

Written by John Crumlish
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2013 began in honorable style for Lisa Ecker, who on Jan. 1 was voted Austria's female Gymnast of the Year for 2012. Pictured: Ecker at Austria's national championships in November.

2013 began in honorable style for **Lisa Ecker**, who on Jan. 1 was voted Austria's female Gymnast of the Year for 2012. Ecker earned the Austrian national all-around title and her first FIG Challenger Cup medal last fall, and now looks ahead to the challenges she will face in the new year.

Born Sept. 19, 1992, in Linz, Ecker trains under coaches **Johanna Gratt**, **Katharina Wieser** and **Julia Nica**

. Ecker, who competed at the past three world championships, placed second on floor exercise and eighth on uneven bars at last November's FIG Challenge Cup of Ostrava, Czech Republic.

Ecker's recent achievements have compensated for inconsistency and injury that hampered her in 2010 and 2011, said Austrian Gymnastics Federation Secretary General **Robert Labner**.

"Lisa totally botched her performance at the 2010 Worlds in Rotterdam and also had some mistakes at the 2011 Worlds in Tokyo," Labner said. "Directly following Tokyo she suffered a torn ACL, and therefore she missed the Austrian run for the one available spot at the (2012) Olympics. Lisa started to rebuild her fitness very carefully."

Ecker proved herself anew in November 2012, when she captured two domestic all-around titles and her first FIG Challenger Cup medal.

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"Many thought that Lisa would not come back," Labner said. "So the surprise was all the greater when she finished her comeback competition at Upper Austrian regional championships on November 4 with a seriously judged 54.995 all-around total, which was the highest ever by an Austrian gymnast. She won the Austrian championships two weeks later, although she had some mistakes there. The Austrian gymnastics community was very impressed with Lisa's comeback. She now seems much more mature and determined than before."

In this IG Online interview, the resolute Ecker reviews her past and assesses her future competitive prospects.

IG: What do you think helped you achieve so much success in 2012?

LE: Concerning my success, there are a couple of things which have to work together. You have to have a lot of discipline and keep your motivation high all the time, and you have to work really hard, giving everything you have! You must be willing to give up most of your spare time in order to achieve things like that. Making sacrifices is very important. But I think the most important thing is to have a real good supporting team - coach, doctor, physiotherapist and especially family.



Ecker and her coach at November's Austrian championships

IG: What are your thoughts on competing at the top level when you are no longer a teenager? What is the benefit to you of doing gymnastics in your 20s?

LE: My benefit of doing gymnastics in my 20s is that I've got a lot of experience. Knowing exactly what my body can do and how to deal with injuries give me a big advantage.

IG: How much time away from the gym have you had during the holiday season?

LE: I had one week off. So I had the chance to live a normal life for a couple of days, spending time with friends and going out, but also regenerating my body and mind. I'm looking forward to training again and preparing for the European championships (in Moscow in April).

IG: How, where and with whom did you celebrate Christmas and New Year's Eve?

LE: I celebrated in a very traditional way with my family and my boyfriend at home. We had a little Christmas tree and I got a lot of presents. I just love Christmas. On New Year's Eve I was with my best friend in Linz and some other very good friends. We watched the fireworks and had a lot of fun.

IG: What are your goals and resolutions for 2013 in the gym, and in your outside life?

LE: Well, I would say being good at school is one goal. But on the other hand I will do everything to be part of the European and World Championships. In the gym I will try to avoid any injuries by being very focused. I will try to work even harder, because otherwise my main goal, the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio, will not be accessible.