

TO go into a championship as defending team champions and come away with silver may sound like a failure. But Britain truly won the silver rather than losing the gold in the European Championships at Luhmühlen, and the whole squad can go home with their heads held high.

"We had to fight all the way to the end," said performance manager Dickie Waygood — and it was true.

None of the Team GBR quartet quite achieved the dressage scores they wanted, and with the Germans always some way in front of their noses and the chasing pack very hard on their fetlocks, the Brits had to battle, scrap, regroup and pull together

This was Oliver's fourth European team medal. The other three were all gold but, oddly, this was his first time providing a counting score. His deadpan exterior often hides how much his success means to him and this silver will be precious.

Because Oliver doesn't volunteer much information about it, it's a shame for he has had a month off this season after breaking his wrist — he admitted he is far from his usual September fitness, which in reality means he is still considerably fitter than the vast majority of the other riders in Luhmühlen. The interruption to his year adds to the scope of this achievement.

The double Kentucky winner Cooley Master Class has "the ideal

Even as an individual you want to do your best and not let anyone down'

KITTY KING

to defend their second place.

At the front line of the British effort throughout was Oliver Townend, who led the way with ninth on Angela Hislop's Cooley Master Class. The Yorkshireman has not always enjoyed an easy relationship with the performance programme hierarchy and he was controversially left off the team last year.

But he was on message all week here in both his interviews and his riding, through to expressing huge relief his fence down had not cost the team silver ahead of the disappointment it denied him an individual medal.

championship brain" — he is unflappable to the point of being lazy. He is carefully managed and scarcely run after niggles earlier in his career and, at 14, doesn't need to be hammered round events to learn his job. But Oliver and his team are justifiably proud of his achievements at the top level.

The withdrawal of Tom McEwen and Toledo De Kerker at the start of the week dropped the chances of Britain winning gold from 48% to 28%, according to the data experts at EquiRatings (see box, p51). It also left Piggy French and Jayne McGivern's Quarrycrest Echo as the only pair



The British team celebrate silver (from left): chef d'equipe Dickie Waygood, Pippa Funnell, Oliver Townend, Tina Cook and Piggy French

tense as they hold the reins.

The first German, Andreas Dibowski, was "shocked" with his mark of 34.6 on FRH Corrida, saying, "I cannot explain what's wrong." But with Kai Rüder equal fourth on the big, impressive Colani Sunrise — who "sometimes tries too hard" — they could discard his score.

The Germans held a 16.8-penalty margin over the Brits in silver, but just 12.2 penalties covered the teams sitting second to eighth.

AN IDEAL BRAIN

OLIVER TOWNEND led the way for the British team in seventh on 27.6 after a strong test on Cooley Master Class, in which the only

error was a break into canter in the trot half-pass.

"He's very consistent in the atmosphere," said Oliver, explaining he had not been between the white boards in arena familiarisation as the extra lift is useful for his horse. "He's a lazy so-and-so to train, but he goes in and gains presence and trot."

Tina Cook rode with great tact to hold ninth with 28.3 on the "sharp and bright" Billy The Red, who whipped round outside before his test. Last year he misbehaved in halt and rein-back in this very arena, so she made a tactical decision to move on quickly out of the first halt.

"He holds his breath in each movement," she said. "I have to be relaxed myself, being almost floppy as I canter down the centre line. When he spooks, I don't discipline him so he doesn't think it's a big deal."

Piggy French was another a little baffled by her mark — 29.8

'It's a huge relief; all last night and this morning I was nervous, thinking, "Why haven't I retired?"'

PIPPA FUNNELL

of a hesitation at the last water, but then he was in front of my aids again. It was really pure fun.

"Team trainer Hans Melzer said I should only smile and pat him at the finish, and I should stay focused because sometimes I pat him all the time and say, 'Bobby, you're my hero.'"

Ingrid easily confirmed her position in individual silver and the Germans in team gold.

Oliver Townend had to go clear inside the time with Cooley

Master Class to keep Britain in silver and he too shook off the long wait and denied any nerves to roll in a cool seven seconds inside the time — with time to blow a kiss to the crowd after the final fence. He rose from seventh to fifth individually.

