



"He's the most reliable horse in the world in the jumping phases" – Ballaghmor Class claims OI victory with Oliver Townend

# Tokyo stars start with wins

British team horses hit the excellent ground running in East Anglia, while a 24-year-old keeps local spirits high

Poplar Park, Suffolk

By PIPPA ROOME

TWO horses from Britain's Tokyo gold medal-winning team started another Olympic year in victorious form when Ballaghmor Class and London 52 both took open intermediates (OIs) at Poplar Park.

"The Suffolk people are very good at turning out for this event and it was humbling to see how many people were watching Ballaghmor Class's dressage test," said Oliver.

Oliver said the 17-year-old "Thomas", who belongs to Karyn Shuter, Val Ryan and Angela Hislop, has "never felt better and the nicest thing is how good he looked the day after the event".

"I don't know whether it's possible, but he still feels like he's improving flatwork-wise and he's the most reliable horse

in the world in the jumping phases," the world number one said of the three-time five-star winner. "I'm very conscious of wanting to finish his career the right way, but to me he feels a long way off the inevitable."

## "100% ON THE BALL"

OLIVER made it a pair of OI wins for his grey five-star campaigners by doubling up on the Ridgeons' Cooley Rosalent, who was third at Maryland last autumn. The 10-year-old beat some smart horses in the first phase in section G – including the eventual runners-up, world champions Yasmin Ingham and Banzai Du Loir, scoring 25 to their 25.9 – and held top spot with the fastest round of the day for 2.8 time-faults.

"Thomas was mad fresh and

couldn't take his eyes off the cross-country but from the first warm-up, 'Rosie' was 100% on the ball," said Oliver. "She's out of a full thoroughbred mother and naturally looks stringy, like a racehorse, but now suddenly she has a neck; she's a bigger horse than last year. Across country it's like riding a full thoroughbred – even when I'm saying whoa she's naturally very quick."

Plans for both horses are "in discussion" but plan A is

that Ballaghmor Class goes to Badminton and Cooley Rosalent to Kentucky.

Oliver praised the Poplar team, saying: "I remember this event trying to scrape together an OI section and thank



Rain does nothing to dampen London 52's spirits as he and Laura Collett top an OI leaderboard at this season opener