accident".

"I took him for a nice run round before Weston and I didn't set out to go quickly," said Angus. "I cut a lot of



above Matthew Wright and If You Want It, who finished second in the open intermediate



above Dag Albert and Mitras Eminem, runners-up to Oliver Townend in section C



above Angus Smales and Ballyvooney, the winners of intermediate section B

the corners and dared myself on the turns. He's also quick because I don't have to set him up very much, but even so I was surprised that we got round so fast.

"He's a real class horse and he's come a long way this season, physically, mentally and performance-wise, and I think he'll be one of my best horses in the future."

Angus, who set up on his own a few months ago after working for Oli

Townend, added: "I'm delighted for the owners who have been a great support to me. In fact, all my owners have been great, often coming to cheer me on even if their own horse isn't running as they feel part of the team."

Angus was one of several riders who praised the organisers for paying attention to comments made about the tricky show jumping phase at the spring fixture.

"The show jumping was much more sensible this time around and although the ground was still undulating in the arena, the fences were much better placed."

"We did take riders' comments on board after last time," confirmed joint-organiser Andrew Spalding. "In the spring it caused carnage, so we gave the arena more space and had a good think about the course-design."