

# Townend takes £1k prize

Oliver Townend dominates ahead of Kentucky and Badminton, as eventing finally runs in the sun

By JO PRESTWICH

Istanbul BBQ Chester Kelsall Hill (1), Cheshire

OLIVER TOWNEND'S ride Cillnabradden Evo lost a front shoe across country, but still ran out the victor in the £1,000-to-the-winner advanced intermediate (AI). The 12-year-



Oliver Townend claims the AI on Cillnabradden Evo, adding nothing to their leading dressage score

old, owned by Sally-Anne Egginton, lost the shoe dropping down Kelsall's signature bank towards the end of the course. However, he was reshod in time to jump clear in the showjumping which ran after the cross-country, with the top 10 in reverse order.

"He's a very reliable showjumper, in fact I've never had a rail on him," said Oliver. "He missed last year after picking up an injury. He had a pipe opener at Gatcombe back in March, but that was so long ago it was like first time out with him again."

Oliver also won the open intermediate (OI) with Paul and Diana Ridgeon's Ulises, and took third in the AI with the Badminton-bound Ballaghmor Class and seconds at intermediate and OI level with Sweeps Crystal Cruise and Tregildur.

"I was super-happy with

ONLY IN HORSE & HOUND

## Remember: 'Keep it simple, stupid'

Mark Phillips on where the FEI needs to improve and the WEG test event

AT Vairano, Italy, last week, the ground jury, technical delegate and I as cross-country designer spent two days arguing about how to apply the new rule regarding circling at combinations with three or more elements. The rule is badly written, the diagrams on the FEI website and the app are different and the clarification on the website confuses more.

The chair of the FEI eventing committee, David O'Connor, has inherited this problem, but he needs to sort it fast. It's unfair on riders to have a rule interpreted one way one weekend and another the next.

I understand the FEI plans to let officials continue working beyond the age of 70 if they pass a competency test. This is great, but a recent experiment with eventing judges in Warendorf was a disaster.

I thought the test would be something simple — perhaps marking 10 dressage tests from

### OPINION

a video, with a pass for landing within a certain percentage of the actual score. But apparently the Warendorf test was so complicated that many of our current top officials failed.

One important point is that officials must be current — you can't retire and then two years later request an extension.

It seems the FEI needs to remember that great saying, "Keep it simple, stupid."

### GOING SCIENCE

THE World Equestrian Games (WEG) test event in Tryon earlier this month went well.

The cross-country footing on the golf course was excellent. We are using a scientific measurement on the going, aiming for 26-28% volumetric water content.

We are still waiting to put the turf down on the last 2,000 metres of the course, but the plan is that the grass will have 120 growing days before WEG. With irrigation and using the volumetric water metric, we'll be able to produce the same



going here as on the golf course.

The eighth minute of the WEG course will have a big hill, so horses must be fit. The questions will be three-star, but the undulations mean I can make them appear bigger by placing fences just over the rise. But, while jockeys will still have to ride, the questions will be clear to the horse, unlike some at our last two championships in Strzegom and Rio.

The WEG course will have a 10min optimum time, with 42 jumping efforts, running at 135m per jumping effort. That is faster than we've ever run a three-star before — it's normally 140-145m per effort. You can't ride at combinations

faster today than you could 30 years ago, so the fewer metres per effort, the faster you must go in between to make up time.

The test event highlighted areas that need improving. The field of play and the horse areas will be excellent; Tryon are now working on spectator flow and facilities. If you have to wait 45 minutes for a loo and a hot dog, no one will have a good time.

### ON TO BADMINTON

BADMINTON has been a big part of my life since I first rode Rock On there 50 years ago. I'll be more nervous this time than for many a year as I am the official "cross-country course adviser". I have enjoyed working with designer Eric Winter, having frank and constructive discussions.

I hope the result will be enjoyable for horses, riders and spectators, but this is real Badminton at 12 minutes and 45 efforts — riders will need to take their brain when they leave the start box! H&H

**NEXT WEEK** Data experts EquiRatings predict Badminton's results

Former Olympic team gold medalist and four-time Badminton winner Mark Phillips is one of the world's leading cross-country course-designers.