

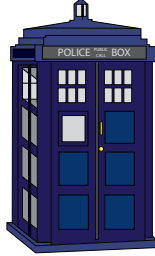


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Twins 4
The Win



Students discuss British obsessions

THE saratogafalcon



Saratoga High School >> Saratoga, CA
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New P.E. policy ignites controversy



Courtesy of KRISTEN ZUNG



FALCON // NOY SHAKED



FALCON // WREN SUTTERFIELD



FALCON // WREN SUTTERFIELD

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Senior Michael Cheung has participated in marching band since his freshman year; P.E. instructor Yuko Aoki demonstrates weight-lifting technique; at the board meeting on Oct. 2, senior Joyce Wang, another member of the marching band, expresses her concerns regarding the new policy; at the same meeting, parents and other community members listen.

BY McKenna Galvin & Michelle Shu

Because of a school district policy that was proposed last June, freshmen starting with the class of 2017 will no longer be able to use marching band or sports participation to exempt themselves from taking the required full year of P.E.

As more students, parents, teachers and coaches have learned about the proposed change, they have expressed concern that it would cut participation in activities like band and sports and necessitate freshmen having to take

seven classes.

Because this policy, effective next year, only affects freshmen, sophomores and upperclassmen will still be able to fulfill the remaining 10 P.E. credits required for graduation through participation in a sport or marching band.

Changes to freshman curriculum

According to principal Paul Robinson, the need for a required year-long freshman P.E. class is a result of the school's current noncompliance with state standards.

"[The policy] is designed to align with Education Code and still meet our

local graduation requirements," Robinson said. "We currently give P.E. credit for classes that don't meet today's state standards. This has to change, or we could suffer penalties from Sacramento."

To comply with these standards, the current Health class will be integrated into the P.E. curriculum and will be no longer offered as a semester-long freshman class. Consequently, the school will remove the driver's education portion of the course. This means that starting next year, students will have to

>> **BAND PE** on pg. 7

A breakdown of the policy

What is it?

The new policy means that freshmen in marching band or sports will no longer be exempt from taking P.E.

Will the P.E. course change?

Yes, the current Health class will be integrated into the new freshman P.E. course.

Whom does it impact?

All freshmen starting with the class of 2017. One exception: students in ISPE (Independent Study P.E.) can earn P.E. credit but must still fulfill Health requirements.

Why was this policy created?

According to principal Paul Robinson, the marching band and sports programs do not comply with state P.E. standards.

What are the repercussions?

Among other consequences, students interested in driving will now have to take and pay for their own 30-hour Driver's Ed class.

Is it finalized?

The proposal will be submitted to superintendent Bob Mistele on Nov. 1 and is expected to be finalized by early March.

PROPOSITIONS

Statewide ballot measures to affect district's revenue

BY Sabrina Chen & Maya Ravichandran

With all the hype that comes with the impending presidential election, students and parents often tend to forget about changes that will affect them the most in their immediate community.

Two propositions, 30 and 38, are scheduled to be voted in November. The outcome of these measures will greatly affect the California's education system.

The first, Proposition 30, is supported by Gov. Jerry Brown. This measure temporarily raises the sales and use tax and the personal income tax on the wealthy and will raise about \$9 billion in the 2012-13 school year.

The second measure, Proposition 38, is primarily supported Molly Munger, a wealthy attorney. This measure increases personal income tax starting in 2013 and

will raise an estimated \$5 billion for the 2012-13 school year.

If both measures pass, the one with the higher percentage of votes will be put into action. Though both measures would benefit the school, superintendent Bob Mistele said the school board supports Prop 38 more.

"It is pretty clear that Prop 38 provides more direct money to public education," Mistele said. "It is secured for a longer period of time directed just to K-12 schools."

However, because the measures are so close in description, many voters might not vote for either.

"I think it would have been better and easier for people to understand if only one of them prevailed and one of them was on the ballot," Mistele said. "But

>> **MEASURE 30 & 38** on pg. 7

HOMECOMING

Seniors find 'fountain of spirit'

BY Sierra Smith

In a 40-minute performance that featured 10 dances, the destruction of an iPhone and a choir song, the class of 2013 certainly impressed in their "Pirates of the Caribbean"-themed quest to find the "fountain of school spirit" during their quad day performance on Oct. 12.

"We all put a lot of time and work into our quad day this year because we wanted to be remembered as the best senior class," said senior Joanne Sturge, who played the head British soldier in the skit.

The senior class began planning their skit the weekend after themes were announced and held regular practices up until performance day, the last one being at 6:15 a.m. on Oct. 12. Construction of decorations also started right away at multiple locations, one being senior Olivia Whiting's house.

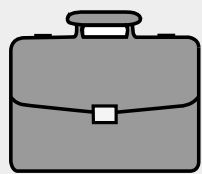
"People made the time to come over every weekend leading up to Homecoming from 10 a.m. to around 6 p.m. usually," Whiting said. "They worked so hard and made so much progress every week. I knew it would look amazing."

The two ships that served as centerpieces on the quad steps took about 120 hours to build and every minute of move-in to assemble.

The senior class also had its largest number of participants this year, a diverse group that allowed them to include a range of cultural dances in their skit such as a Korean dance and an Indian dance.

