

Townend has bid for grand slam thwarted by heavy fall

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Equestrianism

Jenny MacArthur

Oliver Townend's bid to become only the second winner of the Rolex Grand Slam ended on Saturday, when he was airlifted to hospital after a fall from Ashdale Cruise Master.

The fall came in the cross-country phase of the Rolex Kentucky Three Day Event, which was won in style by William Fox-Pitt, Townend's long-time rival, who, as one of three Britons competing, led from the start on his new four-star ride, *Cool Mountain*.

Townend, 27, had had an epic journey to the event involving a £1,600 taxi ride from Paris to Madrid, from where he flew to Lexington via Miami and Atlanta because of the volcanic ash. He had been on course for the grand slam and prize money of \$350,000 (about £228,000) after winning Badminton and Burghley last year.

On Saturday, riding his first horse,



Fox-Pitt steered Cool Mountain to victory in Kentucky

ODT Master Rose, he kept his dream alive after a clear cross-country round lifted him to seventh, but trouble struck when he fell heavily from Ashdale Cruise Master at Fence 20 and was airlifted to hospital with minor fractures.

"I feel bashed and bruised, but my spirits are good," Townend said after being discharged yesterday. "I want to get well quickly and start riding again as soon as possible. It's a tough sport and these things happen."

Fox-Pitt, meanwhile, was celebrating one of the most satisfying successes of his illustrious career. While the build-up had focused on Townend, Fox-Pitt had been quietly confident in *Cool Mountain*, a 10-year-old by Primitive Rising owned by Teresa Stopford Sackville. "This is his first four-star but he's done everything right so far — I'm thrilled with him," he said.