

Interview with Reem Al-Kuthairi, former elite athlete and now working in the medical education department at Aspetar

• Could you introduce yourself?

I am Reem Al-Kuthairi. A former senior coach and supervisor in Aspire. A former Handball player with the Qatar national team. The first Qatari female with a microlight sport pilot license. Adventurer and a recreational athlete.

• What sports do you practice?

I used to play handball with the national team. Currently, practicing different types of recreational sports in Qatar and abroad. For instance: working out in the gym 4-5 times a week focusing on the strength part. Running, biking and kayaking 2-3 times a week for my cardio part. I fly my own microlight sport aircraft for leisure and am working on my second sport pilot license for a gyrocopter aircraft. I also travel to practice other sports like skiing, hiking, paragliding and sport flying to name a few.

• What changed during the COVID-19 pandemic?

A lot changed. I can't be as active as I used to be. This was a whole new experience and my plan was not to give up and adapt to the situation.

• How did you deal with this practically?

The first thing was to plan my workout routine and the target was to at least maintain my strength and fitness levels. So, I downloaded a great app (SWEAT) with a virtual coach and started my home-based workout using kettlebells, dumbbells and bodyweight as my tools as well as HIIT exercises. The result was great! I could actually build some muscles and my fitness is still great too. I have also done some outdoor biking 2-3 times a week for an hour.

And since I'm flying my own sport microlight aircraft, the precautionary measures didn't stop me flying. So, I could fly solo as long as the weather was good (since this is a weather dependent sport). The good thing is I had more opportunity to fly during this time.

• And how did you deal with this mentally?

It was very difficult for me to accept the change mentally at the beginning. However, as mentioned earlier I made plans that kept me busy as much as possible. And after about two weeks I started to adapt, especially when I started to see positive results in my workout and was able to fly more often than I used to, before the outbreak, which made me much better and kept me motivated.

• Where did you get your information about COVID-19?

I get it through some legit social media sources and websites like Aspetar.

- **Did the information reassure you? Or make you more worried?**

To be honest I was worried at first about getting the virus as this could affect in particular my active lifestyle. But now, since I got used to the precautionary measures, I started to get that sense of normality with the new way of life.

- **Have you noticed a change in the way you deal with the situation as the pandemic has evolved?**

Yes. Although it didn't affect my previously mentioned plans as they are not against any measure, we are dealing with a serious pandemic and the rest of the time we are more at home, something we never used to be. This shall continue for a while until everything gets back to normal gradually.

- **What advice would you give to others?**

Keep doing everything you like. Stay active and positive but never forget to follow all the precautionary measures. We will meet again soon.