The "Pirates of the Caribbean"-themed script was written and edited by a group of about 23 students who emphasized working together and highlighting

>> **QUAD DAY** on pg. 4



news
>> briefs

Mascot Freddie the Falcon back in action

Four students, their identities kept a secret, were chosen by spirit commissioner Jaya Narasimhan and assistant principal Kerry Mohnike to play the role of Freddie the Falcon, the school mascot. Tryouts for Freddie the Falcon were on Sept. 20 and 21.

"We wanted to make sure that we had spirited, enthusiastic candidates who would represent the school in a good way and enthusiastic manner," Narasimhan said.

The administration hopes to keep the identities of the mascots a secret.

Narasimhan said she hopes the Falcon mascots will participate more often this year in school events.

"We had them last year briefly, but this year we want them to have a bigger impact," Narasimhan said.

— Devin Zhao

Preschool relocates to Argonaut Elementary

After 16 years on campus, World of Discovery Preschool moved to Argonaut Elementary School on Oct. 4.

The relocation was scheduled to take place over the summer, but the facility wasn't prepared in time.

"[Preschool administration] came back to us in August and said, 'The new facility's taking longer than we thought,'" assistant principal Kevin Mount said.

The date was tentatively extended to Sept. 11, because Santa Clara County had to approve the move officially.

The empty building previously occupied by the preschool won't be used until next fall, when it will be used by teachers.

"We're a little short on classrooms, so that's the plan right now," Mount said.

When the preschool was located on campus, working with the children was convenient for the school's child psychology class. Senior Mia Hammond, a student in child psychology, feels that the preschool's relocation won't affect the class too negatively.

"Travel time could be shortened if students were allowed to drive each other, but they're only allowed to drive themselves," Hammond said. "Other than that, the facility is great."

— Aashna Mukerji

Artistic students publish work in magazine

For as long as anybody can remember, Soundings, the school's arts and literary magazine, has given students the chance to publish creative work for their peers to enjoy.

Although Soundings has traditionally been produced by students on the Falcon and yearbook staffs, this year, staff will be chosen based on an application opened to the entire school.

Journalism teacher Mike Tyler explained that this year's Soundings staff is trying to get more participation from outside those in journalism.

Spearheading this effort is third-period Falcon editor-in-chief Jackie Gu. She said the idea for a more inclusive Soundings came from her friend Maggy Liu, who expressed interest in joining the magazine in the past.

This year Gu decided to do something to include non-journalism students.

Though the magazine is hoping to get more participation schoolwide, journalism funds will continue to pay for the magazine.

"I'm excited to work on a revamped conception of the magazine, and I hope more constructive student involvement will result in a higher quality publication," said Gu.

— Megana Iyer and Sherrilyn Ling

>> correction

In the story about Audrie Pott on page 5 of the Sept. 28 issue, sophomore Christina Miroyan is currently a student at Presentation High School, not a student at Saratoga High.

>> upcoming events

Oct. 20 PSAT

Nov. 9 End of 2nd Grading Period

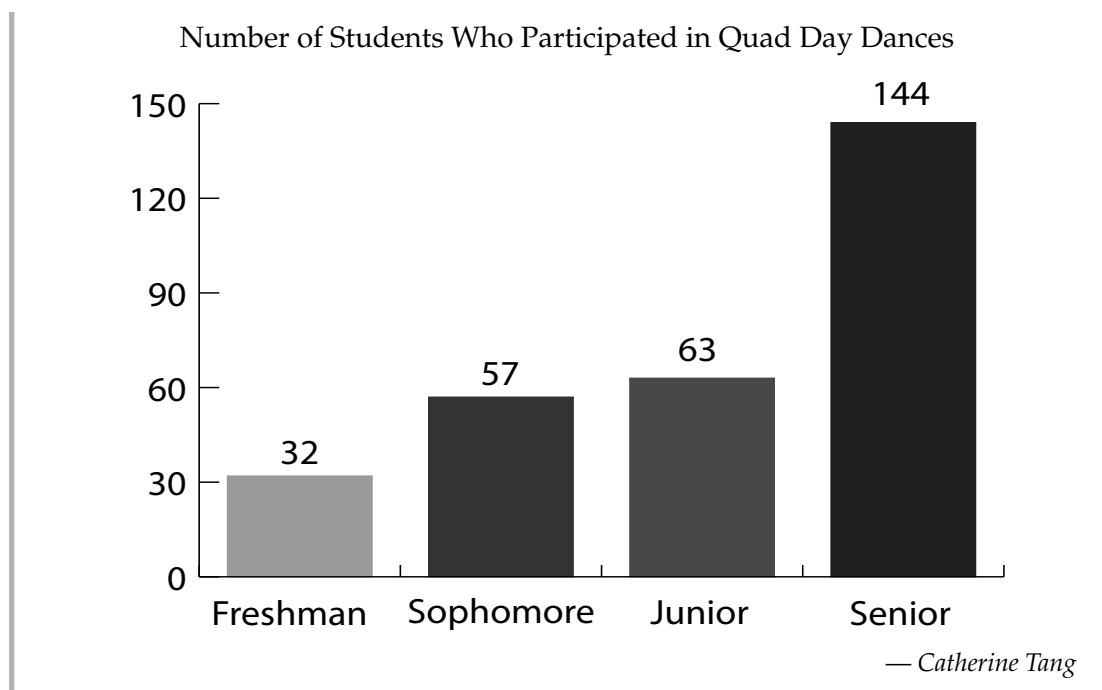
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Courtesy of KRISTEN ZUNG

GO TOGA! >> Freddie the Falcon and his partner Frannie help pump up the Saratoga home crowd during the Homecoming football game against Homestead on Oct. 12. The Falcons won the game 56-7.

