



Oliver Townend and his World Equestrian Games partner Flint Curtis win the World Cup qualifier

# Flint proves hard to beat

Oliver Townend scores his biggest win yet when he takes the World Cup qualifier, reports *Catherine Austen*



Tim Price and Keyflow are the only pair inside the time in either CIC\*\*\* section to finish third in section R



Rodney Powell and the Johnsons' Langarth Darcy finish third in the World Cup qualifier



World Cup qualifier runner-up Matt Ryan (Bonza Puzzle)

**O**LIVER Townend may have ridden 13 horses round Burnham Market International Horse Trials, sponsored by metal recycling company Esco, but his luck was certainly in. He won the showcase event, the CIC\*\*\* World Cup qualifier, on the Nicholson's Flint Curtis, finished second in the other CIC\*\*\* section with Iron Brew, took an intermediate section on ODT Master Rose and won the open intermediate with Woodhouse Ben. After show jumping clear, his 2006 World Equestrian Games partner Flint Curtis sped round

a technical cross-country course with just 2.4 time-penalties to give Oli his biggest win so far. "Flint doesn't get very high at times and you just have to sit tight, but I think he's still improving," said Oli. "He blew his mind a bit at Badminton last year and it's taken until now to recover from that."

Matt Ryan made use of Bonza Puzzle's natural speed and agility to post a double clear with eight time-faults and finish second. "He's a little bucky Australian Thoroughbred. I went out there to give it a cut and prove Paul Tanser was wrong at Somerley when he said I was getting old!" said Matt.

It was a good day for the Ryans — Matt also finished eighth on his other ride, Bonza Katoomba, and wife Marie was delighted to finish 10th with an impressive show jumping clear on Penny Royal III. "Penny" is now 18, and has lost none of her zest for competition. Third was Rodney Powell, riding Brook and Sally Johnson's Welsh Cob/Thoroughbred, Langarth Darcy. Fourth — as ever in major competitions — fastest was Francis Whittington (Sir Percival III). A lightning cross-country round accrued only two time-faults — 1 sec quicker than Oli and Flint Curtis — and pulled Francis up the order from 11th after dressage.

"I aim to save 1 sec at every fence, so I can take my foot off the pedal a bit between them," said Francis. "It's a science to make sure you get it right — and you've got to know your horse and know you're not going to make a mistake."

Dressage leaders Clayton Fredericks and Nullarbor, on 40.4, knocked a pole show jumping and did not go flat to the boards across country for fifth. They have a date at the Kentucky four-star the weekend before Badminton. Clayton had an unlucky fall at the second-last, a fairly innocuous hanging log drop, on his World Cup winner and Aachen silver medalist Ben Along Time. "We were going quite quick and had a good

shot in it. He just jumped a bit big and pecked on landing," said Clayton, who said the horse was none the worse for his crash. Clayton's wife, Lucinda, was runner-up to him after dressage on Headley Britannia (44), but she did not run her Badminton-bound Burghley winner in the show jumping and cross-country. Sarah Cohen and her former British intermediate champion Hide And Seek II, by Regal Sting, were sixth, ahead of Rodney Powell (Zizan II). Both Hide And Seek II and The Wexford Lady head for Badminton.

"They both spent 10 days with Lizzie Murray doing dressage in January, which has been a tremendous help," said Sarah. The Wexford Lady, who booted over in the dressage but jumped her usual impressive clear cross-country, has two embryo transfer foals due to Preci-Spark's own four-year-old stallion Treffy. Treffy will start competing this season.

Zara Phillips and her World Champion Toytown scored highly in the dressage with 44.7 and lay equal third with Jo May (Faere Vision, eventual ninth) at this stage. Two down in the show jumping — with a much calmer, rhythmic round than at this event last year — and a steady cross-country clear left them well-prepared for their first Badminton.

Riders praised Hugh Lochore's course, which asked plenty of technical questions without punishing horses unduly, and no particular fence exerted too much influence. Most problems were simply run-offs at corners and skinnies.

Two big brush corners early on at fence four, followed on a tight curving line to a boxy third brush, came just two fences before three demanding offset barrels. Then competitors quickly came to a double of corners after a table, meaning horses had to make 11 individual efforts within a short space, but the elite field was more than capable of dealing with this. The bounce into the second water disappointed the sizeable Bank Holiday crowds by producing not a single ducking



Sarah Cohen keeps a clean sheet to take the CIC\*\* on the seven-year-old mare Trebetherick



Under-25 national champions Georgie Davies and Fachoudette win CIC\*\*\* section R

Event director Alec Lochore and his team had done their best with the ground, spiking the advanced courses twice, but it inevitably firmed up during three days of bright sunshine and wind.

