

Townend does an

EXPRESS EVENTING

- 1st Oliver Townend on Flint Curtis (GB)
- 2nd Lucy Wiegiersma on Shaabrak (GB)
- 3rd William Fox-Pitt on Ballincoola (GB)



Oliver Townend takes the Castle Embankment on the way to winning £100,000 on Flint Curtis

EXPRESS EVENTING CUP, MILLENNIUM STADIUM, CARDIFF 30 November

By Catherine Austen

OLIVER TOWNEND conjured up the best performance of his life to stand head and shoulders above a top-quality field at the first Express Eventing International Cup in Cardiff. He and his long-term partner, Flint Curtis, thoroughly deserved the £100,000 first prize — the richest ever offered in eventing — as they raised their game to an outstanding level in each element of the new competition.

An emotional Oliver said: "What a fantastic experience. 'Flint' is class — a racing machine, and God knows, I could do with the money!"

Oliver has just bought his own yard in Shropshire, and said, with a relieved grin, that the prize-money would pay the first three months of the mortgage.

The day could not be called an out-and-out success — far too many riders failed to complete the challenging competition, and the loss of Mary King's star Olympic horse, Call Again Cavalier (see news, page five) meant it finished on a tragic note. But it certainly has great potential as an exciting spectacle.

Oliver's brave, perfectly planned cross-country round had the crowd roaring. Only at the end of a tightly fought international championship has the tension and drama perhaps been so high, but it will be difficult for many of the crowd not to take Call Again Cavalier's sad end away with them as their lasting memory.

Oliver was clearly the

crowd's favourite, garnering a massive cheer after a lovely dressage test. Flint Curtis has frequently found this phase a little mind-blowing, but in this electric atmosphere, he relaxed and showed off elegant paces.

Celebrity judge Andy Lloyd Webber described Oliver's music as "an Italian Paganini doing Swan Lake", but commentator Catherine Hester said: "That's a masterpiece. I've never seen Oli ride so well on a horse so well." Oliver scored

finished fourth in dressage when China's Alex Hester displayed the and poise that at many more than just Hong slipped ahead, followed by Bettina Hoy.

Bettina's top leading market streets ahead else's. Now in Ringwood Co not be as surprising as floor pieces determined every market beautiful to

The jump run in reverse the two French Rodolphe (fall) and N (for course his Baden Hildago D eliminated minute comp