



Kanye West falls under scrutiny following recent controversy



Marching band concludes season at regional contest



Political polarization challenges family bonds



# THE saratoga falcon

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Junior Yashom Kapoor (left) whizzes past an opponent at the Sacramento Raceway.

Courtesy of YASHOM KAPOOR

## Racist quad incident spurs local outrage

BY KathyWang

Teachers, students, and parents alike are outraged after a Black doll was found hanging from a noose on a tree in the main quad on the morning of Sunday, Nov. 13. Similar incidents occurred at around the same time at Redwood Middle and Prospect High School.

“This is a horrible display of racism and hate that is condemned by our school,” principal Greg Louie said. “It is a direct violation of our values of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging.”

Based on security camera footage, the district believes that the incident occurred around 9:15 p.m. on Friday, Nov. 11, according to an email sent by superintendent Bill Sanderson. The school is working to try to identify suspects and is using security camera footage.

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PRINCIPAL Greg Louie

In the email, Sanderson emphasized that the “horrific incident” is not representative of the students in the school and district.

Currently, assistant principal Brian Thompson is working with the Sheriff’s Department to identify and apprehend the individuals. Various classes, including Media Arts, have created anti-hate posters, which have been posted throughout hallways and classrooms.

This event preceded the school’s anti-bullying week that began on Nov. 14. Louie said that prevention of these types of incidents is difficult as the campus is open to the community following school hours.

However, the administration says it will continue to stay vigilant against hate and racism while promoting longstanding school values of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging. ♦

## Go-kart driver races on national circuit

BY EricShi & DanielWu

Foot pressing the gas pedal to the floor, junior Yashom Kapoor zipped around the corners of the Prairie City Karting Track in Sacramento. With a line of karts closing in on him like a pack of wolves, Kapoor desperately fended them off until the last lap, where he was eventually overtaken, finishing the race in fifth place and third overall in the championship.

Although Kapoor felt slightly dismayed at his placement in the determining race for the KA100 Senior Championship at Prairie City, which occurred on Nov. 13 — given that he was tied for second with a chance at securing first — he still felt a sense of satisfaction, perhaps even joy, bubbling through him.

To Kapoor, the adrenaline-inducing nature of the race and the feeling of constantly pushing himself to achieve higher speeds is the ultimate reward.

While many students have some prior experience with go-karts, be it at Great

America or elsewhere, Kapoor races at a professional caliber, driving go-karts no bigger than a bathtub at up to 80 miles per hour.

Kart racing, or karting, is an unconventional motorsport where competitors race on road circuits in open four-wheeled vehicles known as karts or go-karts. Karting first rose to popularity in America during the 1960s after race car builder Art Ingels created the first go-kart in Los Angeles, with the first organized race taking place in 1957 in the parking lot of the Rose Bowl stadium in Pasadena.

### Kapoor’s go-karting career timeline

Kapoor discovered his love for karting at age 7 when he visited Zig-E’s Funland, an amusement park located in Indiana, where he used to live. The park featured a miniature go-karting track with karts that ran at a measly maximum speed of 15 miles per hour. Although slow, the experience served as the gateway to Kapoor’s

karting career.

“At the time, I was too small to drive, so I ended up sitting next to my dad while he drove,” Kapoor said. “Even so, it was incredibly fun and I kept nagging at my dad to go again.”

Soon after, Kapoor’s family discovered a go-karting track in South Bend, Indiana. Because Kapoor was too small to drive the bigger karts that run at higher speeds, he started off by driving “mini-karts” with his younger sister, sophomore Yana Kapoor.

“Originally, karting was meant as a fun hobby for the family on the weekends, but I knew from the start that I wanted to take it competitively,” Kapoor said.

At 8, Kapoor began his competitive karting career. Unlike most competitive sports that have a national organization, karting comprises multiple regional series spread across the U.S.

>> GO-KARTING on pg. 17



Kapoor

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## Fall play attendance recovers

BY JonnyLuo & DanielWu

On the evening of Nov. 12, the lights dimmed, the curtains opened and the actors on stage danced in the darkness around a burning cauldron. The girls onstage laughed merrily, and as the dancing concluded, the audience erupted in resounding applause and cheers as they were treated to the opening scene of this year’s fall play, “The Crucible.” Over 240 people attended opening night, dwarfing last year’s show (which only drew around 130 people). The play was also performed on Nov. 13, 17, 18 and 19.

“The Crucible” is a play written in 1953 by Arthur Miller and based on the 1692 Salem Witch Trials. It serves as a reminder about the dangers of McCarthyism and the Second Red Scare, a period of mass hysteria around suspected communist sympathizers in the 1950s that was just ending during the time of the play’s release. The play follows a few characters and their responses to accusations of witchcraft in Salem.

Drama teacher Ben Brotzman, who directed the play, said he was happy with the turnout and performance on opening night.

