

Townend launches his Kentucky Quest

BURNHAM MARKET (1), NORFOLK
1-3 April

By Catherine Austen

LAST year, Oliver Townend kicked off his annus mirabilis with a CIC*** win at the SPC Holdings Burnham Market. He will be keeping his fingers crossed that an identical start to 2010 will reap the same rewards.

Oliver took CIC*** section P with the new addition to his four-star team of greys, Ashdale Cruise Master, and was third in section Q with his Burghley winner Carousel Quest. Both geldings now head to Kentucky (21-25 April) to spearhead Oliver's attempt to complete the third element of the £350,000 (£233,571) Rolex Grand Slam.

Ashdale Cruise Master put a fall at Lincolnshire behind him with a double clear added to a 39.9 dressage mark, and Oliver looked distinctly relieved that it was all starting to come together.

"He's definitely one of the better horses I've ridden, but there are big bits missing in his flatwork, which translates to the jumping," he said. "But I've got huge hopes for him and I need to say a massive thank you to his owners. Edna and Henry Harding, for giving me the ride on him. I've needed him — the grey boys [Carousel Quest and Badminton winner Fitt Curtis] are getting



Oliver Townend puts a fall at Lincolnshire with Ashdale Cruise Master behind him, winning CIC*** section P to keep the Rolex Grand Slam dream alive



Piggy French wins the CIC** on Paris, who has been dogged by various problems over the past two years

older and need looking after." Originally, Oliver thought he was going to have to rely solely on the 11-year-old son of Cruising in America. But Carousel Quest has come back to full fitness much quicker than expected and had his first run of the season here, scoring 47.4 in the dressage and jumping double clear.

"He's taken me by surprise — we've only just had the all-clear with him — but he's on the form of his life," said Oliver.

Paul Tapper was second behind Oliver on his experienced four-star horse Inonthing, who was also second in his last appearance in this class in 2006. He goes to Badminton and Paul hopes they will fill one of the Australian berths at the World Equestrian Games this autumn.

"Even though he's only 16hh, he finds the cross-country dead

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easy," said Paul. "He was even amazing me — he's so clever." Paul only rode two horses at Burnham Market, but with outstanding results. Martin and Susie Belsham's Stormhill Michael, 18th at Badminton last year as a 10-year-old, won CIC*** section Q from Piggy French and

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SPC Holdings Burnham Market (1)



The 15.1hh Portersize Just A Jiff finishes fourth in CIC*** section Q for Irish student Camilla Speirs

her European Championships silver medalist Some Day Soon.

"I was very disappointed to have a rail down in the showjumping [after a 39.3 dressage mark] — he didn't deserve it," said Paul. "He wasn't foot-perfect across country, but he was nice and quick with 7.6 time-faults. He's a bit lazy and a bit of a pretty boy, but I put my foot down."

Cast Away on form

CHLOE NEWTON was third behind Oliver and Paul in section P on the Clover Brigade-sired Cast Away II who, at the age of 10, looks stronger this season and is now owned by Chloe's father Joy. The pair recorded the fastest cross-country time of their section with eight time-penalties.

Pippa Funnell was fourth on Mirage D'Elle, while German rider Simone Deitermann was fifth on Free Easy NRW. Sixth was Ruth Edge, ruing the nine showjumping time-faults she accrued on Nick Of Thyme — the judges tightened the time allowed early on in the class, just as Ruth was about to jump.

Twenty-year-old Irish student Camilla Speirs is heading to her first Badminton after collecting

fourth place in section Q and her final qualification in the process. She and the 15.1hh Portersize Just A Jiff added only six cross-country time-faults to their 55.2 dressage score.

Portersize Just A Jiff was bought for Camilla to do pony classes on, but grew, and has taken her to two junior and two young rider European Championships. He is by the Connemara stallion Crosskeys Rebel, out of a thoroughbred mare. British team members Nicola Wilson and Opposition Buzz were the fastest of the CIC*** classes in fifth with just four time-faults, but lowered two showjumps on the way. Andrew Nicholson and Tristar II had three down for sixth place.

The dressage leaders were reigning European champions Tina Cook and Miners Fitt, who performed an obedient, fluent

COURSE CHAT

COMMENTATOR Henry Symington's April Fool was to announce that Greenwith council had voted against holding the equestrian events of the 2012 Olympics and that the new venue was... Houghton, Norfolk's second-most prestigious horse trials.

A sneaky look at Ruth Edge and Two Thyme's winning dressage sheet revealed four nines, and the comment: "What can I say — a masterclass!" I suppose the rest of us have to keep putting up with "Well tried..."

BILL LEVETT rode new steed Political Trump in the CIC***. He is still owned by Matt Prior, who completed his first Badminton and Burghley on the 15-year-old, but Matt has given up eventing to concentrate on a career in bloodstock.