>> falconfigures



New clubs promote a new wave of interests and awareness in SHS

BY Megana Iyer
& Akshara Sekar

"Action," a whisper sounds, and all goes silent except the actors' voices and the low, steady hum of a video camera. Later, members of the sitcom team run through the lines, edit the video and sit back and watch their work in action.

The Film Club, created last year by junior Ehrland Hollingsworth, has filmed two episodes so far. According to Hollingsworth, the sitcom is about three kids left alone at home while their parents are on an extended vacation.

Hollingsworth explained that though the club was initially founded last school year, they created only two episodes and it was more like a project than an actual club.

"This year, we wanted to make it official," Hollingsworth said. "The club has around 20 members, but we haven't had our first meeting yet. Hopefully, we can really get initiated."

Hollingsworth added that his plans for the future of the

club are to create a full-length sitcom and post the episodes online. Film Club is just one of the more specific clubs added to the school this year.

"Even after Club Day, people are still forming clubs," Clubs Commissioner senior Tiffany Yung said. "There seems to be a new interest in medical-related clubs this year."

One such medical club is Psychology Club.

Senior Samika Kumar began this club this year, along with seniors Jennifer Jin and Aneesa Mazumdar.

Kumar has long had an interest in psychology. She was able to develop and interest in psychology as a freshman, when she had teacher Laressa Ridge, who teaches both math and psychology.

"I talked to Ms. Ridge a lot, and we discussed psychology often. It is very beneficial and helpful when we talk," said Kumar.

As part of the club, Kumar and other students plan to mirror certain experiments related to psychology, as well as conduct surveys.

"We'd like to publish our discussions on WordPress sometime," said Kumar.

Like Psychology Club, there are many other medical awareness clubs that have gained interest this year.

One that garnered much attention over its intriguing name is Baby Advocacy Club. In the next year, this club hopes to raise awareness and availability for prenatal care around the San Jose area. Member activities include interviewing clinics, and asking about prevalent issues and advocating plans to improve the current situation.

In addition, the club plans to find out why health care is inaccessible for certain people in the area. The club believes that this is an integral part of the club because health care is a very controversial topic and is necessary.

"Right now we are in the beginning stages of the club, but hopefully at some point we would want to fully understand the issues at hand and find solutions for them," member junior Krishna Unadkat said. ♦

ASSEMBLY FOR FRESHMEN

Teen Truth Live promotes anti-bullying

BY Sarah Finley & Simi Srivastava

"If you're not making a difference," Teen Truth Live presenter Erahm Christopher asked the class of 2016, "what are you doing?"

The response from the audience was overwhelming. "Nothing!"

On Oct. 5, the freshman class attended an assembly in the McAfee Center for Teen Truth Live, a program aimed at improving the school environment. The program began with a documentary on the Columbine incident, when two students brought firearms on campus, killed 13 people and injured many more.

After sharing a personal story, the presenter had students share things to do to help prevent bullying on and off campus.

"We were pretty impressed with the program, student response was good, and that's why we decided to bring them back this year," assistant principal Kevin Mount said.

To freshman Anne Rollinson, one part of the program was especially moving.

"A powerful part of the assembly was when everyone stood up if they had been bullied and then when he asked if we had ever bullied anyone, then everyone sat down," Rollinson said.

Mount also felt that the parent viewing, presented the night before, was successful.

"I think we had somewhere between 80-100 people there, which was impres-

sive," Mount said. "The feedback was all positive."

Hopes for change

Mount believes the assembly will help to correct problems the administration has observed on campus. He hopes that the assembly will help to create a positive culture and attitude on the school campus, among the underclassmen in particular.

He also hopes that students will be inspired to end some of the problems on campus. These problems include "spreading rumors, accusing students of doing things for which they have no proof [and] saying nasty things about other people."

Mount said that he is now seeing many students reporting such incidents. The administration is optimistic that students will work to help eliminate this kind of behavior, Mount said.

"What we're asking students to do is stand up and say 'No, we're not going to treat each other in that way,'" Mount said. "We want to help students understand that they are the solution."

A program that empowers

This year's presenter, Erahm Christopher, is a co-founder of Teen Truth Live, director of the films and the writer the presentations.

"Our goals are pretty simple," Christopher said. "Number one is to give youth a voice, number two is to challenge students to think differently about



TALISMANI/NOY SHAKED

Teen Truth speaker Erahm Christopher talks to the Freshman class on Oct. 5 in the McAfee Center about anti-bullying and making a difference within the community.

the issues and [number three] is to empower them to use that power to make a positive impact on their own lives and the lives of others."

Christopher believes that the films he uses in the presentation play a big role in sending out the group's message.

"Our program is different because everything we've created is created by students. Our films are shot by students, [and] presentations are interactive," Christopher said.

"We really try to make sure it's real. All of our speakers have personal truths that they overcame."

Christopher said he knows the pro-

gram has made a difference when its message influences students.