William Fox-Pitt summed up the riders' feelings, saying: "They've done a lot to it and it's perfectly rideable, but it is on the firm side." Georgie Davies won the second CIC\*\*\* section on Fachoudette, the French Anglo-Arab mare who carried her to an under-25 victory at Bramham last year. Second after dressage on 44.7 to Caroline Moore and Don Giovanni III (41.4), Georgie set off on the cross-country in the lead after Don Giovanni picked up 17 penalties in the show jumping.

"It was only her second run this year and I thought I'd give her a decent fly round in preparation for Badminton," said Georgie. "She knows her job, and we know each other inside out." Georgie was trying out a new bit — a three-ring gag — on the 14-year-old mare, which was considered a success.

"She knows she's a star, and if we can get the flying changes right, she could be competitive at Badminton," she said. Georgie has nine horses to ride from her Hemel Hempstead yard — seven more than last year. Oli Townend and Iron Brew were second and Tim Price gave the Kiwis a boost by being the only CIC\*\*\* rider in either section to go inside the time and take third place on the nine-year-old Keyflow.

Ginger Charlie followed up his second place at Somerley with fourth here for rider Claire Phillips and his owners, Gary and Susan McCormack. Fifth were Jacko's Delight and Stefanie Thompson.

Andrew Nicholson and Paul Ridgeon's Silbury Hill added another win to their CIC\*\*\* victory here in 2006, adding just six time-faults to a 36.1 dressage score to take the advanced this time.

William Fox-Pitt, who pulled Moon Man up towards the end of the cross-country in the World Cup qualifier because he felt below par, finished second on Macchiato. The Argentine Thoroughbred, who raced in Australia, came to William as a five-year-old from Sharon Ridgeway. Now nine, he heads for Bramham.

Third was Another Cavalier, ridden by Matthew Wright. Matthew also finished second in the open intermediate on Grove Jucas.

Trebetherick, home-bred by Preci-Spark Ltd, won the CIC\*\* after Sarah Cohen. Only seven, the Bolivar mare completed on her dressage score.

"She's awesome — such a big, strong mare, and is ready to go on now," said Sarah. Their only dodgy moment came at the water: "She jumped in big, and just stuck her head under to cool off — we were both soaked! But she's clever and found another leg."

Trebetherick is having a foal by embryo transfer to McGuigan, who was also competing here with Jeannette Brakewell.

Piggy French collected an armful of rosettes, but her best placing came on Cast Away II, second in the CIC\*\*. This seven-year-old belongs to Waveney Harriers master Lavinia Wells, who herself rode Cartell Diamond to ninth in a pre-notice section. Third was Andrew Nicholson on Deborah Sellar's Nereo, another seven-year-old, by Fines.

The main casualty of the weekend was Susie Wales's former advanced ride, 16-year-old Pete's Pasion, who sadly suffered a heart attack and died while competing in the junior regional novice with Susie's daughter, Zoe. H&H

Andrew Nicholson and Silbury Hill put in one of the fastest rounds to take the advanced



## COURSE CHAT

■ THERE were only five show jumping clears in the World Cup qualifier. Apart from the first three in the prizes and Marie Ryan, just Clare Chamberlayne and Astronave left all the poles up, for the second year running. Sadly, a glance-off at the brush corner at fence 18 spoilt a fast, fluent cross-country round.

■ IT wasn't Andrew Hoy's day — he was eliminated in the show jumping on Classy Touch for going before the bell. It can happen to anyone, but do the words "Bettina" and "Athens" spark any memories?

■ THE Busker, Val Gingell's grey who won the under-25 championship at Bramham with Phoebe Buckley and finished eighth at Burghley with Jeannette Brakewell, has been retired.

"His tendon flared up after Poplar, and we decided to call it a day," said Phoebe. "He's having a nice time in the field beating up the youngsters and telling them tall stories about his glory days."

■ "GRAND old man" award goes to Over To You. Now 19, and with more than 2,000 British Eventing points to his name, Jeannette Brakewell's unmistakable liver chestnut bounded round the CIC\*\*\* with a double clear and 16 time-faults to finish sixth. He is entered for Badminton — it will be his eighth visit.



■ RODNEY Powell had a few dodgy moments at the water on Langarth Darcy, third in the World Cup qualifier. The commentator took the mickey, to the delight of the crowd, but Rodney gave back as good as he got (above).

■ APART from the ubiquitous Oli Townend, Friday's other intermediate section went to Sam York and Skiddaddle. Sam works full-time at Nottingham Trent University as an equine lecturer, and rides four horses before and after work.

She said: "I've worked my pants off with Skiddaddle because he's very nervous, but I hope to come back to Norfolk for the CCI\*\* at Houghton."

They are also heading for the national winter dressage championships this weekend at elementary level.

For daily competition news go to: [www.horseandhound.co.uk/competitionnews](http://www.horseandhound.co.uk/competitionnews)