>> CRUCIBLE on pg. 12

## The need for speed: Junior races go-karts at an elite level

November 20, 2022 — by [Eric Shi](#) and [Daniel Wu](#)

*Junior Yashom Kapoor's unique path in Go-Karting, a relatively niche extreme sport, and his never-ending hunt for speed, adrenaline and victory.*

Foot firmly pressing the gas pedal to the floor, junior Yashom Kapoor zipped around the corners of the Prairie City Karting Track in Sacramento. With a line of karts closing in on him like a pack of hungry wolves, Kapoor desperately fended them off until the last lap, where he was eventually overtaken, finishing the race in fifth place and third overall in the championship.

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Soon after, Kapoor's family discovered a go-karting track in South Bend, Indiana. Because Kapoor was too small to drive the bigger karts that run at higher speeds, he started off by driving "mini-karts" with his younger sister, sophomore Yana Kapoor.

"Originally, karting was meant as a fun hobby for the family on the weekends, but I knew from the start that I wanted to take it competitively," Kapoor said.

At 8, Kapoor began his competitive karting career. Unlike most competitive sports that have a national organization, karting comprises multiple regional series spread across the U.S. After joining the Michiana Raceway Park (MRP) Championship series, a regional racing series at Michiana Raceway Park in Indiana, Kapoor began racing in the sportsman class, which caters to racers between ages 8 to 12, with slightly smaller and slower karts that run at a maximum speed of 50 miles per hour.

Attending races across the Midwest, Kapoor gained valuable experience and memories. Since races were often located at tracks far from home — sometimes in neighboring states — he frequently had to rise as early as 4 a.m. to travel to them. Kapoor recalls driving to races with his father and watching the sunrise, an experience he cherishes as a highlight of his childhood.

"It's the little moments like these that really helped me bond with my father. He's been with me every step of this journey and I'm truly so thankful," Kapoor said.



Photo by [Yashom Kapoor](#)

***Kapoor (in front) rounds a sharp corner with another racer following close behind.***

Turning 10, Kapoor moved up from sportsman into the mini class, which proved to be the ultimate crucible of his karting career. Surrounded by highly skilled drivers, he struggled tremendously, battling wheel-to-wheel during races through every lap and corner. As a result of the pressure, he remembers constantly crashing or spinning off the track.

“I just didn’t have a lot of good performances,” he said. “I struggled to keep pace with the other drivers, and when I focused too much on closing the gap I often lost control and would go spinning off into the tire barriers.”

During his struggle in the mini class, Kapoor was able to develop his driving style. In motorsports, a variety of tactics are employed by different drivers. Some drivers demonstrate a “spontaneous and reckless” style, braking late in corners and turning hard to maximize speed on straights, while other racers drive in a more “fluid” manner, balancing speed in both straights and corners.

“I realized I was utilizing a very aggressive driving style with tons of dive-bombing in the corners,” Kapoor said. “Over the years, I’ve adapted it to follow a more hybrid approach, and I realized in some cases I drove too aggressively, which was likely why I spun off the track so often.”

A major difficulty Kapoor faces in the karts is finding the perfect racing line. The racing line is the optimal path around a track where drivers turn the least in order to maintain speed, and Kapoor tries to stay close to this line by first hugging the outer edge of the track before swinging in and touching the “apex,” or inside edge, of the turn and swooping back to the outside.

Karting is greatly influenced by track layouts. Kapoor races most often at the Sonoma Raceway and Sacramento Raceway. He has found that the Sacramento track requires more aggression with harsh braking in the corners and plenty of oversteer, where a kart turns by more than the amount commanded by the driver. On the other hand, the Sonoma Raceway runs smoother with understeer and even, straight-line braking.

After moving to California in 8th grade, he joined his first karting team, [SpeedSense Motorsports](#), based in Sacramento. Kapoor started in the junior class. However, following a growth spurt at around age 14, he exceeded the height requirement for the junior karts and prematurely advanced into the senior class, as opposed to standard advancing age of 15.

“I went from competing with racers around my age to people in their racing prime: late teens and early 20s,” Kapoor said

Despite the major step up, Kapoor found the transition less daunting compared to his jump from sportsman to mini. He attributed this to having a team he could practice and improve with, along with coaches who helped point out mistakes in his driving style. Access to advanced telemetry data to analyze past races and a personal mechanic helped as well.

### **A typical race**

Unlike many sporting events, which last at most a few hours, a single racing event often takes place over the course of several days, with sessions of free practice that allow drivers to get a feel of the track and understand how to achieve the best possible racing line.

Following the practices are qualifying races, where drivers compete to set the fastest lap times in order to start higher up on the grid during the actual race. A typical karting race consists of around 18 laps and lasts about 20 minutes. Often, drivers of multiple categories, from sportsman to senior, race on the same day, albeit in different events.

On race day, drivers arrive at the track pit lane and conduct maintenance work including cleaning and repairing engine components, checking brake pads and swapping old tires. Once ready, drivers proceed onto the track and heat the tires on their karts by driving slowly. Warm tires offer better grip, which in turn allows drivers to maneuver at higher speeds on the track.

Similar to the popular American motorsports series National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing ([NASCAR](#)), kart races follow a rolling start, where cars are already moving slowly on the track before the race begins. This differs from motorsports series such as Formula 1, which utilize standing starts with cars stationary in a grid pattern.

