

as a die, she added. Selected as an individual for last year's young rider squad, Alex has her sights set on a team place and the move up to three-star.

Oliver Townend's consistent cross-country performer Sandiman II proved his worth en route to second place — the gelding caught a front leg at the open corner (15) and pecked on landing. With every opportunity to run past the brush, he picked up and jumped through the flags, still on two strides.

With three OI runner-up spots, Oliver went home happy.

"They all impressed me today — we weren't meant to be at the races, but both ODT Ghareeb and Cooley Master Class finished on their dressage scores and Sandiman was 1sec over the optimum," he said.

Stalking Oliver, Mark Todd posted three OI third places with Oloa, Leonidas II and NZB Campino.

Top horses battle it out

GEMMA TATTERSALL pipped Piggy French to the top spot in OI section T. Arctic Soul was comfortably inside the time to complete on his 24.6 first phase score, while DHI Topper W added 2.4 time-faults to his leading dressage score of 22.3. Piggy confessed she hadn't meant to go as fast as she did, but Topper was cruising.

Gemma was delighted: "He's an ex-racehorse and gives me a real adrenalin rush across country. Built to gallop, he's less keen on 'fiddly' dressage, but was very accurate today — four days in

country time-penalties — was Cindy Onslow's Diamond Sundance, ridden by Emily Parker (see box, right).

"All my horses have been fast this year," laughed Emily. "It's the Scottish hills! Cindy produced Diamond Sundance up to one-star and I took over just before Blair last year — he's a really exciting horse, straightforward and eager to please."

His breeding helps his speed: out of a King Of Diamonds mare, by Sunny Boy and with St Leger winner Julio Mariner as his grandsire, he has a swift turn of foot. The pair now head to the horse's first advanced at Weston Park.

Morpeth-based Emma Carmichael, 21, who specialises in producing event ponies, was

headed the chasing pack in section X was Emily Prangnell (see box), whose DHI Beaunesse was also runner-up at Oasby. Hard on her heels were Emily Lochore and Hexmaley's Hayday.

The day's final winner, with an even greater margin of 11 points — despite 1.2 "too fast" cross-



Incredible recovery: Oliver Townend and Sandiman II manage to stay upright after the horse leaves a leg at the open corner and go on to jump the angled brush just two strides later

