

# SPC YOUNG RIDERS

We spoke to 12-year-old Annika Guptan, who has been riding for the past 7 years. She shares with us more about her hobby and aspirations.

**H**aving started riding at the young age of five, Annika started getting into the depth of the sport by beginning with shorter intervals lessons. At the age of seven, she joined the Club as a member and thereafter the Riding Academy. Her main goal was to learn to ride various horses to gain more versatility as a rider.

At present, Annika trains thrice a week. To ensure minimal disruption to her academics, she plans her week, reserving time for her school homework and projects. Although, of late, her school schedule changes weekly, a strict timetable ensures that she's able to cope with both riding and school.

She recalls an interesting incident about Rascal, our riding school pony she is currently leasing for her lessons. "Before I started riding Rascal, I thought he was a slow pony. It's true when they say looks can be deceiving! But when I first rode him, I found out he's really good at jumping and dressage." She goes on to mention that Rascal has been one of her favourite horses. "He's really fun to jump, especially when you get him going fast. I'm working on his dressage, and we are trying to do leg yielding right now" she says.



Annika mentions that pre and post lessons are spent watching her fellow senior rider friends at their lessons. "There is always something to learn and share. I love how tight-knit our little community is, and I'm delighted to be a part of such a motivating community." Though training shows and competitions have taken a step back due to the pandemic, Annika can't wait for them all to begin. She tries to participate in as many monthly training shows as she could as she loves all the fun and hype centred on a friendly competition. Here's keeping our fingers crossed that things will go back to normal soon.

When asked if she has visited any riding clubs overseas, she quickly recalled her first SPC International exchange show with Malaysian riders in 2019 when she jumped 50cm in the junior category. "It was enjoyable, and I learnt a lot over the few days that the programme took place, not to mention the friends I made too. I learnt to judge how fast I needed to go to beat someone else's time – that motivated me to ride better."



Her advice to riders who are new to the sport is not to be afraid of falling off. "I fell off Sir James and was injured. And I was terrified to ride different horses after that. Now I look back and realise that I spent a lot of time in the same place where I could've been growing as a rider."

Annika aspires to want to try and get to a higher level. "I want to be able to do more complicated movements in dressage, and I want to be able to jump higher with Rascal and see if he can grow together with me." ■

***"One thing that I like about the Academy is that you get the opportunity to ride different horses."***

