

By **BEN BAKER**
Sports Correspondent

Huddersfield eventer Oliver Townend couldn't have asked for a better start to the year but he insists it will count for nothing if he doesn't carry it through to the London 2012 Olympics.

The 28-year-old has been in fine form so far in 2011 recording his best ever score at June's Bramham International Horse Trials – third on French-bred horse, Neo du Breuil.

Townend, who learned the sport at Holme Valley Riding Club, followed that up with seventh on ODT Master Rose at the four-star Luhmühlen Horse Trials, while his wins at Badminton and Burghley from 2009 have ensured he is in the mix for Olympic selection.

But with the London Games now less than a year away, Townend isn't content to live on past glories, instead already formulating his plan of attack.

"I have had a really good year so far and my horses seem to be running better than ever and I couldn't have wished for any more so far," said Townend.

"With this year being all about qualification for the Games my form has come at a good time and I hope to continue it as long as possible.

"But I am not getting too carried away as I know there is still a lot of time between now and the Games, so I need to keep plugging away.

"It's all well and good doing well now but I need to be doing well in a year's time so I won't be taking my foot of the pedal at all.

"I am taking it all step by step and know that I still have plenty of work to do, so I am not about to start getting complacent."

Townend is yet to cut his teeth at an Olympic Games and faces the stiffest competition around to do so with four Brits in the world's top five.

Due to his 2011 form Townend is one of them though, currently ranked fifth, and with a British team of five expected to be announced he is itching to compete on home soil.

"When you travel to events all over the world you never really get a chance to have a

■ **TOWNEND:** has high hopes for Olympic selection if he can maintain his form and, below, in action



I won't take my foot of the pedal: Townend

look at the set up and prepare," he added.

"And the Brits always still manage to do well, so imagine how good we could do with home advantage. I can't wait and hopefully I can be a part of it."

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Farrington lands top honours

AMERICAN Kent Farrington withstood a fierce onslaught from the best of British to win the Longines King George V Cup in thrilling fashion at Hickstead.

Farrington repelled five British challengers – Robert Smith, defending champion Tim Stockdale, Ben Maher, Peter Charles and Ellen Whitaker – to land British showjumping's richest prize of £56,500.

Smith, a three-time Gold Cup winner, filled

Whitaker in fantastic form to grab Salver

JOHN WHITAKER continued his successful run at

action with his top horse Peppermill in Dublin on