



The immensely promising nine-year-old Cooley Rosalent lands third with Oliver Townend, having led the first two phases

Luhmühlen in June was very much an experience-building competition for her, with 20 jumping penalties across country and an uncompetitive dressage score of 37.4.

Here, she improved on that first-phase mark by 14.3 penalties and was fast across country – and Oliver said she could have been faster.

“Although we’re at a five-star and it’s hugely important, she’s hopefully going to be a very long-term partner in my career. We know how good she is, so it was about

giving her the best experience possible,” he said.

“My manager Karyn Shuter drummed it into me that I should sit

very still up the hills and try to save her, so when I got to the difficult combinations at the top, where she might be a bit green, she’d have that bit of energy. In all honesty I spent most of the round saying, ‘Whoa, just wait.’”

Oliver said one of her fences down on the final day was a “baby mistake” and the other was down to him “getting a bit desperate” and he is not worried about this phase for the future.

Oliver has not been short of a ride at the top level for a long time, but it has not

been clear who his next team horse might be, with Tokyo hero Ballaghmor Class in the twilight of his career. The answer could be another grey, a plucky mare who showed her mettle in Maryland this week.

Piggy March and five-star first-timer Brookfield Cavalier Cruise, owned by John and Chloe Perry and Alison Swinburn, lay fifth after cross-country, but sadly “Fletcher” was “not quite right” on Sunday morning and Piggy withdrew from the holding box at the final trot-up.

Hannah Sue Hollberg was best of the home side in fourth on Capitol HIM, whose owner Christa Schmidt passed the reins to Hannah Sue because

he was a little too much horse for her. The 16-year-old was diagnosed with Cushing’s last year after doing the CCI3*-L here – although he had made his five-star debut at Kentucky that spring, Hannah Sue didn’t want to push him too hard as she “couldn’t figure out what was wrong with him all year”.

“Once we got him on the medication he needed it changed his life and he became the horse we always

Hannah Sue Hollberg (Capitol HIM) is the host nation’s best-placed rider, finishing fourth

Oliver Townend claimed third on Paul Ridgdon’s Cooley Rosalent. She was the youngest horse in the competition, just nine years old, and this was already her second five-star.

Oliver and William both praised Ian after their rides, saying they liked the way pilots had to be reactive to how their horse was going in terms of the striding in combinations.

On the optimum time, Oliver said: “Last year I was 17 seconds inside the time, which I found a bit embarrassing. That’s not a five-star time – Ian knew that, everybody knew that, but at the same time it takes a designer a long time to figure out the lie of the land, the place, whether it’s a tiring course.

“I think he’s done it the right way [building up]. I didn’t point fingers because I know what a difficult job it must be. It’s taken three years to get it really right, but I think he’s done an amazing job.” **H&H**

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OLIVER TOWNEND