

'OLIVER WILL BE AN INSPIRATION TO MANY MORE'

Club bask in rider's Badminton glory

OLIVER TOWNEND'S victory at the Badminton Horse Trials will generate massive interest in eventing in this area.

That's the verdict of Jann Crosland, chairperson of Holme Valley Riding Club, where Townend developed his equestrian skills as a junior.

Now 26, Townend reached the pinnacle of the sport last weekend when he took the £60,000 top prize at the Mitsubishi Motors-sponsored Badminton event on Flint Curtis.

And he's hoping for more success this weekend at Chatsworth, where he has several rides in the discipline (dressage, cross country and showjumping).

"Badminton is the pinnacle of our sport, the one everyone aspires to win, so Oliver is at the very top and we are all really proud of him," said Jann.

"He will be at the forefront now when it comes to picking all the

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international teams and the Olympics in 2012 are certain to be a top target for him.

"We have around 90 members at our club and everyone will be following his progress, from Chatsworth this weekend through to the HSBC Classic events which he's going for."

Townend grew up in Scapegoat Hill and his parents, Alan and Eve, were both leading riders in their day.

Their son – also a member of the Rockwood Harriers Pony Club – joined Holme Valley, based at Woodnook above Honley, at the age of 10.

He was a member of their championship winning teams at the British Riding Club's Horse Trials in 1994 and 95.

"Oliver has been back to our club to supervise a couple of demonstration

clinics and they've been very popular," added Jann, chair at Holme Valley since 2000 and in her second spell at the helm.

"I've known him since he was four and, when he first came to the club, I remember he didn't like it at all, but seeing where he is now makes people realise what they can achieve and how they can progress.

"Oliver is a really nice person, but he is also tremendously hard-working and he certainly deserves his success.

"What he is doing now will create a lot of interest and it will certainly be an inspiration to younger riders."

Now based in Ellesmere near Oswestry, Townend's groom, 22-year-old Katherine Mellor, is also a Holme Valley member and won a top award at Badminton. The club's Dee Kennedy also completed the competition at Badminton this year while Jann Crosland's 19-year-old son James is competing at Chatsworth this weekend.



■ **WINNERS:** Oliver Townend with Jann Crosland (left) and Hayley Walker on Conker