"My favorite part of the program is the change that happens in the students during discussions, when they start to think differently about the issue of bullying and the impact that students have on each other," Christopher said.

For Christopher, the main message that he hopes to leave behind is the importance of students taking responsibility for the school's environment.

"At the end of the day, it's really the community, the students, who need to take ownership of it," Christopher said.

"I really hope that will happen here." ♦

STAFF

So where is Hyde now?

BY Evaline Ju

Even after retiring from school after 36 years of devotion to the district, former assistant principal Karen Hyde wakes up each day at 6 a.m. to check emails, research schools and edit essays.

Hyde now works as a college admissions counselor in her business, Hyde Consults, in Los Gatos. She rents what she calls a "closet," an office without windows, from Now and Forever Studios.

"I wanted to be close to Saratoga, as that really is my home base," she said.

Hyde meets about 30 students a week from Saratoga and other local high schools like Los Gatos, Wilcox, Belarmine, Valley Christian and Menlo-

Atherton High.

Next school year, she will spend at least a half day each week in Woodside, where she lives, because she has clients in the area who are now high school juniors.

"I am working with a few kids 'probono' who are in need of the same assistance as others, but either don't have parent support or can't afford it—that is a nice 'perk' of the job," she said.

Her work runs from 1 p.m. to 9 p.m. during weekdays and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturdays, a schedule she claims is busier than the one she had in school. "I only come in two speeds: fast and off, and 'off' didn't suit me following my graduation," Hyde said. "So I knew that to be busy, happy and helpful, this would be a rewarding step." ♦

NATIONAL GIRLS' MATH CONTEST

Freshman wins fourth place

BY Evaline Ju

Among more than 250 contestants from the U.S. and Canada, freshman Celine Liang took fourth place at the fourth annual Math Prize for Girls contest at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology on Sept. 22.

She received a \$2,000 cash prize and also the Youth Prize for being a top performer in ninth grade or below.

"She is among the best, boy or girl," math club adviser PJ Yim said.

According to Yim, Liang's placement in this competition is the highest ever by a Saratoga participant. In the written round of the 2012 National Mathcounts Competition, a middle school mathematics contest last school year, Liang had placed 10th



Liang

among 256 participants from around the country, the highest finish by a female.

Senior Amanda Chow and freshman Kristine Zhang joined Liang in taking the two and a half hour 20-question test on the morning of Sept. 22. This year was Chow's third year participating in the contest.

The girls qualified for the contest by earning scores on the AMC (American Mathematics Competitions) this past spring that qualified for the AIME (American Invitational Mathematics Examination).

Liang and Zhang felt tired after the trip but expressed a desire to return next year if they qualify.

"Math Prize is a great opportunity to get to know other girls with a similar interest in math and science," Liang said. ♦

Math & Science Questions?

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QUAD DAY >> Seniors put stress on class unity

continued from pg. 1

everyone's individual talents. "I really felt that our quad day script's message was all about school spirit," said senior Shreyas Doshi, who played the East India Trading Company General. "We made many references to school-related stuff and the script really showed the unity of the legendary senior class."

In comparison to other class performances and even their own previous skits, the senior class quad day was a showcase of different dances, voices and abilities in an effort to show how the class has grown together.

"Students are not trapped in the established cliques because the senior class cliques serve

the purpose of establishing common interests, rather than boundaries that only certain people can cross," senior Sam Shinnick said. "Each student has his or her own quirks, but for the most part our class appreciates students because of these quirks."

Determined to go out with a bang, the seniors displayed a plethora of excitement and school spirit from the moment when Captain Jack Sparrow rode in on his boat, fitted with a small engine and, to the very last cheer in their "senior power" chant. They were pleased with their final performance.

"We did an awesome job and the work and early mornings were totally worth it," senior Tyler Bakke said. ♦

JUNIOR QUAD DAY

Redemption for class of 2014

BY Allison Chang

On the night of Oct. 10, Facebook was inundated with posts from juniors calling for redemption. One day later, Facebook was once again covered with joyful status updates about the success of the junior quad day.

The class of 2014 has faced numerous Homecoming struggles for the past two years. Freshman year, they were disqualified for enlisting parental aid in decorations. As sophomores, they were disqualified because of inappropriate jokes in the quad day skit.

This year, they were determined not to repeat their former mistakes.

"We all wanted [the quad

day] to turn out well, or at least to show the other classes we could create a decent quad day," junior My-Lan Le said.

Under the leadership of junior class president Anup Kar, the juniors created a skit about Indiana Jones, and the search for Saratoga's hidden treasure. Supplemented by dances to "We Run the Night" by Havana Brown, "PYT" by Michael Jackson, "I Can Only Imagine" by Chris Brown and "Ray Bands" by B.o.B, the juniors reshaped their former reputation as the "DQ'ed class" and showed their class spirit.

"The juniors used the idea of redemption to rally students to participate," Le said.

However, redemption was not the only thing on the ju-

nior's minds.

"I [had] high expectations for everyone in our class because I [knew] how great it [could] be when we all [came] together," Kar said.

Kar's post to the junior class Facebook group reflects the new image the class strives to show.

"We've always been an amazing class, and we always have had super talented people in it," he posted. "All we needed to do was make it apparent."

The juniors are planning to continue this upward trend for their senior year as well.

