

Townend's View proves the best



Oliver Townend leads the CCI** from start to finish on Waterview to score his first three-day event win

HOUGHTON, NORFOLK
21-25 May

By Martha Terry

IT seems incredible that until last weekend Oliver Townend had yet to win a three-day event. But his three-pronged attack on Subaru Houghton CCI** yielded the inevitable victory — also pocketing fifth prize and the £1,000 North Astor Group eventers' grand prix to boot.

"I've been second at every event in the country," said Oliver. "I'm not waiting that long for my next win."

Before the event, Oliver couldn't split his trio. Clover Curtis had the most experience, but it was Andrew Cawthray's Waterview who led from the outset to finish on a clean sheet of 35.1, with Matthew Wright (Hugginstown) and a brace of Fox-Pitt horses less than a fence adrift.

The suspense of the cross-country phase was alleviated within half an hour when Oliver consolidated his dressage lead with an easy clear. The course — designed by Hugh Lochore and beautifully built by Joe Weller — did not prove particularly testing and more than three-quarters of the field went clear, 36% inside the time of 8min 52sec.

"He's not the easiest horse — his steering and brakes are interesting," said Oliver, "but he likes to jump when he gets there."

With the trailing bunch left hanging on to Oliver's coat-tails, a couple of the dressage protagonists



Owen Moore stays on his dressage score to win CCI* section A on Clover Hillson Danewood Clover Lad



Rosanna Crossley finishes second in CCI* section A on Oloa: "It's all up to me — if I do it right, he's perfect"

cracked under the pressure. Dressage second Terry Boon (Always Owen) retained his place despite 0.8 time-faults, but third-placed Georgie Spence plummeted down to 43rd when Skylight stepped back at the steps down into the quarry in the latter part of the course. These novice steps had been re-routed into the two-star when a loop of the course was taken out because of hard ground, so the challenging log drop into the quarry could not be used.

Fourth after dressage was American rider Elisabeth Halliday, but her bid failed at the Tumulus complex (seven), where she retired Silken Crisp. The fence had been eased from 2007, when it caused the bulk of refusals. This year, a hanging log on a mound led to a brush corner on a bending line — with the small matter of a

tree directly on the desired line. Most riders took the longer route to the left of the tree which, although it broke the horse's rhythm, did not add much time. Georgie and Elisabeth's misdemeanours allowed Matthew Wright to join Terry to finish phase two within a fence of Oliver, despite a sticky moment. "Hugginstown left a leg at fence seven, so I was down to the buckle and

I've been second at every event in the country — I'm not waiting that long for my next win

Oliver Townend on his first three-day win

Subaru Houghton

COURSE CHAT

► **HENRY SYMINGTON** and John Kyle made a superb team in the commentary box, but one can't help noticing it's hungry work. Henry had to contend with both a tuna mayo sandwich and Sensei Van De Varnahoeve Z simultaneously (quite a mouthful), while John could only give distracted attention to a couple of runners once he'd spotted the start-box team had been given sticky cakes.

► **GEORGIE SPENCE** (Best Of Spirits) and Vicky Laing (Call Me Ishmael) were taken to hospital after falls, but both were released by the end of the weekend.

► **HOUGHTON** Hall was built for the first prime minister, Sir Robert Walpole, in the 1720s.

► **ADRENALIN** junkie: when she's not riding horses, Elisabeth Halliday is a racing-car driver.

► to finish sixth and best under-25, William Fox-Pitt and Oliver enjoyed reconnaissance rounds on Bee Animas and ODT Master Rose to secure eventual fourth and fifth, with William's Chuckelberry later slotting into third. Oliver's final round was so measured that it looked dangerously like eating into the 3pen he had in hand over Matthew. But Waterview's slick turns were timed to perfection to add the overdue CCI victory to Oliver's already illustrious CV.

Moore's Lad is well ahead

OWEN MOORE breezed to an easy win in CCI* section A on Danewood Clover Lad. After just three in the top 15 had managed to go clear, Owen went into the show jumping arena with a fence in hand over medical student Rosanna Crossley (Oloa) — who had leapfrogged up from fifth courtesy of the paucity of clears.

Owen had tried to shoot himself in the foot beforehand.

"People have been saying all week 'Eddy' would make a great working hunter — and I've replied that he'd be an even better show jumper," said Owen of the Rawlinsons' Clover Hill gelding. "When I found out I was in the lead on the final day I thought it would come back to haunt me. He likes to land on the left leg and this course was all on the right rein. But he's got a good brain and can really jump."

Owen was second after dressage on 40, but moved into the lead when Louisa Lockwood's Wasal took exception to the meaty steps into the quarry. Rosanna's Oloa proved an able replacement for her young rider star, High Time, who broke a leg in the field last year. Oloa's dressage of 46.8 was good enough for eighth, and his jumping faultless.

"It's all up to me," said Rosanna. "If I do it right, he's perfect." Several of the dressage leaders were still in the reckoning on day three. Anabel Yarwood