

Schrade triumphs as Townend falters

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By Catherine Austen

OLIVER TOWNEND'S four-star luck ran out in the show jumping at Pau. Having led through the first two phases of the competition on Andrew Cawthray's Burghley winner Carousel Quest, a third major victory of the season for Oliver seemed just 90sec away.

He had one fence in hand over Germany's Dirk Schrade and the shock on his face when he used it up at the very first jump was apparent. The partnership held it together briefly, but when he hit the final part of the treble at five, it was all over. A further five fences fell and the white-faced Yorkshireman finished with a total of 31 show jumping faults — seven jumps down and three time-faults.

Seven weeks after his Burghley triumph, Carousel Quest looked superb across country on Saturday and Oliver talked in the press conference about how horses recover so much better after three-day events now they are short-format.

But a distinctly lacklustre — and uncomfortable — performance on Sunday does beg the question, should the horse have been asked to exert himself again so soon?

Perhaps the poor performance wasn't related to his Burghley effort. Plenty of horses have show jumped badly on the final day of a three-day event — King William and Spinning Rhombus, to name just two — so let's be careful not

Dirk Schrade moves up from fifth after dressage to triumph on King Artus — it was the 31-year-old German's first four-star win



CCI****
1st Dirk Schrade on King Artus (GER)
2nd Andreas Dibowski on Eurordings Butts Leon (GER)
3rd Pascal Leroy on Mimos De Petra (FRA)



Andreas Dibowski puts in one of just three show jumping clears for second on Eurordings Butts Leon — a repeat of their placing at Luhmühlen in June

It was difficult going out round a four-star knowing I had won the HSBC FEI Classics, but on the way to the second fence I told myself to shut up and concentrate

Oliver Townend, \$150,000 richer after his weekend in France

knives don't fall unfairly. But there is sure to be heated discussion about how regularly horses should run at the very highest level.

It was still a financially rewarding weekend for Oliver. He clinched first in the HSBC FEI Classics series for points accrued at five of the world's six CCI****s, taking home \$150,000 (£92,056). But both Carousel Quest and Flint Curtis will need to find form again before Oliver tackles the third part

of the Rolex Grand Slam in Kentucky next spring.

Oliver's dramas shouldn't overshadow Dirk Schrade's first four-star win. King Artus, a beautiful dark bay 13-year-old by the thoroughbred King Milford, was the class act of the weekend.

Dirk was a trifle disappointed with his dressage — the pair scored 46.7 for fifth place.

"He usually does a good test and has lovely paces. I'm pleased,

but he can do better," he said. A clear cross-country round with 0.8 time-faults lifted them to second and here Dirk gave his horse plenty of credit.

"I knew it would be twisty and King Artus is a big-striding horse. I had to work a bit too much on top, but he listened well," he said.

A clear show jumping round meant they could only wait for Oliver to make a mistake.

Andreas Dibowski ensured the Germans were first and second by gaining some recompense for his European Championships' performance on Eurordings Butts Leon. In the dressage here, the ground jury of Christian Landolt, Marilyn Payne and Michel Assery placed him second on 43.8.1.3pen

behind Oliver and Carousel Quest.

Andreas had a fall with the 12-year-old son of Heraldik across country at the Europeans, but here they jumped clear. A handful of time-faults dropped them a place, but Sunday's clear show jumping elevated them once more.

"Normally he's a fast horse, but I lost some time at the beginning of the course," said Andreas.

Andreas lost out on victory by just 0.1pen — Dirk completed on 48.5, with Andreas on 48.6. The gap was considerably larger back to Pascal Leroy, the first Frenchman home and in third place. Tenth after dressage on the nine-year-old Mimos De Petra, Pascal whizzed the horse round his first four-star cross-country track just a second over the time, rising to fourth place in



Burghley winner Carousel Quest is spot on across country to hold the lead for Oliver Townend — but it all goes wrong the next day

Eventing

the process. Three show jumps down gave them a total of 62.1pen, but it was still good enough for third.