Once the green flag is waved, signifying the start of the race, adrenaline fills Kapoor’s veins as he and his competitors floor the pedals and jockey about to gain positions.

Lap after lap, the leaderboard shifts while racers fight fiercely for their spot on the podium. As the race goes on, Kapoor faces another challenge: the mental and physical grit required to keep his feet pressed against the gas pedal, his hands tightly gripped on the steering wheel and his burning hot engine running for the grueling 20 minutes of racing. All of this for just one, of many, races in a single event.

Sometimes, drivers may get too aggressive and drive unsafely, a behavior that Kapoor strongly discourages.

“Especially with teammates, you’ll see some dirty driving on the track, where the driver behind swerves erratically to hold off the rest of the pack,” Kapoor said. “It doesn’t help anybody. Everyone ends up bunching together and bumping around, and it just makes the experience not as enjoyable.”

Driving in at up to 80 miles per hour just inches off the ground in an open kart without seatbelts is no laughing matter, and safety is a paramount concern. Numerous hazards are present on the track from imperfections in the asphalt to collisions with other drivers.

Kapoor dons a variety of safety gear, including a helmet, rib cage protector, neck brace and fire retardant suit and shoes. Over the eight years of his karting experience, Kapoor luckily has never suffered a major accident.

Along with a plethora of basic safety gear, individuality on the track is a major priority to Kapoor and many other racers. Sporting a vibrant orange kart and sharp black race suit as per Speedsense Motorsports livery, Kapoor takes standing out on the track quite seriously.

“Being visible is important for a number of reasons. For one, it allows our coaches to spot us and keep track of our positions. In addition, when races are filmed, it’s fun to rewatch footage and spot where you are,” Kapoor said.

Kapoor said that racers meticulously design and modify their gear to suit their liking. He currently uses a blank white helmet but looks forward to designing a unique and visually-striking pattern in the near future.

Although Kapoor has never won a race, he has reached the podium places a number of times, including a race on Oct 22., at the Prairie City Karting Track, where he placed second.

Having attended over 100 races in seven states, Kapoor has had a fair share of memorable races. He is most proud of his performance at the Rok Fest West 2022 race.

Even though it was on one of Kapoor’s home tracks, the event was a national race, meaning all of the racers brought their A-game to the track. As a result of crashing out in the first pre final race, Kapoor ended up with a lower starting place, a major disadvantage given the fierce competition. However, Kapoor’s many hours spent practicing on the track came through and allowed him to hold his pace better than the other racers once the track cooled.

By the time Kapoor reached the eight kart lead pack, he picked them off one by one, moving from 13th to 5th place. “It was one of my best performances of the year,” Kapoor said.

### **Challenges of being a go-kart racer**

Off the track, Kapoor faces other challenges such as time management. Because karting races take place over a series of days, he often has to skip school to attend these events that generally occur weekly during the peak of the racing season. This complicates his schedule, which is already packed with AP courses.

These time management issues are exacerbated by the fact that the karting track he races on is in Sonoma and practices are held weekly in Sacramento. Both of these locations require on average two hours of driving to get there. Occasionally, when practices are long enough, he has to rent a hotel and stay in Sacramento overnight.

Along with scheduling challenges, the cost of karting is high. Although not as expensive as racing with actual cars, karting is still a significant investment, meaning only the most dedicated racers who are willing to put in the cash can move up to the advanced leagues.

“The biggest bottleneck and probably why karting isn’t super popular is the economics of it,” Kapoor said. “A kart alone costs \$10,000 and not everyone has that type of money sitting around.”

### **Life lessons from racing**

For Kapoor, racing is not only an extreme sport, but also a way to think about life.

On the track, where the competition is just as unforgiving as the rocky asphalt, opportunities to move up the ranks are few and far between. For the duration of the race, racers find themselves desperately fighting and looking for an open window to climb the ranks on the leaderboard, creating short-lived opportunities, if any, to take advantage of.

“If an opportunity to overtake someone opens up, I’d have to go for it because the problem is that if it closes, it could take three, four or five more laps for the opportunity to open back up,” Kapoor said.

In the end, no matter where he ends up on the scoreboard, Kapoor finds joy in the fierce competition. For him, the feeling of pushing himself to go faster and faster each race, striving to beat the next kart in front of him, and never settling for anything but the waving checkered flag is what makes go-karting so enjoyable.

“To put it simply, racing is just a way to think about real life. It’s not only a hobby that I’m willing to dedicate hours to, but it is also something I can always relate to in real life, because if you really think about it, life is just another type of race,” Kapoor said.

## **About the contributors**

### Daniel Wu



Daniel Wu, Class of '24, is one of the News Editors of the Falcon's 2023-24 staff. Along with serving as an Entertainment Editor for the 2022-23 staff, he was a Reporter and Layout Artist for the 2021-22 staff. He has authored in-depth stories about infrastructure, profiles on niche sports, and news stories localizing global events such as the Russia-Ukraine War.