

Townend steals the honours



WORLD CUP QUALIFIER

- 1st Oliver Townend on Flint Curtis (GB)
- 2nd Pippa Funnell on Ensign (GB)
- 3rd William Fox-Pitt on Parkmore Ed (GB)

CHATSWORTH, DERBYSHIRE 10-11 May

By Jo Prestwich

OLIVER TOWNEND secured a prestigious win at the Chatsworth Nissan International Horse Trials, rising from 12th after the dressage to head a strong field in the World Cup qualifier with Edward and Robert Nicholson's Flint Curtis.

Posting the fastest round of the day on the cross-country and jumping clear around what proved a challenging show jumping track, he put the pressure on those above him and reaped the reward as the poles fell.

There were no surprises after the dressage as one of eventing's best exponents of the art, Ruth Edge, led the way with Catherine Witt's Mr Dumbledore, albeit only a mark ahead of Pippa Funnell with her own and her mother's ex-racehorse Ensign.

With the majority

jumping clear across country, the order going into the show jumping mimicked that of the dressage with the top four — Ruth, Pippa, Polly Stockton (Westwood Poser) and Jeanette Brakewell (Over To You) — all retaining their places. Over To You was clapped even before he jumped the fences, such is his star status with the public.

"He was as amazing as ever," said Jeanette of the evergreen 20-year-old.

As befits a World Cup qualifier, Di Boddy's show jumping track was up to height and although the second in, Ruth Edge and Fast Track remained penalty-free, it was soon obvious it would take some jumping. William Fox-Pitt's clear with one of his Olympic hopes Parkmore

Ed took him from 10th to third, but otherwise it was mostly downhill traffic.

Over To You dropped out of the top 10 after an uncharacteristic four down, having lost a shoe on the cross-country, as did Mr Dumbledore, while Flint Curtis rose to the head of the leader board.

Oli thought the cross-country slightly kinder than last year.

"But the terrain always makes it testing here and it is such a fabulous place to come and compete," he said. "Flint Curtis was a bit lit up in the dressage, but he is rideable like that now and he was awesome across country."

Likening the day at Chatsworth to a return to her Pony Club days — "It was just Mum, me and the horse" — Pippa was thrilled

with Ensign, who despite the accolade of "the slowest hurdler to ever look through the bridle", scorched round in one of the fastest times for second place.

"It was my mistake at Badminton," said Pippa, referring to her run-out and fall at Huntsman's Close. "They are not machines."

William was delighted with Parkmore Ed, who was at Chatsworth as a prep for Hong Kong.

"It was a very pleasant surprise to finish so well up, particularly as the show jumping did not walk as difficult as it rode," he said. "But it was a cleverly built track. The cross-country was a good, fair test and he made it feel easy."

"Ed" more than proved his wellbeing, trying to get rid of William during the warm-up for the show jumping.

"He has succeeded once and keeps trying to get me again," he said.

Outside the World Cup qualifier Oli was

Flint Curtis was a bit lit up in the dressage, but he is rideable like that now

Oliver Townend on his World Cup qualifier winner



Pippa Funnell puts a mistake at Badminton behind her with second place in the World Cup qualifier on Ensign



Oliver Townend and Flint Curtis keep a clean sheet over the coloured poles to move up to top spot in the World Cup qualifier



Lord Killinghurst wins the advanced for Andrew Nicholson. Andrew also won this class last year on the horse's half-sister, Ginger May Killinghurst

COURSE CHAT

► ONE rider who got up close and personal with Chatsworth's hallowed turf returned to the scene of his fall to re-walk the line before his next ride. He got chatting to the jump judge, remarking on the fact that he couldn't work out why he had fallen. The reply of "rider error" was greeted with the pantomime line, "Oh no it wasn't", before the fall report was produced with the damning words in print. It's difficult to know whom to believe, but the form-filler should be qualified to comment — it was Gill Armstrong (née Fleming-Williams), who completed Badminton on four occasions.

► HANDING microphones to the top three in the World Cup qualifier at prize-giving nearly backfired when runner-up Pippa Funnell explained to the large crowd round the main arena, "I rode like a twat at Badminton." Winner Oliver Townend was also left red-faced when Flint Curtis emptied his very full bladder during the National Anthem.

► EMILY GILRUTH was back in action after breaking her collarbone at Powderham, moving up a couple of places in the World Cup qualifier with a stylish show jumping clear. Irish rider Louise Lyons was another to record a rare clear on Watership Down, finishing 10th.

still the man to get past as he added to his spoils with a win in CIC*** section H. Riding Throstle Nest Saddlery's Golden Hue, he was one of the fastest to win by nearly four penalties. Golden Hue is no stranger to success at Chatsworth, winning on his first visit at novice level as a six-year-old.

"He is ultra-reliable," said Oli, who will take the Golden Cliff gelding to Bramham next. "He felt very professional today, so much so that you forget he is a relatively low-mileage nine-year-old. Dressage-wise he is nearly as good as anything I have had — he is so rideable and accurate."

Clayton Fredericks and Ben Along Time, winners of the main class here two years ago, put in a spectacular dressage test on the way to winning the second CIC***. Two 10s, for the entry and for Clayton's riding, helped give him a score of 32.3. Over 10 points ahead of the chasing pack, a total that narrowed to two at the end.

"I was worried about Clea," said Clayton referring to eventual runner-up Clea Phillips with the racing-bred Lead The Way. "I went cross-country before the break for the World Cup qualifier and she went round at the end so it was a long wait, but without pressing mine too hard we had done enough to stay ahead." With the Fredericks



Advanced runners-up: Piggie French (What A Performance)