Fourth was another nine-year-old four-star debutant, Grannetvka Prince, ridden by Britain's Lucy Wiegiersma. This horse's last three-day run was six weeks ago, when he won Blenheim, which complicates the Carousel Quest question somewhat. The handsome son of Grannex did hit two show jumps, but these are more likely to be attributed to the horse's inexperience in such a high-octane atmosphere and generally he jumped very well.

Lucy said: "He can be a bit stressy by nature and can get tense and uptight. I took him to Tweseldown to get the ants out of his pants and he did a 41 dressage in the OII!"

"It's been the plan to come to Pau all year, but I nearly got cold feet after Blenheim. He had a thorough MOT and there was no physical reason why he shouldn't come here."

A third nine-year-old at his first CCI**** took fifth place, Matelot Du Grand Val, ridden by former world champion Frenchman Jean Teulère, climbed all the way up from 17th after dressage with 54.8 to complete on 64.4.

At the other end of the age spectrum was Fairfax, sixth at his 13th four-star at the age of 19. He so nearly show jumped clear, just tipping the last fence, and Rodolphe Scherer gave him a lap of honour in front of an appreciative French crowd. He has now been retired from eventing.

One in the time

THE third French rider to make the top 10 was 23-year-old Gwendolen Fer, who was seventh. She won the \$1,000 (£613) HSBC training bursary for best four-star debut.

Former French junior team member Gwendolen was the only person inside the 10min 37sec time limit across country and she gave Leria Du Ter a gutsy ride, her pigtail swinging from side to side as she wheeled round Pierre Michelet's technical, tight track.

She was one of the first to go the straight route at the second water (fences 20, 21 and 22) — a difficult line encompassing three wooden horses.

It is part of French riders' culture to go the straight way

Pierre Michelet, cross-country course-designer on his nation's bravest riding

Lucy Wiegiersma finishes best of the Brits in fourth on Blenheim winner Grannetvka Prince, who was at his first four-star



"It is part of French riders' culture to go the straight way," said the dapper Monsieur Michelet dismissively.

He had ironed out some of the extreme twistiness of last year, but there were still plenty of motorbike turns across the racehorse training track on which the majority of the course lies.

"It was a very tightly strung, un-English, technical track. At Badminton and Burghley you can

get a cruise on — it rides rough and tough here and you are always on a turn into a combination," said Oliver, who finished only 2sec over the time — and in the lead — despite taking the long route at the second water. It was a well-judged, maturely-ridden performance, and there was no hint of the trouble ahead for Oliver and Carousel Quest.

The biggest scalps taken across country belonged to Andrew

Nicholson and William Fox-Pitt, fourth and eighth after dressage on Avebury and Macchiato.

The inexperienced Jumbo nine-year-old Avebury, owned by Rosemary Barlow, looked really good until fence 27, the third water, listening hard to his jockey and obeying without question. But he missed at the step out of the water and breasted it, firing Andrew face-first into the ground. The New Zealand rider, who kicked his hat away in frustration, had to have stitches in his chin and lip, but show jumped his other ride, Armada, for 13th the next day.

William and Jane Kier's Macchiato, here to gain recompense for a blip at Burghley, looked in perfect harmony until fence 26, a brush corner after a tight turn through trees. The Argentine-bred gelding seemed unsighted — possibly by the sharp contrast between shade and bright sunlight — and dived at it, incurring 20pen for a refusal. It was the same fence at which William's World Cup final quest on Stunning ended six years ago.

"That was expensive," said William, referring not only to the €32,000 (£29,514) first prize for winning Pau, but also to the HSBC FEI Classics dollars.

William was the only person who could challenge Oliver to win the series — but he had to win Pau in order to do so. Oliver therefore knew he had won the series before he set out across country.

