



Oliver Townend with the spoils of the \$150,000 HSBC FEI Classics

### The exceptions who prove the rule?

THERE are those who make it work on their own, however.

Oliver Townend is the flagbearer of his generation in terms of earning a living out of eventing. Last year, the world number one made well-documented financial gains through dealing and earned around £350,000 in prize-money.

So, if Oliver can do it, why can't others?

Angus Smales spent two years at Team Townsend to find out.

"A lot of people say Oliver is the only person making money out of what he does, but even he had to start somewhere," Angus reasons. "One of the first things he said to me was: 'You'd better learn quickly because I don't want you hanging around here forever.'"

But the fact is there are very few riders like Oliver — if any. As a dealer's son, he learned to ride anything and everything. He was never bought the best, but he sought to be the best. His ruthless determination, his eye for a bargain and his ability to get the best out of

## The generation gap — have times changed?

MARY KING has seen the dynamics of eventing change since she took up the sport in the mid 1980s, one of the very few top riders to have done so from a non-horsey background.

"There is a lot more support for young riders now, with the World Class programme and the training that's available," she says. "But, of course, you have to be good enough to be involved in the first place."

When Mary secured her first sponsorship deal with the Carphone Group in the late 80s, most top riders operated by having one individual backer.

"Now, hardly any riders seem to have just one sponsor; most have more than that — and they're very hard to get," she muses.

Mary's parents never insisted that their daughter went to university. Instead, they encouraged her to take a Cordon Bleu cookery course and work part-time to fund her eventing career.

Twenty years on and Mary will be encouraging her 14-year-old daughter, Emily, to adopt the same level of self-sufficiency.

Emily already has her heart set on an eventing career. She has three horses to compete next year and has succeeded in finding sponsors to finance each one.

"I won't be pressuring her into going to university, but she knows how I run my business and she knows it's up to her to make it work," says Mary. "She realises she has to make things happen herself."

“Don't believe in fairy tales. Things will only happen if you make them — no one's going to do it for you”

Angus Smales



Mary King makes her business pay by keeping staff costs down and teaching

every horse have set him apart from the crowd. Owners send him horses because he is an exceptionally good rider and a phenomenal businessman.

Angus is certainly a member of the Oliver Townend school of ambition. One day, he dreams of owning his own place; for the last three years he has lived in his horsebox and in a caravan. Like Oliver, Angus measures success not only by trophies and fame, but also by long-term stability and financial soundness.

So, what is his business mantra? "I ride everybody else's horses," says Angus. "Cornsey Grouse [with whom he has completed Burghley twice] is the only one who is partially mine; he's half-owned by my Dad, who would never let me sell him. Apart from him, nothing I own stays in my yard for more than a month."

"When I'm established I'd love to be in a position to finance a couple of my own really good horses, but at the moment, the priority is a property of my own. I'm sick of renting — it's such a financial drain."

### The juggling game

NOT all riders want to adopt the "stack it high, sell it quick" approach. So what are the other options?

Mary King prefers to run a smaller operation and rely on gaining sponsorship, having paying owners and teaching to boost her income.

She says: "I've never wanted to run a big operation and have always had between seven and 10 horses. I keep costs down by not employing a secretary and doing all the paperwork myself."

Having enough paying owners to cover the bills and make a living, but not so many horses that you struggle to do each one justice and need extra staff, can be a juggling act. Lose a horse and you can't clear your bills; get a horse or two extra and there isn't time to compete as much as you'd like.

Former British junior champion Emilie Chandler, who runs her own yard in



Angus Smales aims to ride as many horses for owners as possible and earn enough to buy his own place