

Piggy is only the second British winner at Badminton since Oliver Townend took the title 10 years ago in 2009.

This year Oliver led the first two phases, on two different horses, to eventually finish second with Ballaghmor Class by 0.3 of a penalty. This was the first British one-two here since William Fox-Pitt was second to Oliver.

Oliver and Piggy were a couple for seven years and he was generous in defeat, saying: "Congratulations to Piggy on an unbelievable performance. We know each other well and I know it's been an awfully long time coming and she'd not have expected it on this horse. It's a very special win for Piggy and the family."

"I was thrilled with Ballaghmor Class' performances this week. Sometimes it goes your way and sometimes it doesn't. Last week Piggy was disappointed and I was in her position in Kentucky."

Karyn Shuter, Angela Hislop and Val Ryan's rangy fleabitten grey Ballaghmor Class, by Courage, is 12 now and in his four five-star runs has achieved a win (Burghley 2017), two seconds and a fifth. It's an enviable record and Oliver said this was his best performance.

"I just wanted to give him a clear run at it and show the world what he is," he said. "He's been class all season."

He was also sixth on Cillnabraden Evo, who set a new Badminton dressage record. Sally-Anne Egginton's 13-year-old has been a prolific winner in the one-day sport, but has also had falls — including the one in which Andrew Nicholson was seriously injured at Gatcombe 2015 — and many doubted he would get the trip over a nearly 12-minute course.

EVENTING

MITSUBISHI MOTORS BADMINTON

The story



'HE CAN'T PUT HIS NECK DOWN'

HARRY MEADE with Oliver Townend



"He's a high-profile horse for good and bad reasons," said Oliver after cross-country. "I couldn't be happier for myself, the team and Sally-Anne for sticking with him. She got flak for allowing me to ride him, but he's done us nothing but good."

HOME SIDE ON THE UP

THE Brits were extraordinarily dominant in the dressage at this event, but couldn't quite maintain it across country. Nonetheless, they filled seven of the top 12 places in the final reckoning. Tina Cook landed seventh

A tight time and unpredictable fences make for a top day, as Oliver Townend stays ahead, albeit on a different horse

PLACINGS AFTER CROSS-COUNTRY

1st Oliver Townend on Ballaghmor Class (GBR)
2nd Piggy French on Vanir Kamira (GBR)
3rd Chris Burton on Graf Liberty (AUS)



The second horse out, Star Witness, had an uncharacteristic run-out at the right-hand log out of the Shogun Sport Hollow. Tina Cook pulled up and it was later discovered the horse had tied up.

Oliver Townend knew there was a question mark about whether the dressage leader Cillnabraden Evo, who is a warmblood type by S Creevagh Ferro, would get the trip and he hoped to ride him as efficiently as possible. He started out well and successfully negotiated the direct route at the Mirage Water, steering neatly to the corner.

At fence 19, "Gary" started to look somewhat deliberate in his jump, but he kept going, with a peck after the Voltaire Design Huntsman's Close (fence 28ab). He was tiring, but every time Oliver moved him away from a fence, he complied willingly and he came home with 12.4 time-faults to drop to seventh.

"I looked after him and at some point I had to say go," said

Oliver. "Going this way round the course I've never had a horse pick up speed after Huntsman's Close as well as he did. He emptied out, but he dug deep. He picked up and jumped the last combination as well as any."

MEGA JUMPING

ARCTIC SOUL is renowned as one of the fastest horses in eventing, but on this occasion he was "insanely strong". Gemma wasted time setting up and had to circle before the final corner at the Mirage Water.

"His jumping is mega and he has such amazing speed, but I have to slow him and his brain for the jumps or he'd just run past them," she said, finishing with 12.8 time-faults to move up 38 places to 28th.

William Fox-Pitt was one of the first to ride a really smooth line through the Mirage Water. All sorts of stride options were on offer here, but those who trusted their horses and landed with

equal 15th to sixth.

Oliver followed him and demonstrated his ability by giving Ballaghmor Class a completely different ride to Cillnabraden Evo. He took the left-hand route at fence 10 on two strides, having gone right on three tiny ones with the earlier horse. The grey was scopey and honest and had one of the best rounds of the day to finish just one second over the time.

