



Oliver on track to become sport's richest star

FOLLOWING back-to-back Burghley and Badminton victories Oliver Townend (*above*) has set himself up to become the richest event rider in history. To achieve this accolade he has to maintain his lead in the HSBC FEI Classics Series, which boasts a US\$150,000 first prize, and he is also on track to secure the Rolex Grand Slam.

Oliver is currently enjoying a 12-point lead ahead of the final leg at the Pau CCI**** (21-25 October) and can only be pipped by William Fox-Pitt and Australia's Sam Griffiths, who have 21 and 20 points respectively to Oliver's 33. Only victory for one of the challengers will be good enough to secure them the Classics prize pot, and that is if Oliver finishes no better than eighth.

Oliver, 26, who netted £100,000 when winning the controversial Express Eventing contest in Cardiff on Flint Curtis last November, is also in a position to bank the US\$350,000 Rolex Grand Slam if he wins the Kentucky CCI**** next year. No rider has won the Grand Slam – for three consecutive four-star wins – since Pippa Funnell back in 2003.

When asked if he had been aware of the HSBC and Rolex money in the pipeline after winning Burghley Oliver joked: "It never even crossed my mind! Honestly, though, it's no good thinking about the money and having a run-out on the cross-country. I just take each competition as it comes."