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VIRGIN ATLANTIC Gliding SCHOLARSHIP 2024.

It all started with an, “Err...Lemme give it a go” - this was me contemplating in my thoughts anxiously sat on my computer looking at the application window, fearing to apply for this opportunity as I feared that it was going to be competitive (which it was). There I was trying to use my passion to battle my fears and, as always, passion and determination always wins. I finally printed the application questions, took me some time to fill them in because I was as careful as possible in every word I wrote down, then I scanned it and sent it through. I immediately got an automatic email telling me that my application had been received and that I would be contacted to know if I made it through from the 20th – 26th of February and if not, I should just know I was not successful this year. I took this with a hopeful heart that I may make it through because of how careful I was making the application.

It has been two weeks since I made my application and the next week was to me, “The week of fate” in which would determine if I made it. From the from the 20th – 26th my anxiety levels were above the roof as I really needed this scholarship but feared losing it. The 26th passed and I still did not receive any email. I just had to accept my fate, which was exceedingly difficult if anyone asked me because I knew how badly I needed this scholarship, but again, I just had to face the harsh reality and hope to do better next year.

FastForward to the next month, on March 20th of the blues, I received an email informing me that I have been invited to an interview at the Air pilots House. I was overly excited! And I Immediately started preparing for my interview right away. I got to my squadron that evening and told my Officer Commanding about my interview, and he started coaching me on how to go about answering the interview questions. He really put a lot of effort into making sure I aced the interview.

The day of the interview came, and I had stayed all night preparing, I was feeling very hopeful that I would do well in the interview. I finally found myself in the interview room with my two interviewers, I found myself waffling a lot about my passion of becoming an airline pilot and I also carefully answered all the questions they threw at me, and they were very smart and made the interview quite friendly. Even at that, I found myself still shaking in fear of messing up but on the outside, I still had to maintain my composure so that they would not sense it. The interview was concluded, and I still felt that I did not say enough as I planned to. I went home telling thinking to myself that, “I should have said this..., I should have added that....” The next week was also fueled with anxiety yet again and I kept checking my emails every day hoping to receive feedback from the Air Pilots. On the 3rd of May I was just on my phone when I saw the pop-up notification saying, “Thank you for attending your interview with us...” I immediately just felt sad because successful email would often have a “congratulations” before the context of the message and so I did not even bother opening the full email and I just carried on with what I was doing initially. After 3 hours I finally

summoned the courage to open the email and immediately, my eyes caught the “Congratulations!!” I could not help but scream aloud so that everyone at home could hear me!

I was placed at London Gliding Club, Dunstable. I arrived in the morning then met my fellow scholarship winners, it felt so good being surrounded by people who share the same dreams and aspirations as you. We all had fun talking about our reactions to the successful email, our love for aviation and how it started and what routes we were going to embark on. We then had an initial briefing and all the safety measures, then we were taught how to do a walk-round on the aircraft and we were also educated on the various components of the instrument panel. We had lunch and we were ready to kick off with our first flying lesson in the air!

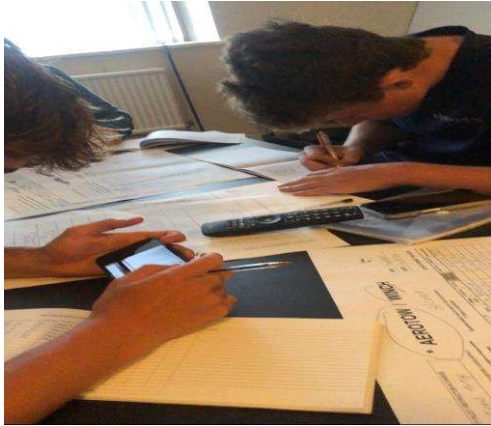
I got into the aircraft with my instructor, Trevor. M after doing some pre-boarding checks on the aircraft which involved checks on Airframe, Ballasts, Controls, Dollies, Environment (ABCDEs) all in the aim to make sure the aircraft is fit to fly. When we got in, we performed our pre-flight checks, The CBSIFTBCEs and everything was in order, and we were ready for takeoff by aerotow.



The view from the cockpit before I closed the canopy again after my checks.

“Speed’s live,” I joyfully said to my instructor as I felt like an airline pilot seeing the aircraft’s speed indicator showing the live speed for the first time! We rotated off the field and then started an unsteady ascent and then dizziness kicked in because my body was trying to adapt to this new exhilarating experience and felt okay after some time mid-flight. And then I started doing some basic flight controls and then I realized how important rudders were when rowing – I only flew airliners on Microsoft Flight Simulator 2020 I always used autopilot, so I never knew how important rudders were while airborne. So, it took me that flight to adapt to that and my instructor was very patient and made me feel at ease while learning. We finished with the basic controls which were not new to me apart from using the rudders to row. We landed and it was my friend’s turn to take his own flight then went to do some groundcrew work and when he came back from his flight, it was my turn to have my last flight for the day and it went perfectly well. We all rounded up for the day

after my friend was done with his second flight. Then we all went to get a debrief with our instructors and then logged our first hours!



After that, me and my fellow scholarship winners who immediately became my friends had a very splendid evening while chatting about our flight experiences.

Throughout the week we engaged in some more flying lessons entailing how to operate the aircraft during a launch, how to use thermals, how to make a landing with the airbrakes and we also flew some circuits, and I was also lucky to get an entire hour of flight on my final flight of the course at the end of that week.

We had the best week ever learning how to fly, gaining experience, and making lifelong friends. I can say I am noticeably confident about flying a glider!



Happily cruising at 52 knots.

Honestly, this scholarship was a 3 in 1 if you ask me because we got some air traffic control, ground crew and the main flying. I am grateful to have learnt how to fly with my friends who were incredibly supportive and all of us took the responsibility of looking out for one another.



And for anyone reading this wondering on how to go about on the interview here are some tips on my own personal experience:

- Have a career plan which you will discuss with the Air Pilots during the interview.
- Express your deep passion for aviation.
- Tell them the things you do concurrently that build towards achieving your dreams of becoming a pilot.
- Learn a lot about the company, get involved as much as you can.
- Talk about your skills and achievements.
- Learn a lot about Gliders and how they fly!

Lastly, I want to say that this was the best experience I have ever had thanks to my squadron (56 squadron) for preparing me for the interview, my instructor who was very patient and keen to help and London Gliding Club for granting the facilities for the flight training and making everything possible. I also want to use this opportunity to give special thanks to Angie Rodriguez of the Air

Pilots for being so kind, understanding, hardworking and patient with me throughout the entire process from the application stage up to this very write up. I then want to express my grand gratitude to the Honorable Company of Air Pilots for providing this scholarship opportunity and my very heart-felt appreciation, thanks and gratitude to Virgin Atlantic for sponsoring my flight training and I am glad to let you know that, in extreme fulfillment for your sponsorship, I would be very committed to flying of the Airline when I become a pilot in the nearest future – Virgin Atlantic has just earned a future pilot with them in the nearest future for marking an important moment in my life by making my first flight possible!

Thank you to everyone who was involved including you reading this write up and I hope you achieve your dreams, and it is completely okay to feel nervous at times but always remember to maintain your composure and remember to always give it a try, put in your best effort, and be determined even if it seems like the entire world is competing with you.

