

time-fault. But Marcio admitted that he had never been to Gatcombe before and had no idea that it was so hilly; he knew his mare wasn't fit enough to have a real stab at the time and came home steadily for 21.6 time-faults and seventh place.

Performances lower down the order that caught the eye included Vittoria Panizzon and Borough Penny's stylish preparation for their first Burghley in eighth place, and Caroline March and Postmaster's double clear for 11th.

Not everyone went home smiling. Both Bill Levett (Shannondale Titan) and Oliver Townend (Note Worthy) hit the deck at surprising fences — the Richard Cogan Arch Log at 20 and the Harringtons Wall at four respectively — when in fourth and fifth places. The two had scored the only two dressage marks in the 30s: Note Worthy led with 38.7 with Shannondale Titan second on 39.2.

TOWNEND'S FOURTH INTERMEDIATE TITLE

OLIVER'S weekend can only be termed as "mixed". He bit the dust — or rather the mud — in both the novice championships and the open, but won the Smith & Williamson intermediate championships for the fourth time, this year on Angela Hislop's Khoi Traveler. This class had the stickiest ground of the weekend — it bucketed with rain on Saturday lunchtime — but the American ex-Flat racehorse, who has a distinctive flaxen mane, used his speed and the fact he went early



Intermediate victor Khoi Traveler gives Oliver Townend reason to smile

'He has a serious turn of foot, stays well and is exceptionally brave'

OLIVER TOWNEND ON KHOI TRAVELER

on to post the fastest round of the class for 4.4 time-faults.

They hadn't looked likely winners; a dressage of 33.3 left them 29th, and a single rail down in the showjumping meant they approached cross-country in 18th place. But Oliver knows how to win here and they whizzed round.

"It didn't feel as though we were going ridiculously quick, but he does have a serious turn of foot, stays well and is exceptionally brave," said Oliver.

Matt Heath led after showjumping on Hazel Livesey's Sportsfield Lord Livesey. The Kroongraaf eight-year-old's round was a classy demonstration of jumping, but 10.8 time-faults meant he slipped behind Oliver, finishing on 42.5 to Oliver's 41.7.

"I'm over the moon with the horse — he just got tired coming up the last hill on very soft ground," said Matt. "He's incredibly talented. He can be a bit insecure, but that's because he's fast-tracked himself — he's way off being the finished article."



Tom McEwen and Royal Roxey cruise to third in the intermediate



William Fox-Pitt finishes second at novice aboard The Graduate