

Fall ends eventer's grand slam quest

By Suzanne Roberts

Shropshire eventing star Oliver Townend suffered a devastating fall dashing his hopes of clinching one of his sport's most coveted prizes in America.

Oliver Townend, of Dudleston Heath, near Ellesmere, sustained a cracked collarbone, chest bone and ribs after falling from Ashdale Cruise Master during the Rolex Kentucky cross-country phase on Saturday.

It followed a nightmare 51-hour journey for Mr Townend to travel from Shropshire to Lexington in Kentucky because of the disruption caused by the Icelandic volcano eruption. His trip included three flights, two train rides and a £1,600 taxi fare from

Paris to Madrid.

Despite his injuries, he has vowed to get back in the saddle as soon as possible, but he will now miss out on defending the Badminton title he won last year, with his intended ride Carousel Quest – his victorious 2009 Burghley horse – also suffering injury problems.

"I feel a bit bashed and bruised, but my spirits are good," Mr Townend said. "I want to get well quickly and start riding again as soon as possible."

Damage

"It's a tough sport and these things happen. I was very fit going into Kentucky, and the physical strengthening work I did helped me take such a hard fall without serious damage.

"I have to be grateful for my inflatable air bag jacket and riding hat. They both saved me from suffering more serious injuries.

"I would like to thank all those who have supported me while I've been in Kentucky and everyone who has been sending me messages on Facebook.

Mr Townend's Grand Slam quest ended when he parted company with Ashdale two thirds of the way through his cross-country round.

He had hoped to be discharged and ride in the showjumping finale on his other horse ODT Master Rose.

But Mr Townend was left wondering what might have been at the end of a week that began with him chasing one of equestrian sport's most coveted prizes, a six-figure jackpot for winning three consecutive four-star events having triumphed at Badminton and Burghley last year.

● Listen to an interview with Oliver Townend at www.shropshirestar.com

Council meeting

A planning meeting of Wem Rural Parish Council will be held tomorrow at 7.30pm. It will be held at the Council Chambers, Edin-



Ashdale Cruise Master and Oliver Townend tumble over the jump



Townend suffered a cracked collarbone, chest and ribs in the ac-



Oliver Townend

Family jailed on 'depraved' killing of man

The torture and death of a young man whose headless body was dumped in a lake was branded "depraved" by a judge today as he sentenced six members of the same family.

Judge John Bevan QC made the comments at Luton Crown Court as he jailed three members of the Watt family for life for murdering Michael Gilbert and three others for familial homicide.

The 26-year-old was kept as a slave and tortured for his benefit money before being killed. His headless body was dumped in the Blue Lagoon in Arlesey, Bedfordshire, in May last year.

James Watt, 27, his girlfriend Natasha Oldfield, 29, and his brother Richard's girlfriend, Nichola Roberts, 22, were jailed for life for murder today.

Watt will serve a minimum of 36 years, Oldfield a minimum of 18 and Roberts a minimum of 16.

James's brother, Robert Watt, 20, and his mother, Jennifer Smith-Dennis, 58, were jailed for eight years and 10 years respectively for familial homicide.

A third brother, Richard Watt, 25, who previously pleaded guilty to familial homicide was sentenced to six years in prison.

James Robert and Richard Watt had pleaded guilty to perverting the course of justice and, on Friday, Roberts, Oldfield and Smith-Dennis were convicted by the jury.

Detectives believe Mr Gilbert died overnight between January 21 and 22 last year as a result of the

Charity to host It's a Knockout

The 1970s hit TV game show *It's a Knockout* is back in the form of a fundraiser for a Shropshire charity.

Hope House Children's Hospices, based in Mordla near Oswestry, has organised the *It's a Knockout*-style competition to take place in *The Quarry, Shrewsbury*, in September.

It comes as *The Quarry* has also announced plans to re-create the 1864 Olympic Games as part of a three-day festival next year.

Hope House is now looking for thrill-seekers to take on this ultimate challenge and get wet 'n' wacky while raising funds for the children's charity.

Senior area fundraiser Rachel Thomas said: "We are searching for 12 teams of 10 people to take part in the *It's a Knockout* event on September 26."

Participants need to each pay a registration fee of £10 (£100 per team) and raise a minimum of £30 in sponsorship (£800 per team).

For more details contact the appeal office on (01691)