

# The new 'Mr Weston Park'

COVER STORY



Oliver Townend rides through the influential corners on the way to scoring an advanced double on Outside Chance and Douglas (pictured). This horse feels like the real deal.

## WESTON PARK (1) SHROPS 6-7 April

By Jo Prestwich

OLIVER TOWNEND took over the mantle of 'Mr Weston Park'. He won both advanced sections when, for the first in 10 years, Andrew Nicholson went away without an advanced section in the bag.

But Andrew did pick up a third (Mr Cruise Control) and a seventh (Viscount George).

Oliver's first win came with Douglas, who was bought last year by Harthill Stud from Emilie Chandler.

"I've always liked him as a horse and, although in theory everything is for sale, this horse feels like the real deal," said Oliver of the VDL Ard Douglas 10-year-old.

"This is a fantastic place and riding a good horse round here is as good as anywhere. They need to be good over a fence as the showjumping always takes a bit of jumping, with broomstick poles and being close to the cross-country, but mine all jumped clear."

"The cross-country was good as ever — decent with loads of questions," he added. "I thought the double of corners at 14ab was bordering on a four-star test, but they rode well."

Plenty took a flag with them here, although the ride of the day through it had to be fourth-placed William Fox-Pitt and Chilli Morning. They were foot perfect, despite there being no flag to hold them in after a previous competitor had knocked it.

Oliver's second advanced winner Outside Chance is another relatively new ride. He took over on the 10-year-old last July when the horse's owner Angelica Hislop sent her entire string to him.

"Like Douglas, he is a very classy horse and very careful, which is great as you can always keep riding forward," said Oliver.

## A REAL EMERGENCY

VET Ken Anderson was summoned to the secretary's tent on the Saturday for an "urgent equine emergency". He was expecting to find blood and gore, but it turned out a lady with the exact same Audi model as Ken was desperately trying to tune her stereo to RadioLive so she could listen to the Grand National.

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Billy Buzz heads a one-two for Chris King in OJ section H

I knew there must have been a mistake somewhere with the time, as he is fast and I took the Andrew Nicholson line everywhere

Beanie Sturgis on being given 20 time penalties on the provisional scores

The Nearly A Nose gelding was one of only two horses to make the time in the advanced, the other being Briarlands Matilda, third to Outside Chance with Izzy Taylor.

Both Oliver's winners are aimed at Bramham.

Laura Collett led the dressage in section K on 22.9 with Rayel. But they parted company across country when the bay changed his mind having taken off for the penultimate fence.

Another double AOIFE CLARK also doubled up, winning two sections of the intermediate with Imperial Trump and Ariando. Cressida Legge's



Paul Tapner takes second in advanced section K with Kilronan

Imperial Trump is a recent arrival, Aoife acquiring the ride as his usual rider, her sister-in-law Polly Stockton, is pregnant.

"It is great — she has done all the work and I'm reaping the benefit," said Aoife.

The horse is by Aoife's favourite stallion Master Imp, sire of her Olympic ride, the Badminton-bound Master Crusoe. He cruised round the advanced for fifth.

"I have done a couple of open novices with Imperial Trump to get to know each other — in fact, they were also our only cross-country fences as a combination, before coming here," she said. "He was amazing today and what an event they put on. It looked good, rode well and was educational, asking plenty but without overdoing it."

Aoife's second winner Ariando, owned by the Stirling Syndicate, is another new ride for this year. "The idea was to get something that could go on and I am really excited about him," she said. "He is foreign, but rides like a thoroughbred and he made it feel so easy."

Aoife was particularly pleased with the gelding's dressage — he

Weston Park (1)



The 2010 Pau four-star runner-up wins for new rider Sophie Beauty

runaway success for this new combination (news, 21 March), who led throughout for a four-mark winning margin. Navigator is owned by former rider William Fox-Pitt.

Lynne Earle and Sophie's grandmother Catherine Joice. "They all decided that dropping down to juniors was the right move for him," explained Sophie.

"He is much bigger than anything I've ridden before, but he is so easy to ride — push button, in fact — and I'm so privileged to have the ride."

"I did send William a text last night after I'd walked the course as I had a few questions on how to ride him. He looked at the fences and told me what to do — keep my leg on and steer between the flags!"



Beanie Sturgis tops an OI with the Badminton-bound Lebowski

led the section with a 25.5. "It is just a question of finding the keys to him as he is cheeky, but great fun to ride," she added.

"He's due an upgrade!" It was only at the prize-giving that Vittoria Panizzon discovered she had been demoted to second in open intermediate (OI) section L with Merlots Magic. It turned out that the provisional scores had wrongly attributed 20 time penalties to eventual winner Beanie Sturgis with Lebowski.

Eventing

Weston Park (1)



Romeo Z stretches out for Alex Liddle on the way to taking under-21 OI section G. The first time I rode him, he felt quite ponyish, but the more you dare him the better he is!



Aoife Clark wins both intermediates, with Ariando and Imperial Trump (pictured)

of last year and had her entered in the advanced today, explained Chris. "With all the cancellations, she decided that an advanced to start the season was a bit much, moved her to the OI and then, with a manic week at work, asked me to stand in."

