Article from Phillip Dutton (7 time Olympian) posted on social media.

(https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=1128303758660995&id=100044441439427)

With the 2024 eventing season coming to a close, I feel it has been a great year for our sport in many respects with some incredible performances at the CCI5*s throughout the world and with the showcasing of the sport at the Paris Olympics.

The downside and tragic events of the year were two high-profile riders having cross-country falls. Namely, the death of Georgie Campbell and the life-changing accident of Liz Halliday at the AEC competition in Lexington, KY.

Our sport has come a long way in regard to safety and horse welfare. Frangible pins have definitely prevented falls, and in doing so, have prevented major injuries to both horse and rider - and probably, in some cases, death. Course design and construction have also played an important part as well. It is in everyone's best interest to embrace this new technology to further improve the safety of the sport.

Both Georgie and Liz's falls were at jumps without frangible pins. It is probably not practical yet to have every fence frangible, but as riders, we should be encouraging organizers and designers to aim for this. Other sports more dangerous than ours have made huge leaps in the safety area - Formula One and the NFL come to mind. Having the old adage that horses won't learn if the fences come down is rubbish! If a horse needs to run into a solid fence to back off, you probably shouldn't be riding him.

On the other side of safety, riders have to make sure they have the right skills and their horses the right education before setting out on course. Aggressive riding definitely plays a part in keeping a horse confident on cross country. More importantly though, is being able to approach each cross-country jump with the required speed, line and take off distance on a forward-thinking horse. After watching some of the long-format events lately, it's clear to me that many riders lack those skills and instead are relying just on speed and aggression and having a brave, genuine horse.

As riders, we have to make split-second decisions, and it is not always going to be the right decision. That is sport and life. However, embracing improvements to jump design, frangible devices in future courses and riders who have a good grasp, understanding and the skills needed to ride safely at each jump will hopefully keep a bright future for our sport.

📸 : Shannon Brinkman Photography