



## What's the risk?

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Everything was going as planned. Hoof beats were creating an even rhythm as I approached the jump, I saw the spot from where the horse was going to leave the ground. It wasn't too far away or too close to the jump. It was that sweet spot that every rider hopes to find.

Underneath me, the horse's weight started to shift and we were taking off. Never for a second did I think something was going to go wrong.

All equestrians hear horror stories about freak accidents that leave them in the hospital. I never thought that would be me. I always trusted that my helmet would protect me. Only a few months into my senior year, I never thought I would be in the ambulance.

As someone's fingers pulled off my helmet, I became aware that I was laying on the ground. I can't remember how

many paramedics were hovering over me or who was in the arena holding my hand. I do remember being confused as a steady hand stopped me from trying to get up. Over and over I asked the same questions.

"What day is it? Where am I? What horse was I riding?"

I was lifted into an ambulance, and a paramedic worked to start an IV.

As I was regaining consciousness, I slowly became more aware of my injuries. My head was throbbing, pounding against my skull like it was attempting to burst through bone. The shoulder I landed on was swollen and bruised. When I attempted to move my arm, it felt as if pins were digging deep into my arm.

But I had to move, wiggling slowly out of my riding clothes with my head in a neck brace as nurses dressed me in a hospital gown. Once I was properly dressed in thin material, I was whisked away to another room.

In this new, thankfully dark, room, a man worked quickly, just out of my sight to pull off my earrings and my necklace before placing me inside the big, dark machine that took pictures of my brain.

Apparently the doctors didn't see anything too worrying. A few minutes later, I felt the sweet release of my neck brace finally being removed. No swelling. No bruising. Just a fairly nice concussion.

After a couple more x-rays of my skull to make sure my brain wasn't going

to explode (because it still felt like that might be a possibility), I was released from the hospital. I wasn't given much instruction on how to take care of myself. Just that I shouldn't drive for two days and that I might want to skip a day of school.

I would be told later that all this had happened because the horse misjudged the jump and crashed through the back rail, sending us both to the ground. A freak accident that left me unconscious for two minutes. Even though I was wearing a helmet, those few seconds when everything went wrong have cost me so much. In the 24 hours after the accident, I had conversations with people that I can't remember at all.

In the week after the accident, headaches and nausea from pushing myself back into school too fast forced me out of school and took time away from my sport. Even now, months after the accident, my head still throbs if I've been staring at a screen for too long or if I try to do too much strenuous homework at once. I don't know when I will be fully recovered.

What I do know now is the risks that arise every time I get on a horse. I know that every time I buckle my helmet, I'm jeopardizing the health of my brain. I love my sport so much, and it's not something that I would give up easily, but if I ever get another concussion, then I might have to put my health before my hobby.



# Newspaper IAA Entry Form

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This form must be typed or printed clearly and taped or glued to the back of the entry.

No staples or paper clips. You may submit two entries per school for each category.

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Category entered Sports Column Category # 12

Type or print below names of all persons who created this entry:

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son's fears about the "bad people" that cell phones and not the world around them? How will America handle the violence took many lives the night before. "They

join together in love to stop the violence ISIS is inflicting on this world.