"The mare only arrived four days ago and, although I trained Izzy all last year with her, I've only sat on her a handful of times," added Chris.

"Luckily, she is very straightforward, although the pressure was on as Izzy won an intermediate section here with her last year — a fact she kept reminding me of, so I had to win."

"It was a great start to 2013 for the Lambourn-based rider as his other rides were both placed too, Billy Bounce third (intermediate section L) and Idol Hero seventh (OI section I).

**Liddle leads throughout** ALEX LIDDLE. A member of last year's gold medal-winning junior European team, did her chances of selection for this year's young rider squad no harm with a win in under-21 OI section G. She led throughout with Romeo Z.

The combination came to Weston on the back of an open novice run to start the season, before moving up to open intermediate at Lincoln, where they were third.

Romeo is owned by the Huntridges, who have had horses with both Alex's mother Toni and aunt Tanya Kyle, so the arrival of Romeo was a natural progression.

"I think they were keen the horse went to a junior," said Alex, who has had the ride since the end of 2011. "The first time I rode him he felt quite ponyish, but the more you dare him the better he is and he was amazing round to get some better going to gallop on — it was perfect."

"There were a lot of questions, but he couldn't have been better and to lead after the dressage was very satisfying, as we have worked hard on that through the winter."

As ever, the Plant family did a fantastic job running an event that had a far from ideal run-up.

"Planning in 2ft of snow is not easy," said Janet Plant. "We were running out of time and had to pack the birch corners using planks to stand on the snow." H&H

## Results

**WESTON PARK (1)**  
**Adv sec J** — 1. Douglas (O Townend) 31.0, 1.6=33.2, Zekarta (K King) 26.8, 4.7=31.5, 3. Mr Cruise Control (A Nicholson) 33.0, 0.6=40.3, **sec K** — 1. Outside Chance (O Townend) 31.1, 0.0=31.1, 2. Kilronan (P Tapner) 29.0, 5.5=34.5, 3. KEBIS Briarlands Matilda (J Taylor) 28.9, 7.0=35.9, **OI sec L** — 1. Billy Buzz (C King) 25.0, 0.9=25.9, 2. Miss Crusoe (C King) 25.0, 1.0=26.0, 3. Kekeeyn Cognac (K McNab) 26.8, 0.0=26.8, **sec L** — 1. Lebowski (B Sturgis) 33.2, 0.3=33.5, 2. Merlots Magic (V Panizzon) 33.2, 2.2=35.4, 3. Bodidly (S Mines) 35.0, 0.8=35.8, **OJ21 sec G** — 1. Romeo Z (A Liddle) 23.0, 0.4=23.4, 2. Posse Captain (I Innes Ken) 28.6, 0.1=28.7, 3. The Cherokee Artist (L Poltche-Baron) 25.0, 0.2=25.2, **sec N** — 1. Navigator (S Beauty) 25.9, 0.1=26.0, 2. Uchin (G Clarke) 24.1, 4.3=28.4, 3. Kasseador (A Gillespie) 25.9, 4.5=30.4, **int sec** — 1. Ariando (A Clark) 25.0, 0.8=25.8, 2. Osoos Cootley (L Collett) 25.0, 1.0=26.0, 3. Billy Bounce (C King) 26.8, 0.1=26.9, **sec M** — 1. Imperial Trump (A Clark) 28.2, 0.3=28.5, 2. Courtine (A Nicolas) 32.3, 4.4=36.7, 3. Kipatreek Knight (A O'Connor) 27.0, 1.2=28.2, **nov sec C** — 1. Strike Smartly (D Berkeley) 32.0, 0.2=32.2, 2. Vane Kamra (J Taylor) 33.0, 0.3=33.3, 3. Garrybrill Daisy (O Townend) 29.9, 4.1=34.0, **sec D** — 1. Curragh Kyle (A Clark) 24.4, 3.6=28.0, 2. Thornton Jones (A Nicholson) 29.4, 3.2=32.6, 3. Silver Birches Arthur (J Shannon) 25.0, 1.6=26.6, **sec E** — 1. KEBIS Sturmund (J Taylor) 28.0, 0.2=28.2, 2. Ballaghmore Class (O Townend) 25.8, 2.2=28.0, 3. High Light III (M Reid) 24.5, 4.6=29.1, **sec F** — 1. Philanderer II (A Nicholson) 28.0, 2.2=30.2, 2. Majestic Imp (M Reid) 30.0, 0.4=30.4, 3. Toussy Lady (B Way) 31.5, 4.0=35.5, **PT sec A** — 1. Ferrar Ezzon (D Bower) 30.0, 0.2=30.2, 2. Another Island (J Thomas) 28.0, 7.2=35.2, 3. Kiloran Blue (P Geese-Saurau) 27.5, 4.4=31.9, **sec B** — 1. Craig Mar Tom (V Ingham) 24.5, 0.0=24.5, 2. Carrowmore Gemstone (R Nesbitt) 25.0, 0.3=25.3, 3. Strawberry Box (T Bell) 31.0, 0.3=31.3.