"I can guarantee you that next year's quad day will be the best quad day that SHS has ever seen," Kar said. ♦

HOMECOMING COURT

Sweethearts break a trend

FIRST NON-BAND KING AND QUEEN IN SEVEN YEARS

BY Sierra Smith

For seniors Hannah Johnson and Kyle Dozier, winning Homecoming king and queen is more than a walk across the football field and a convertible ride around the track.

For Johnson and Dozier, friends since kindergarten and a couple since their sophomore year, the ability to share this honor together makes it all the more memorable. The two have been prince and princess nominees since freshman year, but had never experienced a victorious ride around the track until this year.

"I've always gone to the Homecoming games since I was little and I've always watched the queen go up," Johnson said.

Despite being nominated every year, Johnson was still surprised to win this time around.

"A few people said they were voting for us, but we have never won, so I was only expecting to be nominated," Johnson said.

Not only will these athletes' win be sentimental to them, but it will hold a place in school history. It has been several years since neither king nor queen was a member of the band.

Of this year's final round

nominees, only two seniors, Kevin Chen and Michelle Chan, were marching band members. Final nominees for king were seniors Chen, Sasan Sadaat and Kyle Dozier. Final nominees for queen were Chan, Evelyn Lee and Hannah Johnson.

In recent years, most of the more than 200 band members have voted as a bloc for one or both of the drum majors.

"Before it was each social clique for itself, and marching band was always the biggest one," said senior Sanjna Verma, head Homecoming commissioner. "This year's senior class is full of school spirit and they've made an effort to know

the other grades and students of their own class better. Hannah and Kyle have been really special to the school and to each other."

Following the game, the couple went out to dinner at Jake's after the game to celebrate.

"I thought it was really fun, especially to win with Hannah," senior Kyle Dozier said.

To Johnson, winning the Homecoming queen title gave her more confidence and a stronger kinship to the school.

"It's nice to know that people support you at the school," Johnson said. ♦

Hannah and Kyle have been really special to the school and to each other.

>> Senior Sanjna Verma

Last take on big week

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: Freshmen Aakash Thumaty, Anant Rajeev, Spencer Yen, Luke Salin, Neel Jain, and Matthew Zung set the standards with the freshman quad day opening dance; seniors Neal Siganporia and Shreyas Doshi take part in their quad day dance; sophomores Madison Seagraves and Mikayla Davis dance to "The Joker" in the sophomore quad day dance; junior Stephanie Chu rides with the Homecoming court along the track during Homecoming game halftime; junior Jessica Pham paints a poster for the junior quad decorations; junior Stephen Cho leads the junior quad day all-boys dance; seniors Hannah Johnson and Kyle Dozier are celebrated during the Homecoming football game.

Final Homecoming scores for each class were not counted in time for the issue.



>> THE bigidea

Homecoming Court

Homecoming King and Queen

Kyle Dozier
Hannah Johnson

Senior Princes and Princesses

Sasan Saadat
Kevin Chen
Evelyn Lee
Michelle Chan

Junior Prince and Princess

Anup Kar
Stephanie Tsang

Sophomore Prince and Princess

Josh Pi
Madison Gress

Freshman Prince and Princess

Matthew Zung
Michelle Wang

ACADEMICS

Common Core standardizes curriculum

BY GraceMa
& DevinZhao

For years, each state had its own academics standards, and the standards in states like California and Massachusetts were considerably higher than those in many other states.

In an effort to unify and increase standards, a mix of educators, business leaders and many other intellectuals came up with the Common Core standards.

First introduced in June 2009, Common Core was created to help prepare students by emphasizing 21st-century skills. Previously a part of the American Diploma Project in 2005, the new system tries to ensure that a high school degree truly represents adequate knowledge expected by colleges and employers. Forty-six states have accepted these

standards so far.

Common Core standards are projected to be implemented by the spring of 2015, when all U.S. high schools in the 46 states are due to administer the first assessment of math and English/Language Arts to 11th graders.

The assessment will entirely replace the STAR test because it will test all students on their proficiency in topics learned in respective year.

English 11 Honors teacher Amy Keys supports the Common Core program, saying that it allows English students to experiment more with research.

Keys said English teachers will be "continuing to give students lots of opportunities to synthesize information from multiple sources and kinds of sources, to conduct research and to evaluate research sources, to recognize op-

posing arguments and formulate one's own original argument—all that good stuff."

Although the changes to the school curriculum do not have to start until 2014-15, math department chair Debra Troxell thinks that the changes should start as early as this year.

"It wouldn't be smart to wait until the last minute to make major changes," Troxell said. "I think that all subjects that are affected should take baby steps this year, additional changes next year, and by the year after be in full compliance so students can do well on the tests."

As one example, the math department this year has started to include more reasoning problems on tests and quizzes, requiring students to explain in writing the justification behind their answers. Other upcoming changes include

the realignment of topics covered in the math classes.

"There will be topics that will be less emphasized or even not emphasized at all, and topics that will be more emphasized," Troxell said. "[We're trying to] follow other countries' approaches of more in-depth coverage of less topics, [which is] very central to the intent of Common Core."

Principal Paul Robinson said Common Core changes will not drastically affect the school.

