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Horse riding is in Noella Angel’s blood.

Her father was a professional who qualified for two Olympic teams, while her mother is a lifelong rider and now instructor.

Noella, 27, was diagnosed with arterial vascular malformation as a child, also known as Klippel-Trenaunay syndrome, which affects the development of blood vessels, soft tissues and bones.

For Noella, it’s impacted the mobility of her right leg, spending the last 17 years of her life on crutches.

As she went through her younger years and into adulthood, enduring treatment and over 100 embolisations, horse riding was the constant in her life.

“Horse riding has been the one thing over my lifetime that’s been able to adapt with my disability,” Noella said.

Noella is a Pare Equestrian dressage rider, and has ridden competitively in Para and able bodied events for many years, including national competitions. She was on the verge of competing at an international competition at the start of 2018, until her horse went lame.

In the same year, she had a fall while washing her mum’s dog and fractured her femur, and subsequently spent three months in hospital while doctors tried to work out how to manage the injury.

“When I broke my leg my whole world kind of stopped.

“Three months on your backside means everything deteriorates, I lost all my basic muscle tone so walking has been a real struggle for the last couple of years.”

Noella recently returned home to South Australia, after a stint living in Melbourne, and she has accessed funding from the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) to assist with getting back into riding.

She now has funding for specialised crutches, and a new wheelchair for days where she is fatigued. She also has funding for therapists to help build her strength back up, and a support worker who helps her get to and from her horse’s stable and helps prepare her for riding.

Noella says she is most exciting for the funding towards a new adaptable horse float that will be able to take her mobility scooter and other needs to events around the country.

“Now that I have funding, it’s been a huge change.

“The NDIS has provided me with support I need to go riding without relying on my family. I’m quite an independent person but it’s given me even more independence which has been great.”

With coronavirus restrictions easing, and life somewhat returning to normal for many South Australians, Noella’s next goal is to ramp up her riding.

“Now I’m back trying to rebuild, in the coming months I want to work on building my fitness again and get back to competitions.”

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