

SINGAPORE **POLO CLUB**



**Spring International
Polo Tournament 2023**

A display of polo excellence from the field to the podium.

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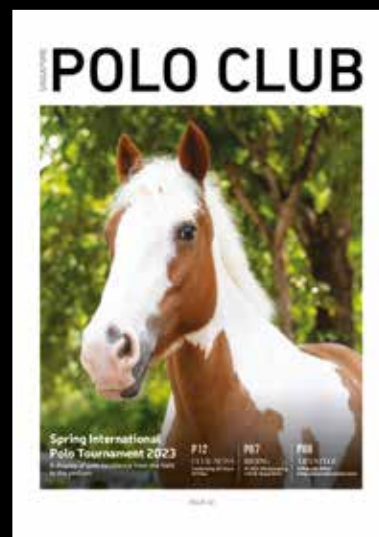
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SPC Young Rider, Nyrah Dhariwal

SPC Riding Academy's youth rider, 17-year-old Nyrah Dhariwal shares about her local and international riding journey. Having gotten onto the saddles at the age of 4, she reveals how she juggles school and her passion for riding.

When did you start riding and how old were you?

I lived in Upstate New York where there were a lot of stables and equestrianism was an extremely prevalent sport. I was 4 years old when I started riding. However, upon moving to Singapore at the age of 7, I took a break from riding. I restarted at SPC at the age of 11 and I have been riding ever since.

When did you join SPC and what do you like about the Club?

I joined SPC in 2017 when I was 11. Something I really appreciate about the club is the positive environment visible both in and outside the riding arena. During my lessons, I have formed great friendships with my fellow riders and during competitions or otherwise, I have always felt supported and motivated by my fellow riders and coaches.

How long do you train and how many days do you train in a week?

I currently train 4 times a week with 2 dressage lessons, 1 self-ride and 1 jump lesson.

How do you find time to juggle between school and riding?

I find riding to be a reprieve from the stresses of school. Especially being in 11th grade this year, my workload has increased immensely, relative to my stress levels. For the 45 minutes during my riding lessons, I feel like I am able to push all the stress from school to the back of my mind and focus myself entirely on my training. My lessons provide a nice rest from schoolwork that allows me to refocus and realign myself and I find that I often come out of my lessons more energised, happy and focused.

However, in the interest of my academic success, I have all my riding slots concentrated on the latter part of the week (Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday) so I can spend the remaining school days focused on my academics and other extra-curricular activities.

Any interesting experience/ encounter?

Every time I compete with a horse for dressage and have to braid their mane, I would have my mum come with me. Throughout the years, I have noticed a common trend - all the horses seemed to like her more than me! I got to admit that when I was younger, I was perplexed and maybe even slightly envious, but now I think it's lovely that they all like her so much and it's great to see my family bond with the horses.

Do you ride on your own horse or is there a favourite horse that you enjoy riding?

I currently lease CJ, but I have spent extensive time riding Rebell and Boris. While I believe every horse I have ridden has provided me with a valuable learning experience, Boris has a special place in my heart. I began riding him when I was in the 7th grade and continued riding him for about two years or so.



Prior to Boris, I had ridden various other horses and ponies but none for extended periods of time. On my first lesson with Boris, I could barely get him to trot for the entire duration of the lesson and I only managed to canter him for a short period of time before he broke into a trot.

“You should never limit yourself or deem anything impossible.”

However, I found myself elated to see that I was riding him again the next day. Boris is a challenging, stubborn horse and my time riding him taught me how to take control of the horse, not vice versa. He was stubborn and unrelenting, but after a certain point, so was I.

He was the first horse I ever competed with and I remember how surprised people were that he was competing in dressage. We ended up finishing with 67% in the Pony Club C Test. Boris was the one who helped me develop important technical skills, such as use of riding aids, that I have been able to apply to my experiences with other horses and that have helped me succeed with both Rebell and CJ.

Furthermore, he taught me that as a rider, you should never limit yourself or deem anything impossible. Nobody would have thought that Boris would compete at dressage but we did together and did so quite successfully! Adopting this mindset has really allowed me to flourish in my riding career and has allowed me to improve immensely with CJ.

Who is your idol in terms of riding?

My idol would probably be Charlotte Dujardin - I loved watching her compete when I was younger and I really respect her relationship with her horse, Valegro. However, while my personal focus in riding has been largely on dressage, I do enjoy watching the US show jumping team compete - specifically McLain Ward, Beezie Madden and Jessica Springsteen.

Have you participated in any training shows, interclub shows, nationals or world championships?

I have competed in both training and interclub shows. I currently compete at the Novice level.

“Taking risks and stepping out of your comfort zone are vital to progression in riding.”

Have you visited any riding clubs overseas or engaged in any riding activities? Tell us about the experience.

My dad and I have a tradition where we try to go riding in every country we visit. When we go back to the US during the summer break, I usually take up riding lessons in my hometown, but otherwise I've gone trail riding in some pretty cool countries. The most memorable would probably have to be Iceland and Tanzania.

In Iceland, I had the wonderful opportunity to ride an Icelandic horse in the beautiful, snowy landscape of the countryside. Icelandic horses have a fifth gait named the tölt, which is essentially the pace of a trot without its usual bounciness - it was super fun to experience. We also got to gallop the horses a couple of times, which was exciting in our given terrain.



Competition moments with CJ



With Icelandic horses

During our visit to Tanzania, my dad and I went on a trail ride and we got to ride up close to a herd of zebras grazing! It was so surreal to be so near to them outside of a motorized vehicle. It was also lovely walking through the Tanzanian terrain - at the end of the trail we got to gallop through the grassland. While my most memorable experiences riding abroad have been in Tanzania and Iceland, I have also ridden in a variety of other countries, such as Australia, Turkey, New Zealand and India. I hope I will be able to come across similar opportunities to ride in Spain and Morocco when I visit this summer.

What's your advice for someone intending to take up riding?

Don't hesitate at all! Horse riding is such a fun sport and teaches you many valuable skills you may apply to other aspects of your life such as communication and planning skills. Furthermore, your mindset is key to your success in horse riding. If you let fear or doubt overtake you, you will never be able to improve. Taking risks and stepping out of your comfort zone are vital to progression in riding. Like every sport, there are highs and lows, and it's important to remember that each horse is different and you, as a rider, are working with animals. Don't beat yourself up after a bad lesson, but understand where you have opportunities to improve and take criticism as a gateway through which you may progress.

What are your future plans and ambitions, where do you see yourself?

I am planning on attending college in the United States in 2024 upon graduation, majoring in International Relations with a concentration in Middle Eastern studies. I would like to pursue a career in the US State Department, eventually holding the rank of ambassador. I am interested in international relations because I have an immense interest in exploring new cultures and the relationships between various nations. Furthermore, I have completed ample research and academic papers on the relationships pertaining to the Middle East & North Africa. I also speak 8 languages: English, Hindi, Punjabi, Spanish and Italian fluently and am currently studying French, Arabic and Farsi. While my interests and focuses moving forward will be largely academic based, it would be lovely to continue to have opportunities to ride in the US.