"California and Massachusetts have used those standards for years, so for SHS, we'll continue to score well," Robinson said. "It will change some things in the classroom for how teachers work, but many of our teachers do these things already. It will be great for students to see what's different in our learning." ♦

EXCHANGE STUDENTS

Foreign students to arrive from Cuernavaca

BY NikilRamanathan

Next month, 10 students from Cuernavaca, Mexico will be staying in Saratoga for the first time. For 30 years, students from the school have been traveling to Cuernavaca to study, and now the students from Cuernavaca are finally making the trip here.

According to Spanish teacher Arnaldo Rodriguex, the Saratoga students will be hosting the Mexican students throughout their stay here.

Senior Joanne Sturge appreciates the idea of returning the favor to the students from Cuernavaca.

"I think it's really cool to be able to have friends in other countries," Sturge said. "And the fact that the roles have reversed and I get to teach her about my lifestyle is really rewarding."

Rodriguex said one of the benefits of this trip, which will be from Nov. 10-26 is that it will give the students a chance to break stereotypical barriers between students of different countries.

Rodriguex also said that since some

of the students aren't from a wealthy background, the trip will likely be eye-opening for them.

According to Rodriguex, having the students from a different culture in Saratoga classes will help expand students' knowledge.

"They speak Spanish and represent culture, and just having those students participate in our classes and talk to our students will be a great tool," Rodriguex said. "It's kind of nice to talk to people from other countries your age and [say], 'This is what I do here and this is what I do there.' Many, many times it's very similar."

Junior Stephen Cho said he looks forward to meeting the student he will be hosting and the overall experience because it is something he has never done before.

Ultimately, Sturge hopes that the students will enjoy their time in California.

"I not only hope that they have an awesome time while in Saratoga, but



Joanne Sturge (center right) hopes to host Andrea (center left) Rivera Lopez in November. They pose with seniors Courtney Ruppel (far left) and Shireen Kaul (far right).

Courtesy of JOANNE STURGE

I also hope that they see California as a place they would come back and visit

again, the way I did when I stayed in Cuernavaca," Sturge said. ♦

SPEECH AND DEBATE

Team experiences major changes this season

BY DeeptiKannan
& NelsonWang

When speech and debate practices began on Sept. 24, the returning debaters noticed several changes for the season including a new coach, new captains, the implementation of a travel team and the new student-led team meetings.

Coach Erick Rector said the captains for the year have yet to be confirmed. Until then, he will be giving applicants a one-month trial period during which they will take turns being in charge of the meetings. After evaluating their performances, he will make his final decisions.

In previous years, there have not been such lengthy trial periods. The high number of applicants this year has resulted in a longer application process, Rector said.

"A lot of people want to be captain on paper, but don't actually do anything for the team," Rector said. "I'm making sure I'm actually getting commitment out of these kids."

In addition to the new system of selecting captains, the team also welcomes its newest member this year, coach

Keller Firestone. Firestone will be coaching congress debate, extemporaneous speech, original oratory and advocacy, expository speaking, oratorical interpretation and original prose and poetry.

She has formerly coached at several schools from the Fremont district including Lynbrook, Monta Vista and Cupertino.

"I have always enjoyed working with students and I think this will be a good year here," Firestone said.

To meet these goals, Firestone said she will try to promote an environment where students help each other improve.

"I like to have students critique each other before I present mine," Firestone said. "I think that students coaching students is really the key to having a great team."

Rector said he is excited to have such an experienced coach join the speech and debate staff.

"She's one of the most decorated NFL (national forensics league) coaches in the

nation," Rector said. "She's got many years of experience and she has a real passion for speech and debate."

Another interesting change is the implementation of a travel team for the very first time. Rector said the school would be able to take around 10 speech and debaters to a few out-of-state tournaments

throughout the year. These students will be chosen based on how successful they are at league tournaments and at some invitational tournaments.

"A lot of students are doing really well, and they have been very dedicated to

speech and debate, treating it as their primary extracurricular activity," Rector said.

Senior and former captain Ishaan Kolluri said the team has also decided to conduct unified team meetings this year once or twice a month for all speech and debaters in all events. The purpose of the meetings is to convey information about tournament schedules, share results from tournaments and hold team

lectures.

"Team lectures are meant to help more than just one event," Kolluri said. "We want the younger students to get extensive, baseline knowledge of economics, politics and social issues so that they have a much better learning curve in their respective events."

With a new coach, pending new captains and new additions to the team, Kolluri said all the changes will create more team unity.

"The goals as a team are first to bond the team even further and make sure everyone gets new skills," Kolluri said. "We need to remember the goal is to improve the presentation skills and knowledge base of all members."

Kolluri said the new skillset that the members will acquire this year and the newly found team unity should help the school gain a competitive edge over its rivals and become more successful.

"Saratoga is in the top five [schools in the Coast Forensic League]," Kolluri said. "We want to push the outside of the envelope and show the juggernauts like Leland and Bellarmine that we've got many very talented young participants." ♦

I think that students coaching students is really the key to having a great team.

>> Coach Keller Firestone

MUSIC

New band schedule stresses students

BY Devin Zhao
& Candice Zheng

Junior Bryan Chow grabs his clarinet as he makes his way to yet another three and a half hour Wednesday band rehearsal starting at 5:30 p.m.

After getting back at 9 p.m., he still has to study for an AP US History test and finish all his homework due the following day.

Chow is among roughly 230 students who are struggling to keep up with a more intense band schedule this fall.

