

## Tragic Events at Red Hills Horse Trials

### **Olympian Darren Chiacchia severely injured on course.**

03-21-2008

Olympic rider Darren Chiacchia competing in a previous year's Rolex Kentucky Three-Day Event. Chiacchia is currently recovering from injuries suffered at the Red Hill Horse Trials.

The Red Hills Horse Trials in Tallahassee, Fla., was marked by tragedy this weekend. Olympic rider Darren Chiacchia was severely injured when the horse he was riding, Baron Verdi, took a misstep and somersaulted March 15, during the cross-country portion of the three-day eventing competition. The horse was apparently uninjured, but Chiacchia was airlifted to the Neuro Intensive Care Unit at Tallahassee Memorial Hospital. He sustained a severe head injury and contusions to both lungs, with multiple rib fractures and a partially collapsed lung. Initial concerns about spinal injury were alleviated after extensive specialized testing.

According to reports, Chiacchia's pulmonary function is improving, but the head injury continues to be a major concern. His overall condition shows definite improvement, but he still remained unconscious Monday. Chiacchia's family and close friends are with him and remain optimistic he will continue a slow, but steady, recovery.

#### STATEMENT FROM CHIACCHIA FAMILY

March 18, 2008 - 2PM EDT

After breathing independently for a few hours, Darren had a temporary setback. He developed a fever and pneumonia causing him to be re-intubated and is now breathing with a ventilator. He continues to receive superior medical care and remains in critical but stable condition. The Chiacchia family wishes to extend their appreciation for all the concern and support.

#### STATEMENT FROM CHIACCHIA FAMILY

March 20, 2008 - 2PM EDT

Darren is still listed in critical condition, but he remains comfortable and stable. He has squeezed hands upon command at times, and opened his eyes on a few occasions. The medical staff remains optimistic about his recovery. Some of Darren's favorite music has been playing around the clock at his bedside to soothe his spirit. Let's all say some extra prayers on Good Friday and throughout this Easter weekend.

#### Darren Chiacchia and the Equestrian World

Darren Chiacchia remains unconscious in critical condition but is now breathing independently without the assistance of a ventilator, from the USEA. [Read more >>](#)

#### A Message from USEA President Kevin Baumgardner

Eventers everywhere are deeply saddened by the accidents that occurred this past weekend at the Red Hills Horse Trials in Tallahassee, Florida, from the USEA. [Read more >>](#)

For updates on Darren Chiacchia's condition, visit his website at [www.eventrider.com](http://www.eventrider.com).

In addition to Chiacchia's accident, two other tragedies occurred during the Trials on March 15: The horse Missy Miller was riding, Leprechauns Rowdy Boy, took a fatal fall while negotiating a combination jump on course. He died immediately but Miller was uninjured. A necropsy on the horse will be done at the University of Florida and updates will be given as available on the Red Hills Horse Trials website at [www.rhht.org](http://www.rhht.org).

Additionally Jonathan Holling's horse, Direct Merger, collapsed and died on course during the Trials Saturday. According to a statement by Holling, the accident was "in no way related to a jump on course." Holling extended his thanks to everyone who responded to help his horse and said, "I lost a great partner in Direct Merger today, and he will be greatly missed." The Red Hills Horse Trials featured a challenging cross-country course designed by Captain Mark Phillips, Chef d'Equipe and Technical Advisor for the United States Equestrian Team and a former member of the Great Britain Olympic team. For more information on the event, visit [www.rhht.org](http://www.rhht.org).