

## **White Oak Equestrian Center Plans Unveiled by Captain Mark Phillips**

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Standing in front of a large banner for the White Oak Golf & Equestrian Community in Polk County, Captain Mark Phillips talked about working with the developers on the community's new equestrian center. He also fielded questions. Some of the questions weren't about the facilities, as Phillips is also the Chef D'Equipe of the U.S. Equestrian team that will be competing in the upcoming Beijing Olympics. When questioned whether the United States team will win gold, he glanced at the panel of guests to his right and smiled. "We'll definitely beat the Irish," he said. The large crowd filled the tent with laughter. Phillips' talk was the final event in a weekend that was all about equestrian activities for White Oak. White Oak hosted the Calcutta, an annual fundraising dinner before the Block House Steeplechase this year, sponsored two races and revealed plans for its new equestrian center, in which construction is set to begin this fall on Phase I. The new center will include a 40-stall barn, outdoor arena, indoor arena, 12X turn out paddocks, a round pen, a social space/arena observation lounge and 15 miles of riding trails approved by Phillips. At the brunch on Sunday, White Oak officials wanted to get a feel for what the community desired in the new equestrian center. "We are building a community here and that's why it's important that we involve the community in the process," project manager Michael Carroll said. Each person who attended Sunday's event was given a survey with a variety of questions about their level of riding skill, what discipline they're interested in and even whether they own a horse. "These people really want to make equestrian a part of the community and that's why I'm excited," Phillips said. But he wasn't the only one excited on Sunday. The packed room listened intently as Phillips discussed plans for White Oak and talked about the U.S. Equestrian team. In 1972, he won gold medals at the Munich Olympics riding Great Ovation. In 1988, he announced his retirement from competition to concentrate on design and coaching. That same year, the Mark Phillips Equestrian Centre opened in Gleneagles Hotel in Scotland. He's coached the Spanish and British Olympic teams. He began coaching the U.S. team in 1993. At the Olympic games in Atlanta, the U.S. team won team silver and individual bronze medals and at the games in Sydney, they won team bronze and individual gold medals. Then in 2002, the U.S. team won gold at the World Equestrian games in Jerez for the first time in 28 years. With momentum building, Phillips told the crowd on Sunday that the U.S. is definitely one of five teams that could win gold in Beijing. "The event was a smashing success this weekend, as it reaffirmed the community's excitement to have Captain Phillips' involvement in the area," said White Oak Golf and Equestrian Community Director of Marketing Mark Wishart in a press release after the event. "When the facility is completed it will be a real feather in the cap for the greater Tryon area." The equestrian center is expected to open in 2010. Phase I should be completed in late 2009.



Captain Mark Phillips enjoys the brunch on 4-20-08