Chloe Newton finishes third in CIC*** section P on the talented 10-year-old Cast Away, who is entered for Badminton

very successful as a youngster [he was British Eventing six-year-old champion, won Tattersalls CCI*, South of England CIC** and was third at Le Lion]. We stepped him up to three-star last year to keep his mileage down and I didn't run him competitively," said Pippa, who was beaming after a productive weekend. "He's always been a machine across country, but there's a huge amount of improvement to come."

Pippa didn't quite lead from the outset — her old friend William Fox-Pitt shaded her with 30.5 on Cool Mountain, but with a few seconds slower than Pippa across country for second place.

The other advanced section

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Paul Tapper on Inonthing

went to another dressage queen, Ruth Edge, whose 23.6 dressage mark on Two Thyme, added to a clear showjumping round, meant that she could afford 16.4 time-faults across country.

"He only came for a nice run before Badminton — and to qualify, as the British Open [which he won] was his only advanced last year and you need two to qualify," said Ruth.

Matthew Wrix (Park Pilot,

second) and Andrew Nicholson (Armada, third) were much faster, but couldn't catch Ruth with Phil and Maureen Smith's 16-year-old, Paris's comeback victory

IT wouldn't be Burnham Market if Piggy French didn't win a section — and she obliged in the CIC** on Paris. This was only his fourth run since the pair started their partnership so well with 12th place at Burghley in 2007 — a variety of

Results

CIC (sec P)** — 1, Ashdale Cruise Master (O Townend) 59.313; 6, 54.2; 2, Inonthing (P Tapper) 45.611; 2:57.8; 3, Cast Away II (C Newton) 49.218; 58.2; (sec Q) — 1, Stormhill Michael (P Tapper) 39.347; 5:50.2; 2, Some Day Soon (P French) 43.584; 4:55.9; 3, Carousel Quest (O Townend) 47.012; 8:50.2; **adv (sec A)** — 1, Redesigned (P French) 37.010; 4:41.1; 2, Cool Mountain (W Fox-Pitt) 30.810; 6:43.3; 3, Lead the Way (C Phillips) 30.010; 6:43.5; (sec B) — 1, Two Thyme (R Edge) 23.616; 4:40.2; 2, Park Pilot (M Wright) 32.017; 6:42.3; 3, Armada (A Nicholson); 35.5; 4:44.3; 3; **CIC** (sec Q)** — 1, Paris (P French) 40.015; 6:46.1; 2, One Two Many NJ (B Lewellyn) 42.018; 6:58.3; 3, Farnham Crystal (L Collett) 41.815; 6:53.4; **QI (sec A)** — 1, Society Spots (C Lewellyn) 22.310; 30.3; 2, Limerock Lulu Dancer (C Taylor) 30.014; 28.2; 3, Cool Dancer (O Wilton) 34.118; 4:46.5; (sec M) — 1, Mery Oak (L Collett) 32.310; 4:40.3; 2, Just A Jiff (C Taylor) 35.018; 4:45.3; 3, West Side (S Chapman) 30.914; 9:24.1; **nov (sec F)** — 1, Its A Gold Rush (A Similes) 31.422; 8:38.2; 2, Julie (M Payne) 33.016; 6:40.1; 3, My Doss Side (J Shaw) 21.913; 2:42.1; (sec G) — 1,

problems has kept the 13-year-old largely off the road since then. Both Piggy and second-placed Bill Levett scored 40.5 in the dressage and showjumped clear, but Paris was six seconds faster across country than Bill's One Two Many NJ, who was second last year's novice championship at Gatcombe.

Emily Lovell and Society Spots made their first outing of the season a winning one, taking the open intermediate (OI) despite two showjumps down by virtue of a faultless cross-country and an unbeatable 22.3 dressage. They head for a second Badminton next month.

Intermediate sections went to Laura Collett, riding Eliza Sangster's Mere Oak, who was capitalising on a novice win at Gatcombe last weekend, and Julie Lawson on the Stanhopes Diddycosy Zigane.

The amount of showjumping faults can be attributed to the soft ground at Burnham Market's sandy soil and drying winds, said that it was never in danger of cancelling, unlike so many events at the moment. But the heavy rain in the past 10 days did give the showjumping warm-up the appearance of a lightly ploughed field after the first two days. The cross-country going held up very well and was probably good to soft by Saturday evening after a day of unexpected sunshine.

Problems were sprinkled round Alec Lochore's tracks, with some intermediate and CIC** riders needing to walk the courses with more concentration after several were eliminated for missing out fences. The angled brushes early on caused a few run-outs, but did the brush corner that comes up quickly after the roller coaster of the Leaf Pit drop, R&H



Paul Tapper jumps the skinny out of the water on the way to taking CIC** section Q on Stormhill Michael