



Foot perfect: Oliver Townend and Carousel Quest (above) celebrate victory at Burghley, ahead of Zara Phillips (left) and William Fox-Pitt



Townend on course to cash in

Imperious Yorkshireman set for £300,000 payday after Burghley success on Carousel Quest

By Pippa Cuckson

OLIVER TOWNEND is just two competitions away from becoming eventing's richest winner yet after victory at Burghley set him up for £300,000 worth of global awards.

Townend, 26, and foot-perfect Carousel Quest led throughout to win the Land Rover-backed event with 8.7 penalties in hand.

The dual Badminton-Burghley champion is poised to become the first £213,000 Rolex Grand Slam winner since Pippa Funnell in 2003 if he can score at Kentucky next spring. His Burghley victory also gives him a healthy lead in the £91,000 HSBC Classics, with only William Fox-Pitt armed to overhaul him at next month's finale in Pau. Townend would add this to the £100,000 – the domestic sport's largest prize – won with Flint Curtis in the "Express" event at Cardiff last November. The Yorkshireman is rarely lost for

Short but not sweet

EVENTING has changed in nature since the dropping of "speed and endurance" in 2004 to secure its future in the Olympics.

However, the 600 metre reduction in cross-country at Burghley was a step too far for many. The extra intensity of jumping in the revised time of 10min 30sec – reduced by about a minute – on this testing terrain exposed weaknesses in horses of non-

thoroughbred breeding who were hitherto advantaged in dressage and show jumping.

Following the concession that Greenwich, site of the 2012 Olympics, is too small for a full-length course, designer Mark Phillips (pictured) wanted to familiarise Burghley riders with the new distance.

But Mary King said:



"Some horses hit a 'wall' at 10 minutes, but with a really good horse you want to be tested to the full. I was held up on the course when a fence was being repaired, and it still felt shorter."

Sam Griffiths added: "I completed Burghley in its last year of 'long format'. That felt like a great achievement. This only feels like a good one."

words, but as he cleared the second-last show jump he knew he could not lose, and was visibly tearful as he stormed through the finish.

"I just want to thank Cressida Clague-Reading for producing this horse," he said of the previous owner-rider, fourth here in 2006. "She applied the buttons; all I had to do was push them."

An influential show jumping test significantly changed the remaining leader board, and Polly Stockton's

premium clear on Westwood Poser moved her up four places, ahead of Sam Griffiths, who had a fence down with Happy Times.

Westwood Poser was a late substitute when Stockton's seasoned contender, Regulus, suffered a colic attack.

Poser was not earmarked for this career path when bought "out of a field" by Arthur Comyn. "He was so crazy we even had to re-break him, and I gave him to a working pupil

until he was about seven," said Stockton, 35. "He is fragile, and can be quite a worrier, but I am thrilled he can be competitive at the highest level."

Griffiths, 38, settled for third, as at Badminton. Despite his federation's veiled aversion to British-based riders, he must surely make Australia's World Championship squad next year, along with Paul Tapner (Inonothing), who finished fifth to Clayton Fredericks (Poilu).

Griffiths honed his skills working for Olympic champions Blyth Tait and Matt Ryan.

Zara Phillips and Glenbuck were clear cross-country for 19th place overnight, but dropped three places yesterday.

The cross-country was as difficult as anticipated, with only five of 80 starters making the time – Francis Whittington and Sir Percival, incredibly, doing so with a refusal – and 28 faulting at the Discovery Valley complex early on.

Among the favourites to run straight past its obliquely set brush-fence were Fox-Pitt (Macchiato) and Piggy French (What a Performance), who has just replaced Mary King in the European Championship team.