"I'm used to waiting at Badminton, Burghley and Kentucky," he said. "The others kept popping in and giving me feedback, but I don't need to be socialising on Saturday. I had a

plan of what I was going to do and he's very special.

"He gets better and better every time at these big events. He has minimal preparation because we know how good he is and he doesn't need run after run."

Oliver admitted that however calm he is beforehand, he usually laughs or cries or "does something embarrassing," as soon as he crosses the finish line, and he was another rider close to tears in his interviews.

For France, Nicolas Touzaint's clear in the time on a nine-year-old he rates highly, Absolut Gold HDC, confirmed overnight team bronze.

Had Sam Watson matched him, Ireland could have held fourth, less than a penalty behind France. But Sam's otherwise excellent round came off the rails when he had to circle before

TEAM SCORES

		DRSAGE	CROSS-COUNTRY JUMPING	CROSS-COUNTRY TIME	SHOW/JUMPING JUMPING	SHOW/JUMPING TIME	TOTAL
1	Germany						
	SAP Hale Bob OLD (Ingrid Klimke)	22.2	-	-	-	-	22.2
	Fischer Chipmunk FRH (Michael Jung)	20.9	-	-	4	-	24.9
	FRH Corrida (Andreas Dibowski)	34.6	-	0.8	-	-	35.4
	Colani Sunrise (Kai Rüder)	25.8	-	16	-	-	41.8
							82.5
2	Great Britain						
	Cooley Master Class (Oliver Townend)	27.6	-	-	4	-	31.6
	Quarrycrest Echo (Piggy French)	29.8	-	-	4	-	33.8
	Majas Hope (Pippa Funnell)	35.4	-	-	4	-	39.4
	Billy The Red (Kristina Cook)	28.3	20	15.6	-	-	63.9
							104.8

INDIVIDUAL SCORES

		DRSAGE	CROSS-COUNTRY JUMPING	CROSS-COUNTRY TIME	SHOW/JUMPING JUMPING	SHOW/JUMPING TIME	TOTAL
* denotes team member							
1	SAP Hale Bob OLD (Ingrid Klimke, GER*)	22.2	-	-	-	-	22.2
	Fischer Chipmunk FRH (Michael Jung, GER*)	20.9	-	-	4	-	24.9
	Rioghán Rua (Cathal Daniels, IRL*)	29	-	-	-	-	29
	Totem De Brecey (Christopher Six, FRA)	28.4	-	0.8	-	-	29.2
	Qing Du BriotÉNE HN (Thibaut Vallette, FRA*)	25.8	-	-	4	-	29.8
	Bayro (Tim Lips, NED*)	26	-	-	4	-	30
	Vendredi Biats (Kitty King, GBR)	27.9	-	2.4	-	-	30.3
	El Kazir SP (Ludwig Svennerstål, SWE*)	31	-	-	-	-	31
	Cooley Master Class (Oliver Townend, GBR*)	27.6	-	-	4	-	31.6
	Absolut Gold HDC (Nicolas Touzaint, FRA*)	31.6	-	-	-	-	31.6

OPINION

will not be able to afford such largesse next year.

On the brighter side, Oliver Townend rode fantastically to get the team monkey off his back. He will be a serious player in championships to come.



Oliver Townend steers Cooley Master Class through the last of the four water questions to keep Britain in contention for silver

By the time Oliver Townend jumped, sitting fifth individually, he needed a clear to guarantee Britain's silver. Cooley Master Class is an excellent jumper, but he inexplicably chipped in a stride at the plank at fence eight and crashed through it — the top two planks were black as the fence was the colours of the German flag, which was perhaps visually tricky.

"He loves to be a bit off planks and verticals and it felt like I was in the normal place, but I gave him a squeeze and he never took off," said Oliver, who slid to ninth,

but added with a smile: "He's just got good taste in planks and he didn't like that one!"

Britain were down to bronze, and for a few minutes the day had uncomfortable shades of the 2011 Europeans at the same venue — on that occasion Britain entered the final day in silver but lost it to France with a showjump down piece, taking home bronze.