

Oliver Townend does it again!

For the tenth time in 10 years British number one, Oliver Townend, bagged the headline class at Barefoot Estates Burnham Market Horse Trials. He had come to Norfolk meaning business, with four entries in the big class, and having secured the win on his third, *Cooley Master Class* – the same horse who took the title 12 months ago – was able to withdraw his final runner, *Note Worthy*, who could have given Oliver a 1-2, instead saving the horse for another day.

In total over the three days Oliver won the Three Star, the Advanced, an Intermediate and a Novice section, making the drive over from Shropshire worthwhile. Oliver now also has his first of a necessary three out of five legs of the Shearwater Insurance Grand Slam in the bag, with its £50,000 bonus. "Burnham Market is always the first event of the year where I really aim to be competitive. I trust the ground, I trust the course designer, I trust everything about the place. I think running here sets my horses up for what's to come later in the season," Oliver explained. Norfolk-born Piggy French has returned to competition in some style after a year off to have a baby. She finished runner up in the Three Star on *Vanir Kamira*, a horse that she produced back in 2012 before the ride went elsewhere, only returning to



Photos: Julie Walker www.musketier.co.uk

Piggy's Maidwell base last winter.

"I hadn't planned to run fast, but we were in a good position so I went for it," said Piggy, who finished bang on the cross country optimum time. "*Vanir Kamira* can get quite nervous and it's taken a while for me to figure her out, but she was much calmer today and jumped fantastically well."

New Zealand's Andrew Nicholson made amends for an early dunking at the first water with third place on *Byrnesgrove First Diamond*, with Yorkshire's Nicola Wilson fourth riding *Annie Clover*.

Sarah 'Cutty' Cohen was the popular winner of the Two Star, riding *Treason* whose last run was at Burghley where the pair finished twelfth. Cutty was once one of the more prolific riders on the circuit, and was selected for the 2004 Athens Olympics but disappointingly her horse picked up a small injury before the start

of the competition. She now describes herself as a 'one horse amateur rider and mum'. "I'm just down here having a fun weekend. I love coming to Norfolk and tomorrow will be on the beach with the family." Cutty was, in fact, a double winner, sharing victory in the East Anglian Air Ambulance Camel Racing which drew a huge crowd of spectators. One notable presence at Burnham Market this year was the number of Japanese riders competing. With the new four year Olympic cycle underway the next host nation is upping their game; three Japanese riders finished in the top 10 in the Two Star class and another two completed the Three Star. So at the end of three days of world class sport and entertainment, once the site is cleared and the 'wash up' meeting held, it will be time to start planning for Burnham Market International 2018.



Event Director Alec Lochore summed up the last few days: "We've had a great competition, with many of the best eventing athletes in the world here in Norfolk – both human and equine. Spectator numbers were high with so many people enjoying the East Anglian Air Ambulance Camel Racing, the tradestands did good business, and even the weather was kind. "Oliver Townend's achievement, in light of the high calibre of competitors who come here every year, is astonishing. The question is, should we ban him coming next year to give everyone else a chance?" Alec was (almost certainly) joking!