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RUNNER-UP OLIVER
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A PHENOMENAL RECORD

BALLAGHMOR CLASS continued his phenomenal record of being placed in the top five in all eight of his non-championship five-star appearances to finish runner-up with Oliver Townend for the second time – the first was in 2019.

The 16-year-old, owned by Karyn Shuter, Angela Hislop and Val Ryan

also has an Olympic team gold medal in his cabinet.

“He’s unreal, isn’t he?” Oliver said. “I’ve had too many seconds with him, bless him, we’ll put that down to the jockey. He is literally part of the family and it’s a huge relief to me that I haven’t mucked it up and he’s had another amazing result.

“I’ve had him since he was four, and I just trust him 100% and I think he trusts me 100%. I am not eloquent enough to tell you how proud I am.”

Austin O’Connor, who was

Pictures by Peter Nixon, Nick Murren, Martin and Alamy



Ballaghmor Class finishes second under Oliver Townend, keeping up his 100% record of eight top-five finishes at non-championship five-stars

every loop.

Oliver Townend was the only rider to have two horses in the top 10 after the first phase, with Swallow Springs third on 23.2 and Ballaghmor Class sixth on 24.7.

Oliver and Swallow Springs started as they meant to go on

with a nine for their initial halt.

Despite the squally conditions, it was a calm and polished performance, just losing a couple of marks when the grey tried to break in the first extended trot. Their canter work was the highlight, rewarded with eights for medium and extended canter and the flying changes.

The reliable Ballaghmor Class added yet another five-star cross-country clear jumping round to his CV under Oliver Townend. Oliver made the most of the grey’s giant stride to come home with 21.2 time-faults, the third-fastest time, to move up to third overnight.

“He’s a good mate,” said Oliver of the 16-year-old. “I’ve had him since he was four, and I trust him 100% and I think he trusts me 100%.”

“He has no reason at this stage in his life to do what he’s just done. You can’t make a horse do it. He loves his job, and he’s a true professional. He’s probably like me in that he’s a nightmare when he’s not kept busy. We’re very similar, and life would be a lot more boring for me without him around.”

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BALLAGHMOR CLASS lowered four showjumps at the Pratoni World Championships last year with Oliver Townend. When he knocked down the oxer at fence three it looked like a long way home, but he made light work of the rest, adding just 0.4 of a time-fault to climb from third to second on 50.3, after Austin O’Connor’s ride Colorado Blue felled both parts of the final double.

“He’s my hero,” said Oliver. “Whenever I’m having a rough time, he comes to the front.

FINAL PLACINGS

- 1st Ros Canter (GBR) on Lordships Graffalo
- 2nd Oliver Townend (GBR) on Ballaghmor Class
- 3rd Austin O’Connor (IRL) on Colorado Blue