

= Bruce Davidson (equestrian) =

Bruce Oram Davidson (born December 31 , 1949 , in Rome , New York) is an American equestrian who competes in the sport of eventing . He grew up in a family uninterested in horses , but began to compete in Pony Club events after a family friend introduced him to riding . He began college at Iowa State University , but left in his third year to train full @-@ time with the United States Equestrian Team . In 1974 he married , and his two children were born in 1976 and 1977 . His son , Bruce Davidson , Jr . , has followed in his footsteps to become a top eventing rider .

At 18 , Davidson tried out for the United States eventing team and was accepted . He won his first medal as a member of the silver @-@ medal @-@ winning US team at the 1972 Summer Olympics . After that , Davidson went to win gold at the 1976 and 1984 Olympics and silver in 1996 , participating unsuccessfully in 1988 . He has also competed repeatedly at both the World Equestrian Games and the Pan American Games , winning medals at both , as well as winning repeatedly at the top @-@ level Badminton Horse Trials and Rolex Kentucky Three Day events . In the 1980s and early 1990s , Davidson was a consistently top @-@ level rider on both the American and international eventing scenes . He is also known for his horse breeding and training abilities .

= = Personal life = =

In 1949 , Davidson was born to Francis and Annette Davidson , the former a businessman and the latter a concert pianist . He was the third of four children , and had little opportunity to be around horses until his family moved to Westport , Massachusetts , when he was a child . A family friend introduced Davidson to horses , and he began attending Pony Club events . He bought , trained and sold horses until he found a championship horse in Irish Cap , the horse that took him to his first gold medal at the 1974 World Eventing Championship . Davidson went to college at Iowa State University with a veterinary major , but left in his third year to train with the United States Equestrian Team (USET) .

In 1974 , Davidson married Carol Hannum , a top rider and daughter of Nancy Hannum , who owns extensive property in Pennsylvania surrounding Davidson 's Chesterland Farm . In 1976 , Davidson 's son , Bruce " Buck " Oram Davidson , Jr . , was born , followed by a daughter , Nancy Fraser Davidson , in 1977 . In 2006 , Davidson 's first grandson , Oram , was born to Nancy . Buck Davidson is also an internationally competitive event rider , competing in high @-@ level events such as the Rolex Kentucky Three Day along with his father .

In 2002 , at a competition in Massachusetts , Davidson 's horse suffered a fall in a freak accident . The horse , High Scope , broke his neck and died instantly , while Davidson was taken to the intensive care unit at Massachusetts Memorial Hospital . After being treated for injuries , Davidson was released . In 2010 , Davidson missed that year 's Rolex Three Day Event in Kentucky after undergoing surgery to repair herniated discs in his back .

= = Career = =

= = = Competition = = =

At 18 , Davidson participated in a tryout for aspiring eventers run by Neil Ayer and Jack le Goff , who were trying to build the United States team to an international level . He had talent , and according to LeGoff , " He didn 't know which diagonal he was posting when he came to me . Two years later , he was riding in the Olympics . " Davidson was chosen , and began training with the USET in a four @-@ year , seven @-@ day @-@ a @-@ week program in Gladstone , New Jersey .

Davidson won team eventing medals at Olympic Games in 1972 , 1976 , 1984 and 1996 , and also competed at the 1988 Games . In the 1972 Games , at age 22 , he took individual eighth , while the American team won silver . At the 1976 Summer Olympics , the team won gold while Davidson

came in tenth individually . In 1984 , Davidson , who finished 13th individually , was the lowest scoring member of the gold @-@ medal @-@ winning United States team . At the 1988 Games , Davidson took 18th , while the American team did not finish the competition . In 1996 , Davidson did not compete as an individual , but the American team again took silver .

Outside of the Olympics , Davidson also competed repeatedly at the Eventing World Championships and the Pan @-@ American Games . He took both an individual and a team gold at the 1974 World Championships , and another individual gold at the 1978 Championships . Davidson 's victory at the 1974 Championships aboard Irish Cap made him the first American ever to win the event , and his win in 1978 aboard Might Tango made him the first rider of any nationality to win back @-@ to @-@ back championships . In this event , the inexperienced Might Tango was Davidson 's backup horse after Irish Cap went lame , leading to a scenario which Sports Illustrated likened to " a junior high school quarterback leading USC to victory in the Rose Bowl " . Might Tango 's inexperience led to increased tiredness and rumors that the activity made him go into shock , but Davidson replied that the horse was just " very tired " and praised him for his stamina . The United States also took a team bronze at the 1978 championships . In 1990 , Davidson took an individual bronze at the World Championships in Stockholm , Sweden . In 1998 , Davidson competed at the World Equestrian Games in Rome , where he took an individual 21st place , as well as helping the US to a team 4th .

At the 1975 Pan American Games , he took both the individual and the team silver ; he followed this up by an individual gold and a team silver at the 1995 Games .

He has also ridden at the Badminton Horse Trials , where he is one of only two Americans to win that event , and he also holds the honor of having the most wins at the Rolex Three Day Event with six victories . Through his 1974 World Championship victory , Davidson is credited with helping to create the Rolex event , as this victory allowed the US to host the 1978 World Championships . The 1978 event turned into an annual competition that eventually became the Rolex Kentucky Three @-@ Day , which was the first and continues to be the only four @-@ star eventing competition in the United States . Davidson has competed at the event almost every year since it began .

In 1993 and 1995 , Davidson held the top place in the world eventing rankings compiled by the FEI , and between 1980 and 1995 , he was annually named the leading rider for the United States Eventing Association .

= = = Other = = =

In 2002 , Davidson was named as one of the 50 most influential horsemen of the 20th century by the equine magazine The Chronicle of the Horse . In 2009 , Davidson was inducted to the United States Eventing Association Hall of Fame , along with his horse Irish Cap . In 2003 , another horse ridden by Davidson , Plain Sailing , had also been inducted .

Davidson is also known for his success in finding and training the horses that he rides at the international level . Irish Cap was purchased at the age of five years , JJ Babu and Dr. Peaches as yearlings and Might Tango as a two @-@ year @-@ old ex @-@ racehorse ? all ended as championship horses . He is currently a Thoroughbred breeder , and at his Chesterland Farm he says that " the ultimate in the sport is to breed , train and win , to carry the whole system right on through . "