"I was listening to the TV in the wagon between rides and Harry Meade and Ian Stark were saying that anybody who doesn't get nervous either has no brain or is no good — I thought, 'Sh*t, I'm not feeling it,' because apart from him being a little het up, I knew

he could do it, as long as I did my job," said Oliver.

"This was his best round to date. As I was coming to the Lake, I thought I had balled it up — I'd been enjoying myself too much and was way down on the clock, but I pressed go, and even with the great Armada, I've never had a feeling like it. He opened his stride and went faster than I've ever finished a five-star in my life."

Tom Crisp, who followed Oliver, broke a frangible, which led to Tina Cook being held on course. William Fox-Pitt was allowed to carry on and overtake

Overall: final scoreboard

MITSUBISHI MOTORS BADMINTON HORSE TRIALS 2019

Final position	Horse and rider	Dressage	Cross-country Jumping	Time	Showjumping Time	Total	
1	Vanir Kamira (Piggy French, GBR)	26	-	0.8	-	26.8	
2	Ballaghmor Class (Oliver Townend, GBR)	21.1	-	0.4	4	1.6	27.1
3	Cootley Lands (Chris Burton, AUS)	28.1	-	-	-	-	28.1
4	Graf Liberty (Chris Burton, AUS)	27.7	-	-	4	2	33.7
5	Swallow Springs (Andrew Nicholson, NZL)	27.8	-	-	8	-	35.8
6	Cillnabraden Evo (Oliver Townend, GBR)	19.7	-	12.4	4	-	36.1
7	Cillnabraden Evo (Oliver Townend, GBR)	28.1	-	12.4	-	-	40.5

EVENTING

MITSUBISHI MOTORS BADMINTON

Dressage



Oliver Townend scores two 10s for his final halt with Cillnabraden Evo. His mark of 19.7 puts him at the top of the leaderboard and sets a new Badminton record

PLACINGS AFTER DRESSAGE

1st Oliver Townend on Cillnabraden Evo (GBR)
2nd Oliver Townend on Ballaghmor Class (GBR)
3rd Tom McEwen on Toledo De Kerker (GBR)

Townend sets two records

Oliver Townend leads a British top eight with a one-two and a record score

OLIVER TOWNEND laid down a new Badminton record dressage score of 19.7 as just the fourth rider into the arena. His test with Cillnabraden Evo took over from Andrew Hoy and Darien Powers' effort in 2000, which received 20.5 when converted to current marking.

The black gelding excels in this phase, with an active hindleg and superb self-carriage. He scored two 10s for his final halt.

"I do torture myself quite a lot — last night I lay in bed and rode that test again and again and again," said Oliver.

By the end of Friday, he had become the first rider to hold first and second after dressage here as he piloted last year's first-phase leader, Ballaghmor Class, to 21.1. Without a slight blip in his final flying change, the elegant grey

might have beaten his stablemate and one member of the ground jury, Christian Steiner, actually placed him first.

"Everyone expects a lot from him because he won Burghley, but he was a novice then," said the rider. "Now, he's becoming established and beautiful to ride."

Of his one-two, Oliver added: "These are the situations I dream of every day of my life. I start early every morning, struggling away with mirrors and floodlights."

The rider said that "embarrassingly" he doesn't have a dressage trainer, but he watches a lot of DVDs and his "best mate" Karyn Shuter acts as his eyes on the ground. He has also enlisted judges of the calibre of Christoph Hess and Stephen Clarke to mark his performances at home.

BRITISH TOP EIGHT

OLIVER headed a British top eight, the first time one nation has been so dominant in over a decade. The top 10 all scored below 28, the magic number that data experts EquiRatings decree is the final score needed to win at this level.

Tom McEwen filled the third podium spot on 24.7 with a mistake-free test from the

athletic Toledo De Kerker. The horse has long promised such a performance, but the odd error has prevented him delivering it.

"It's just about being consistent — he's always been a bit funny in his brain," said Tom.

Piggy French held fourth, saying: "Vanir Kamira always feels distracted walking up from the stables here, but she went in and had presence, pricked her ears



"He tries hard, but is built like a wheelbarrow": Laura Collett scores 27.5 with Mr Bass to sit eighth