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Townend has aura of invincibility

COVER STORY



Oliver Townend en route to one of three wins over the weekend, in the CIC3* aboard Mr Hiho

BACON.CO.UK BURNHAM MARKET (1) NORFOLK 2-4 April

By Catherine Austen

OLIVER TOWNEND completely dominated Burnham Market on Easter weekend, taking the top two places in the CIC3*, the CIC2* and an intermediate section.

It was his eighth CIC3* victory at this event over the years and, by winning the feature class on Patsy

Mason's Mr Hiho, he pipped his 2014 winner, Armada, into second by a fraction of a penalty.

Oliver took over the ride on Mr Hiho from Emily King at the end of last season.

"He's not my usual type, but he has loads of ability and scope and feels flash in the dressage," he said. "Emily did a very nice job of producing him on the flat. He has a huge amount of stride across country and is very honest on a line."

The pair were second after

dressage with 39.8 to Pippa Funnell and Billy The Biz, who scored 37.1. Pippa picked up a single showjumping time-fault on the Cevin Z-sired 10-year-old, so went into cross-country still just ahead of Oliver.

But she came to grief at the most influential fence of the event, the "Olympic Diamond" owl hole followed by a corner and angled brush (see box, p36). Billy The Biz chipped in an extra stride to the second element and put down on the back of the brush,

unshipping Pippa.

Mr Hiho was the second fastest of the 82 cross-country starters in this section, picking up 2.8 time-faults. His stablemate, Paul and Diana Ridgeon's Armada, probably the most experienced cross-country horse in the world, was faster with 0.8 of a time-fault, but would have had to have been one second faster to win.

"I could have gone slightly faster early on," admitted Oliver. He exited the showjumping arena with an enormous grin after

19.5 the event's top dressage score, from BE100 runners-up Izzy Taylor and Constance O Cool

Bacon.co.uk Burnham Market (1)



Tina Cook claims the advanced with De Novo News — her Badminton prep run



Lanfranco finishes in second spot in the advanced under Andrew Hoy

Armada jumped a faultless clear — the first the 16-year-old chestnut has managed since Burnham Market last year.

"That was as good as he's jumped in his life," said Oliver, who will do the dressage and showjumping at Weston Park as a final prep before attempting to improve on last year's second place at Badminton.

Mr Hiho is missing a CC12* qualification, so will head to Ballindenisk to achieve that. "It won't do his confidence any harm to do that before we go for a CC13*," said Oliver.

Tom Jackson did very well in stellar company to take third place in the CIC3* with his 2014 Bramham under-25 winner, Waltham Fiddlers Find. They added 6.8 cross-country time-faults to a dressage mark of 44.7.

"He needed a fast run, and this was the ideal place to do it," said Tom, who arrived at Burnham Market at 3am on Thursday morning on the back of a low-loader after his lorry broke down. He has another Bramham title in his sights with the Jetset-D 12-year-old.

Nicky Roncoroni and Stonedged

took fourth, while Badminton-bound Caroline Powell (Onwards And Upwards) and Mark Todd (Leonidas II) were fifth and sixth.

Clean sheets for Townend
THE two horses Oliver rode into first and second in the CIC2* were the only ones in the class to finish on their dressage scores. The winner was Angela Hislop's Ramiro B eight-year-old Cooley SRS on 43 penalties, while Andrew Cawthray's Colonel Joe was just behind on 44.1 penalties.

"I came here thinking one or the other of them should win," said Oliver. "Cooley SRS was ninth at Le Lion d'Angers last year — he would have been third if the jockey hadn't had a fence down — and I think he's smart."

Cooley SRS, by Ramiro B out of a Kilttealy Spring mare, will aim for the CC12* at Tattersalls and then Blenheim's eight- and nine-year-old CIC3*, whereas the Colonel Clover-sired Colonel Joe, who won the CCI* at Tattersalls last year, will be targeted at a CC13* at the end of the year.

Piggy French took third place on OBOS Cooley. The new partnership had a commanding

First win Camilla Kruger

THE 28-year-old's victory in intermediate section I was her first at the level. Camilla and Biarritz II (pictured, below) added just 2.4 cross-country time-faults to their dressage mark of 27.5 to beat Oliver Townend and Power Drive by nearly four penalties.

"Biarritz has been quite spooky and difficult, and he really struggled to make the time last year," said Camilla, who was born in Zimbabwe. "He's bred to showjump and doesn't have much blood. But I took him out with the bloodhounds all winter and it has really helped. He's up for it, has learnt to gallop and has relaxed into the whole thing."

"We had a few braking problems at Aldon, so I changed his gait to one with nylon cheeks instead of leather and he cruised round today."

Camilla, who is based in East Sussex, is planning to take the nine-year-old to Saumur, and admitted that the ultimate aim is to represent Zimbabwe at the Rio Olympics next year.



lead after dressage with 33.3 penalties, but added a pole down and then didn't hurry across country for a final score of 47.7. Nicola Wilson was a further five marks behind in fourth on her coloured mare, Beltane Queen.

Ho's new ride

NO one watching Andrew Hoy storm round the cross-country to win open intermediate (OI) section K on Barbara Keller's The Blue Frontier would have guessed

that he had had the 14-year-old grey for seven days. The horse, who was formerly ridden by German world champion Sandra Auffarth, led the dressage with a mark of 20.9, and added four faults for a showjump down and two cross-country time-faults.

"It's an absolute joy to get on a horse which has been so nicely schooled," said Andrew. "He's a

real power horse and utterly focused on everything you do with him. This has been a wonderful start."

Aoife Clark was equally delighted with Richard Last's Fernhill Adventure, who took the other OI section with another impressive dressage score of 20.7. "He's magic — I think he's the best horse I've ridden," said Aoife. "He has such an ease about him and I believe he's a championship horse."

Fernhill Adventure, by Newmarket Venture, was second at Le Lion d'Angers and Gatcombe's British Novice Championships in 2013 but missed the majority of last year after striking into himself on the gallops before Weston Park last spring.

"As he was a big, leggy horse and had done so well the year



Nicky Roncoroni pilots Stonedged to a fourth-place finish in the CIC3*

before, I didn't see the point in rushing him back," said Aoife.

Michael Owen was second in both OI sections. The Highland Prince finished a mark adrift of Fernhill Adventure, while Bradeley Law was just 0.4 of a penalty behind The Blue Frontier.

Oliver Townend warmed up for his Saturday doubles by taking the top two places in intermediate section J on Friday. Both Red Andes Fanfare and Perusing are eight-year-olds owned by Andrew Cawthray and finished on scores of 34.4 and 34.9 respectively —

nine penalties clear of the rest of the class.

The sole advanced section went to Tina Cook and her 2014 World Equestrian Games partner De Novo News, who held off Andrew Hoy and Lanfranco.

"It's unusual for me to win a one-day event," said Tina. "He went really well in all three phases. I just wanted a good prep run before Badminton, so it's an added bonus that he won. He's not full 'blood' so it was good to open him up a bit across country." H&H



Tom Jackson gives Waltham Fiddlers Find a fast run to land third in the CIC3*