



Oliver Townend wins the novice final on Jeepers Creepers: 'He's very genuine and I knew he had this win in him'

— rather than international under FEI rules — event, Gatcombe offers neither FEI qualifications nor points, which riders need to focus on to gain entry to three-day events. If the novice championships were a CIC** and the intermediate a CIC***, it would surely help deflect the tide turning towards Hartpury the weekend after Gatcombe. That

Hartpury was the chosen final trial for Australia and New Zealand's WEG squads did further damage.

Novice championship

LIKE Ruth Edge, Oliver Townend is in possession of a fine collection of Gatcombe titles — two intermediates and now two novices. He won the Dodson & Horrell novice championship on

another grey — all four of his titles, weirdly, have been on greys — this time Jeepers Creepers.

Oliver has ridden Olivia Tappin's son of Ricardo Z, who is out of a Cavalier mare, for a year.

"He's not always the easiest in his mouth which makes him difficult to steer when the pace gets up, but he's very genuine and I knew he had this win in him," said Oliver. "The showjumping can be tricky because he's spooky, but this was by far the best round he has jumped — he didn't ever feel like he was going to have a rail."

A dressage of 30.8 was good enough for eighth place, but a clear showjumping — one of just nine in the class — and a cross-country round inside the time left him 3.6pen ahead of Sharon Hunt and Azeb, owned by Sharon and David and Susan Howard. Azeb, seven, is a son of the Irish grand prix showjumper Pairc Na Clocha.

Vicky Tuffs, third on her first trip to the Festival, was the only rider apart from Oliver to finish on her dressage score on Sir Robert and Lady Hayman-Joyce's Nothing Ventured. It was a jump of 28 places from 31st after dressage.

"I can't bloody believe it!" exclaimed an excited Vicky. "He's a really tricky, sharp horse and it all just came together today. He's not built for dressage, he's built for speed and Gatcombe suits this horse — coming from Wales [Vicky is from Usk in Monmouthshire] he's used to hills."

Fourth was Angus Smales on the Puissance mare Chanterelle, who had 4.8 time-faults across country, and fifth was the ubiquitous Ruth Edge (Master Zero). Italy's Vittoria Panizzon was sixth with Borough Pennyz.

The main problems in the novice didn't come on the