

# Badminton-bound

**EQ LIFE BURNHAM MARKET (1) NORFOLK**  
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By Catherine Austen

OLIVER TOWNEND approaches Badminton in the best possible form after taking both CIC3\* sections at Burnham Market.

Adding them to his Ballindenisk win the previous Sunday (report, 17 April) means Oliver won three three-stars in seven days — and now totals seven CIC3\*s over the years at Burnham Market.

One of his victories came courtesy of his yard star, Paul Ridgeon's Armada. Oliver's endless patience with this super-talented but difficult 15-year-old has certainly paid off.

"I try to touch the reins as little as I possibly can and, as long as you are brave enough to sit there, he's great," said Oliver. "He never came out of third gear."

Armada was fourth after dressage with a score of 39.8. Although a careful showjumping round notched up two time-faults, the chestnut's raking stride ensured his cross-country was the fastest of the three-star sections with just 1.2 time-faults.

Oliver's other CIC3\* win was with Karyn Shuter's Black Tie II. Much smaller than Armada, Black Tie II was nevertheless nearly as quick, collecting 3.6 cross-country time-faults when double figures were very much the day's norm.

"He's a proper New Zealand thoroughbred and very fast — and the firmer the ground, the better," said Oliver. "We withdrew him at Weston because it was a bit soft

The hard work pays off: Oliver Townend wins the CIC3\* section C on Paul Ridgeon's Armada, by holding his nerve and 'touching the reins as little as possible'



Craig Nicolai and Just Ironic come third in section B and achieve their best result yet at this level

for him and he got totally stuck in the mud showjumping at Ballindenisk, but this was perfect."

Karyn Shuter, who helps manage Oliver's business in Shropshire, bought the ex-racehorse out of New Zealand's free ads. She evented him herself before giving Oliver the ride in 2010.

"He's a beautiful type — nearly perfect to look at — but the best thing is that he's an out-and-out trier," said Oliver. "If he never wins another class he'll stay with us forever — we love him."

**Wilson's strong string**

NICOLA WILSON finished second to Black Tie II in section B with Ann

and Valerie Robson's Beltane Queen. Her 38.9 dressage mark was better than Black Tie's 40.4 and both showjumped clear, but Nicola had Badminton in mind and settled for 12 time-faults across country.

"She's got stronger and stronger, and for her and One Two Many [fourth in section C, scoring 37.2 in the dressage] to have broken into the 30s — a first for me at this level — is very exciting," said Nicola with a huge smile.

"And all four horses I brought for the three-star [Watermill Vision, 11th in section C and Annie Clover, withdrawn before cross-country] showjumped clear. I feel