"It was difficult going out round a four-star knowing I had won the HSBC Classics, but on the way to the second fence I told myself to shut up and concentrate," joked Oliver. William and Macchiato completed, lowering two show jumps for 17th place.

Italian team silver medalist Susanna Bordonone had a mixed

COURSE CHAT

ON hand to witness Fairfax's last competition was his owner and former rider Heidi Antikatzides, who rode for Greece and finished 11th in the 2003 World Cup final at Pau on him. She had her two children in tow — what could be more appropriate for the sons of a Greek sportsman than being called Jason and Alexander?

OLIVER TOWNEND picked up another £2,300 (£2,121) for second place in the CCI** on Neo Du Breuil, whom he and Andrew Cawthray bought from France in the summer. A very fast

clear in heavy rain on Sunday morning left him just 2pen behind the winner, Dutch rider Madelein Brugman on Katmandu 7. New Zealand's Tim Price was fourth on Billy Malone.

VETERAN American rider Karen Reuter Niklasson suffered the weekend's worst injury — double fractures of both wrists in a nasty fall from Punchline II in the CCI**. It was not a good weekend for American riders in general. Both Allison Springer and Jan Bynny flew horses in, but Allison's Destination Known was eliminated after his

dressage test for unsoundness and Jan's Waterfront had suffered from travel sickness and stopped twice across country.

CAROUSEL Quest's leading dressage test was inches away from coming unstuck when the horse caught sight of the big screen during the halt to rein-back. "He gawped at it and froze. It felt like he was about to have a nervous breakdown. He hates big screens — [his former rider] Cressy [Clague Reading] hired one for four months and put it in her school to get him used to them," Oliver said.

Eventing



France's Gwendolen Fer, 23, puts in the only cross-country round inside the time. Her performance on Leria Du Ter leaves her seventh on her four-star debut

weekend. Third and sixth after dressage on Blue Moss and Ava, she finished 10th on Ava, but picked up a yellow card for failing to stop after she had accumulated three refusals round the cross-country track on Blue Moss.

To be fair to Susanna, she simply jumped the fence Blue Moss had stopped at and immediately pulled up — there was nothing unsafe about it and it was surely a better lesson for the mare — but rules are rules. Because it was her second yellow card — she acquired one for the same offence on the same horse at Fontainebleau — Susanna will have to sit out a two-month ban. Although eventing is pretty much over for the year, this may affect her dressage career.

Brazilian rider Jeferson Sgnaolin Moreira was also yellow-carded for failing to pull up after elimination, but he actually carried on and completed the course on Escudeiro Do Rincão. American-based Irish rider Hilda Hick Donahue was stopped by the ground jury for alleged dangerous riding.

Besides the two Germans in first and second, the only show jumping clear rounds came from Clea Phillips, who would have

finished in the top five on Lead The Way had they not run out at the skinny brush after a large table with a drop behind it at fence 17, and Mark Kyle (Nitetime Cavalier).

Leicestershire-based Irishman Mark started the 36-runner competition with three horses and very nearly piloted all three time with Oliver and the footy in the four-stars. Step In Time spoiled the party by getting overstrong and running out at the second last — his resemblance to Mark's Olympic ride Drunken Disorderly is growing.

Willow Fairgreen Attraction was not presented for the vets' inspection on Sunday morning because he was a little stiff, but Mark just touched one pole on Step In Time II for 24th place and Nitetime Cavalier's clear promoted him from 33rd after dressage to 16th. H&H

Results

CCI**** — 1. King Artus (D Schrade), GER 46.7 0.8.1+48.5; 2. Eurordings Butts Leon (A Dibowski), GER 43.8.4.3+48.6; 3. Mimos De Petra (P Leroy), FRA 49.7.0.4+52.1; 4. Grannetvka Prince (L Wiegiersma), GB 47.5.8.4+48.6; 5. Carousel Quest (O Townend), GB 42.5.0.8.3+74.3; CCI** — 1. Katmandu 7 (M Brugman), NED 47.3.2.4+48.7; 2. Neo Du Breuil (O Townend), BEL 52.5.0.2+85.3; 3. Koko Du Forez (P Mercader), FRA 52.5.0.2+85.3



