



Oliver Townend *reveals*

This year's Badminton winner on aching bones, misconceptions, French tarts and romantic potential

First&last

WHAT IS your first... memory of riding?

Charging around in a home field at home in Yorkshire — it really was an absolute hole. I'd been to watch some Pony Club games to see if I liked it, then went home and tried to recreate what I'd seen with a tennis racket, swinging it around my poor pony's ears.

When did you first... jump the top of the wings?

Once again, in the swamp as a kid. Me and some friends would hold our own puissance competitions and it used to get pretty big. Looking back, it probably wasn't that high at all, but it felt big enough at the time.

What is the first... misconception people have about you?

I think that they have a lot actually. I don't let many people get close enough to know the real me.

What is the first... thing you would change in life?

All the logistical problems involved in getting to events — I'd definitely like to cut out the travelling I have to do. And mobile phone reception, too — or lack of it.

Who would be your first... choice to play you in a film?

Daniel Craig. Not that I think I'm that good looking, but he's northern and one of my favourite actors. He's cool.

When did you first... set up your own yard?

After leaving work on Kenneth Clawson's yard [show jumping trainer to the British eventing team] just after my 21st birthday. I set up in Market Harborough, Leics. I was there for five years, but upgraded last November and bought a farm in Ellesmere, Shrops. It's a really nice place, with all the stables and facilities that I need.

What is the first... thing on your shopping list?

I want a new wagon. I could do with something more comfy now that I'm getting older. With the number of bones I've broken over the years, I'm not always very comfortable when I first wake up — it takes a while to get moving.

What is the first... word you would use to describe yourself?

Determined. Or maybe stressed. I'm not sure which one to choose.



After winning £160,880 at his last three competitions, Flint Curtis is 'quite special' to Oliver

When did you first... realise you had something special in Flint Curtis?

He is improving all the time, but you only start to realise what you've got when they begin pulling it out of the bag regularly at big events. He's won £160,880 at his

last three competitions, so that makes him quite special to me!

When did you last... get eliminated?

At Shelford Manor in May, in the show jumping phase believe it or not. I was doing a pre-novice with a

really green youngster — three spooks and they kicked me out. I just hope it doesn't happen too often.

What was the last... strange thing to happen to you?

I think I'm a bit of a boring bugger. Nothing funny ever seems to happen to me.

When did you last... do something romantic?

Along, long time ago. I think I have the potential to be a romantic, but I haven't had the opportunity lately.

When did you last... wear fancy dress?

To Kenneth Clawson's 60th birthday party a few weeks ago. It was a Moulin Rouge theme — French tarts or top hat and tails. And no, I didn't go as a French tart.

When did you last... need a stiff drink?

Now that is a tricky one. Can I say every day of the week?

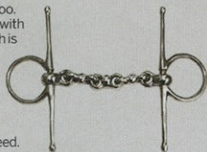
When did you last... get a dressing down?

That happens on a regular basis by various people! I think I'm generally just a bit naughty. H&H

My secret weapon

PIGGY FRENCH [the eventer and Oliver's ex-girlfriend] stole my secret weapon and gave it as hers in H&H.

It was mine first so I'm going to say it too. It's a Waterford bit with cheekpieces, which is good for taking youngsters cross-country. It's not a sharp bit, but it gives you the extra control and steering that you need.



A horse I'd love to own... KAUTO STAR

THIS year's Cheltenham Gold Cup winner, the Paul Nicholls' trained National Hunt racehorse Kauto Star.

It must be such an amazing feeling to ride a horse with so many gears.

Unfortunately, he would probably make most event horses feel like diesel engines to ride afterwards.

I just love racing and I love fast horses. I don't think I'd have any problems controlling him cross-country either — I've ridden a lot worse.



Kauto Star — 'a horse with so many gears'