



## Townend jumps his way to a rewarding pay day

*Yorkshireman secures lucrative first place as course takes its toll*

**By Alan Smith in Cardiff**

OLIVER TOWNEND and Flint Curtis ran away with the biggest eventing prize ever, the £100,000-to-the-winner Express Eventing International Cup that developed into a war of attrition in Cardiff's Millennium Stadium yesterday.

They ended a massive 41.98sec ahead of Lucy Wieggersma's Badminton runner-up Shaabarak, with William Fox-Pitt, riding the brilliantly consistent Ballincoola for the last time, just under five seconds further away in third.

Only six of the 19 starters finished the course, and this unique event ended in a sad anti-climax when Mary King's Olympic medal winner, Call

Again Cavalier, had a heavy fall and had to be taken out of the arena by ambulance and was later put down.

They had been second last to go, with the field going in reverse order after the dressage. The predictable leader in that phase, Bettina Hoy with Ringwood Cockatoo, followed them into the arena and must have found it difficult to get psyched up after a long delay. She had six show jumps down and retired before the cross-country.

With such a star-studded field, the rate at which they fell by the wayside over Pierre Michelet's cross-country course was surprising, but as Tina Cook said after her Hong Kong bronze-medal winner Miners Frolic was eliminated: "He was completely fazed by it all - he just froze."

But Yorkshireman Townend, 26, a team

**Top prize: Oliver Townend and Flint Curtis at the Millennium Stadium**

gold medallist in the 2007 European Championships, after producing possibly his best ever dressage test on Flint Curtis, had a bit of luck in the show jumping, then rode quickly and accurately round the cross-country fences.

He said afterwards: "He's a racing machine. I saw some horrible distances but he picked up for me - and God knows I could do with the money."

The crowd, well short of the 40,000 the organisers were hoping for but still enough to augur well for the future of this shortened version of the traditional event if it should be repeated, had plenty to excite them.

Fox-Pitt, whose Ballincoola was one of the most experienced horses competing, said: "I don't think I took a breath from beginning to end."

