

# 'The money must match the level'

Oliver Townend says Bramham hits the mark, except for the prize money

THIS year's Bramham cross-country course was a very good, serious three-star track. It was tough but fair, and probably exactly what a three-star should be if Badminton is to be what it was this year — a real four-star.

The terrain there is always difficult. If you have a horse aiming for its first Burghley this autumn, you know what you've got underneath you and whether it will be capable of tackling that by the end of Bramham.

The ground was as good as it has ever been — it handled all the rain it received very well — and the course was wheeled correctly. This was Bramham at its best.

Top course-designers must walk a tightrope between a track which is too soft and one which is too strong. Ian Stark,

Oliver Townend won Badminton and Burghley in 2009. He has been the leading rider in Britain for the past three seasons and is the reigning Event Rider Masters champion.

## OPINION

who designed Bramham and Tattersalls the weekend before, is getting it right a lot of the time now. Both of these courses were tough to walk and really made you think. You had to be 100% on your line, but if you were, the questions were clear for the horses to read. Ian's tracks have an "old-fashioned" feel: big fences, a proper coffin question, that sort of thing. They ride well and horses finish with a good feeling.

If a good horse with a proper rider on top does something well, it should look easy.

It was a fantastic win for Yoshiaki Oiwa. I've known him for a long time now and he is a top-class rider for whom a big success like this was well deserved.

There was one rider — who had a bad fall — who I think should have been pulled up long before the fall happened.



Where does the ground jury's responsibility to the horse begin and end? They are happy enough to err on the side of caution in things like the trot-up, but I was surprised that they didn't intervene in a situation which had appeared dangerous for a number of fences.

## UP THE PRIZE MONEY

I'm a Yorkshireman and obviously Bramham is Yorkshire's big event, but

I struggle with it a little bit. Of course I want to be competitive in front of a home crowd, but I never have an "A team" of horses there — I'm running ones which need qualifications, or need to step up for the first time, or ones I need to find out a bit more about. Part of that is because the prize-money in no way fits with the level of competition. Badminton has a first prize of £100,000. Bramham's is £5,750. They are only one "step" apart, yet this is a huge gulf. Bramham is the strongest and I think the best three-star in Britain, yet what you receive for winning it doesn't reflect this.

I understand very well that money doesn't grow on trees, but a first prize of half the value of that at Badminton would be appropriate for a competition this prestigious and this tough to win. **H&H**

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