

Oliver Townend is the star of the show with a win and a second place in the top two classes at Brightling, notes Julie Harding

TWENTY-year-old Oliver Townend was clearly a man on a mission at Brightling Park. Not content merely to trounce the opposition in the sole 46-strong advanced section, Oliver also became the top under-21 rider at the event, an accolade he earned by finishing second in the OI.

It was Monarch's Jeremiah Daly, a nine-year-old who was originally bought by owners Trevor and Janet Holliday as a hunter, who carried Oliver to victory in the advanced, despite clocking up 13.2 time-penalties over Scott Brickell's cross-country course, where the optimum time proved impossible to attain.

A clutch of competitors withdrew after the show jumping, citing firm ground as the reason. One of these was the almost unbeatable Pippa Funnell, who had put up her usual dazzling first-phase display for an early lead with the stallion, Viceroy II.

Oliver, meanwhile, rose through the ranks from equal fourth after the dressage to the head of affairs on what was Monarch's Jeremiah Daly's first advanced run.

"I didn't set out to be competitive," said Oliver, who has been based with Kenneth Clawson for the last three seasons, "and the horse was only in fourth gear all the way round."

By contrast, Nat Dixon confessed that she "went for burn" across the country with her old campaigner and former four-star horse Willy's Knight, now 15 and mainly confined to one-day events due to "soundness problems".

Nat's speedy time of 6min 53sec proved good enough for second place, but she was left ruing a rolled pole at the second show jumping fence which cost her victory.

"A dog ran in front of the fence as we came towards it," explained Bedford-based Nat. "It blew Willy's concentration and as we approached it again, I thought: 'I bet I'm going to have this down!'"

Willy, who has often been the bridesmaid but never the bride in so many advanced classes over the years, is set to contest the British Open at Gatcombe in three week's time.

Occupying third spot was local rider Sacha Pemble with Caroline Richardson's 14-year-old The Solicitor, "the most patched up horse on the eventing circuit", according to his owner.

The Solicitor has been beset by injury for most of his life, his various traumas including a broken patella, the removal of a splint bone, breaking



Brightling

Advanced

- 1st Oliver Townend on Monarch's Jeremiah Daly
- 2nd Nat Dixon on Willy's Knight
- 3rd Sacha Pemble on The Solicitor

Oliver Townend and the 17hh Monarch's Jeremiah Daly collect their first advanced win

Youth prevails over