Old favourite bows out: Fairfax II finishes his four-star career with his best placing at the level. The 19-year-old is sixth with France's Rodolphe Scherer

Mark Phillips

Comment
It is acceptable to run this often



WHEN I got home from Pau in the early hours of Monday, seldom had my own bed felt so good. Changing times in eventing don't make the season any shorter. Whatever your chosen profession, I guess you need a break from time to time and I'm definitely ready for mine.

So Oliver Townend's dream end to 2009 did not happen. He got the \$150,000 (£92,056) HSBC FEI Classics cheque, but he must have been gutted when seven fences fell.

The British camp put a brave face on it, saying how well the horse had warmed up. Carousel Quest has not had seven fences down in his whole time with Oliver and the footy in the warm-up was very different from that in the ring. But having watched the horse closely, I suspect he was carrying a hindleg injury. Let's hope it is nothing serious and that the horse will be back next year.

There were many in Pau thinking that we are putting too much stress on the horses, asking them to run too often and therefore putting them at greater risk of injury. I cannot agree as horses recover from the short-format so much quicker than in the old days.

These days, the event horse is more like a racehorse that can be peaked to various levels four, five or six times a season. However, horsemanship is a crucial factor — if a horse has a particularly hard run or if there are Oliver and the footy issues, then the plan must be adapted.

At Pau, "normal" business was resumed with the Germans back at the top, this time led by Dirk Schrade. I really liked King Artus when I saw him at the World Cup final, where he collected a silly 20pen when Dirk "went to sleep." And was surprised not to see him in the Europeans at Fontainebleau, but maybe there were veterinary reasons for that.

For me, though, Lucy Wiegiersma put in the outstanding riding display on Grannetvka Prince. Having won at Blenheim, they looked even more impressive here, even if there is a little work to do over the winter to improve the technique on the last day. It was

A yellow card for a good horsemanship decision seems a little hard

sad for her to miss the Classics money by one place.

TO yellow card or not? THESE days controversy never seems to be far away. The ground jury quite correctly stopped Allison Springer's Destination Known from going cross-country at Pau — the horse was uncomfortable all over after its long journey from the US.

However, Hilda Hick Donahue, after a similar journey, was stopped just four fences from home because Extravagance was jumping in an "upside down" shape. She was not going fast and had sensibly taken some long routes. And there was no yellow card for dangerous riding.

In stark contrast, Tim Price and Vortex hit a number of fences so hard that he was ejected out of the saddle more than once and it was only with extreme athleticism that he managed to stay on, yet he was not stopped.

In another matter, Susanna Bordonone had three run-outs with Blue Moss. After the third she turned around and hopped over the alternative route before walking off the course, getting a yellow card.

In the show jumping world you can jump the first fence on your way out of the ring after refusals. This is good horsemanship, as was Susanna's decision, and a yellow card for a good horsemanship decision seems a little hard. The rule needs looking at again.

I'm not talking about having a fourth attempt at the same fence or trying again after a fall — Susanna quite rightly got a yellow card in Fontainebleau when she went on round the course after three refusals.

As the International Equestrian Federation (FEI) focuses more on safety and horse welfare, it is increasingly clear that officials are going to need more guidance from training videos and the like to get more consistency in their decisions.

The week before Pau was at Fairhill in Maryland, USA. The rain never stopped and the officials did a great job, taking Jimin and eight fences off the CCI**** course. In the wet, 30 fences in 9min over undulations was still a good — if old school — three-star test. It was eventually won by America's newest recruit from Australia, Boyd Martin.

With a wet ending to the season on both sides of the Atlantic, I'm sure I was not the only one happy to get home this week for a little rest. H&H