The band has kicked it up a notch from previous seasons by adding Friday rehearsals in order to adapt to the back-to-back performances in which the band will participate.

According to new band di-

rector Jonathan Pwu, the band will perform "in both parade and field show for the first time in 14 or more years" and will march in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade, which will be the first time the band will be live on television.

In addition, the band will also have to do an 85-second field show at Macy's, adding sets to the already difficult season they have now.

"Because of this, we have scheduled a few extra rehearsals in order to provide the best opportunity for success for the students," Pwu said.

Although there are longer rehearsals, Pwu realizes that homework and tests are crucial to band students' academic lives.

"Although rehearsal time

is crucial, [music director] Mr. Boitz and I are very aware of the rigorous schedules students have and try to give students enough time to focus on all of their academic studies," Pwu said.

Even so, students seem to find this extra commitment stressful, especially upperclassmen whose time is already eaten up with the demands of AP classes, SATs and college applications. Chow has realized that he has to ration his time carefully.

"It's pretty strenuous, since the entire Saturday is occupied with rehearsals," Chow said. "Usually I study SAT on the weekends and catch up on homework, but no, you can't do that. I have to do everything beforehand so later I don't run out

of time later."

Despite the stress, drum major Michael Shang, a senior, feels excited about the upcoming performances.

"I will tackle each performance with more energy and enthusiasm than the prior performance and I hope that the band will do the same," Shang said.

Pwu believes that the band has the potential to do well in the season, and ultimately, in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.

"This season is definitely a challenging year for the students, but it is also a season filled with great potential," Pwu said. "The students have been working very hard and achieving higher than ever because of the great student lead-

ership and proactive members of the band."

"Mr. Boitz and I could not be more proud of the benchmarks the students have set and will continue to set," Pwu said. ♦

>> **bigidea****Cupertino Tournament
Oct. 12****Awards**

3rd place Drum Major
2nd place Brass
2nd place AAAAA class
1st place Woodwinds
1st place Auxillary AAAAA
Showmanship Sweepstakes
Marching Sweepstakes
Music Sweepstakes
Parade and Field Show Champion
Grand Sweepstakes

FOOD ALLERGIESClasses now
nut-free zonesBY Trung Vandin
& Candice Zheng

Nuts are now included among the many substances and foods recognized as dangerous by the administration. Around campus, bright pink sheets of laminated paper warn, "This is a [nut-free] zone. Do not eat nuts in this space!"

At the beginning of the school year, the enrollment of three students with severe nut allergies led the administration to take action. Although many feeder schools such as Redwood Middle School have long disallowed nuts, this is the first attempt to restrict what SHS students eat.

After receiving health records from families and feeder schools, the office asked that students and teachers in the affected classrooms not eat any fruit, legume or kernel that could be considered a nut, including but not limited to peanuts, cashews and walnuts.

For students with serious allergies to these foods, a mere taste could result in anaphylaxis, a potentially fatal tightening of the throat that is rapid in onset and may cause death.

"Just counting peanuts, we have several students on campus who are mildly or severely allergic," assistant principal Brian Safine said. "But there have been no negative reactions on campus to date; this is just precautionary."

One such student is freshman Lucas Peng, who experiences a potentially fatal reaction to any nut. Peng appreciates the safety measures the school is taking but feels that too many people do not sincerely care.

"I've seen some teachers eat nuts in classrooms with the signs," Peng said. He believes that the rule is currently more of a suggestion than a rule because it is not enforced.

Safine said the signs serve more as guidelines than an actual rule. The administration does not see a need for strict enforcement or punishment because taking the necessary caution should be common sense for both teachers and students. The signs are posted as a warning to help keep students as healthy as possible within a safe learning environment.

"We subsequently need to be more aware as well," Safine said. "We want to err on the side of caution and stop incidents before they happen." ♦

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P.E. POLICY >> Mixed reactions regarding P.E. proposition

continued from pg. 1

complete and pay for the 30 hour class on their own.

Although Independent Study Physical Education (ISPE) can still provide P.E. credit for the incoming freshmen, they must take Health over the summer in order to be exempt from taking P.E. according to superintendent Bob Mistele during the June 5 board meeting.

"The combination of P.E. and Health gives us an opportunity to integrate the two, as many districts have already done," Robinson wrote in an October newsletter to parents and students.

"This approach allows us to go a bit deeper into the healthy aspects of exercise."

To fill the empty semester next to World Geography, the school plans to offer new semester-long electives for freshmen.

"Our teachers have been brainstorming some very creative and relevant possibilities," Robinson said.

Students voice concerns

Despite the policy's good intentions, many students responded negatively to the changes.

At the school board meeting on Oct 2., teachers, parents and band students spoke out

against the policy.

"I feel like the passage of this [proposal] will discourage our students from pursuing multiple extracurricular interests," senior Maya Nag said.

"I don't think that's providing the most enriching and diverse educational environment for our students."

After numerous students voiced their opinions at the board meeting, music department chair Michael Boitz under-

lined their arguments with his appeal to the board.

"I have never been this disappointed in my career with the leadership and the lack of communication about this policy," Boitz said.

"I think the process is dangerously flawed, and I think it has dangerous implications on student connectedness and time on our campus."

According to Boitz, there was a lack of communication between the school and the board regarding this policy, which the board discussed at a meeting on June 5.

"I have found very few staff

members who were aware of the June 5 meeting," Boitz said.

"A room full of department chairs all looked surprised when we found out [on Sept. 24]."

Although this policy was only recently communicated to the Saratoga community, Boitz said that discussion has been ongoing in Los Gatos for the past two years.

"The agreement was that [Saratoga and Los Gatos] would always be on the same page," Boitz said.

Unlike the Saratoga community, which was just recently notified of this change,

Los Gatos parents and students were informed about the changes in September 2011 through a proposed transition plan written by Los Gatos High School.

Impact on athletics and band

The main concern expressed has been that as a result of this policy, freshmen in sports who typically have a free seventh period will now have to make room for an extra class in their schedule.

Because more students will likely be forced to take seven

classes, opponents of the policy change said sports will no longer be able to start practices during seventh period, as many do currently.

"In order for all sports to get time to practice on the field, practices would have to start later," senior Feargus MacFhionnlaioich said at the Oct. 2 board meeting.

"That means students get home later and have less time for homework and sleep."

For many freshmen, P.E. credit is a large incentive to join a sport or band.

Next year, fewer students may participate in sports because of the higher workload caused by an extra class period, opponent speakers told the board.

MacFhionnlaioich admits that P.E. credit was an incentive for him to join band and athletics his freshman year.

"The P.E. credits given for sports are advantageous for a number of reasons. They are incentives for students to get active," MacFhionnlaioich said.

"A student can join an activity that they normally would not be inclined to join, and they can stay fit while making new friends."

Although the policy does not directly affect anyone other than the incoming freshmen, many current students still feel

very strongly about opposing the policy.

"It means a lot when you have upperclassmen and sophomores from Saratoga High come to a meeting on a school night to argue against a bill passed that doesn't even affect them directly," junior Anup Kar said.

Despite the concerns, Robinson believes that the new P.E./Health class and policy will have little to no effect on the level of participation in athletics or band.

"[Athletics and band] will survive and be just as strong as they've always been. Our coaches and directors are the best in the business," Robinson said.

"Contrary to some beliefs, it does not signal the end of athletics and band as we know it."

Policy not finalized

The school board placed the issue on its agenda for its Oct. 16 meeting at Los Gatos High School for discussion. According to the informative proposal written by Los Gatos High, the proposal will be submitted to Mistele for review on Nov. 1.

The policy will undergo further review and discussion by both Mistele and the school board and is scheduled to be finalized by the beginning of March. ♦

>> togatalks

What do you think about the new P.E. policy?

"Band kids who are already here after school for 3-5 hours will have to stay an extra hour for P.E."



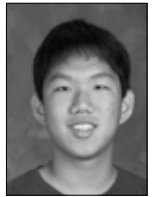
freshman Brian Menard

"The new policy is unjust in the fact that students who do sports still have to an extra hour of P.E."



sophomore Chris Nasser

"I'm not a freshman, so it doesn't matter. It doesn't affect me, so I don't care."



sophomore Kevin Chiang

MEASURES 30, 38 >> Statewide tax measures to affect SHS directly

continued from pg. 1

this is not the case, so being in a situation where neither one of the passes will make us have a severe cut to our budget."

Mistele said the district is prepared to cut \$1.3 million from its 2012-2013 budget if neither proposition passes.

According to Mistele, the board has created two plans. One plan describes the budget if one of the measures pass, and the other describes the budget if neither of the measures pass.

"We are not going to be cutting any teachers, [and] sports and music will not be affected," Mistele said.

If neither proposition passes, Mistele said most students will not see a noticeable effect.

Mistele said that because the two schools' evaluation scores are increasing, the district will receive more money than usual from the state, funds that may cover almost half of the cuts.

If Prop 30 passes, the district will not receive any more money than it already has. If Prop 38 passes, there is a chance that the school will receive state funding, Mistele said.

"For this [Prop 38] money, we are looking at using it for technology and student-cen-

Proposition 30	Proposition 38
Official name: Schools and Local Public Safety and Protection Act	Official name: Our Children Our Future: Local Schools and Early Investment Act
Supported by: Governor Jerry Brown	Supported by: Civil Rights Attorney Molly Munger
Money raised: - 2012-2013: \$9 bil. - 2014-2016: up to \$7.6 bil.	Money raised: - 2012-2013: \$5 bil. - 2014-2025: \$10 bil.
Tax provisions: - Temporary increase in sales and use tax - Temporary increase in personal income tax	Tax provisions: - No increase in sales and use tax - Temporary increase in personal income tax
Revenue Allocation: - Money deposited into special account. Prop 98 gives 40% of funds to K-14 schools.	Revenue Allocation: - Revenues kept out of state general fund and allocated directly to recipients. \$5.95 bil. to K-12 schools.

Graphic by: Sabrina Chen and Maya Ravichandran
Source: California School Boards Association

tered activities. If students want a certain class added, we would use [the money] for that," Mistele said.

According to Mistele, in recent statewide polls, 51 percent of voters in the state are in favor of proposition 30, while 46 percent favor proposition 38.

For either measure to pass, 50 percent approval is needed.

"I'm encouraged that one of them will pass, though I'm getting nervous that the polling is so close to 50 percent," Mistele said. "But when push comes to shove, voters will realize public education needs support." ♦

FALCON FOCUS

Alumna returns as attendance technician

BY Sabrina Chen & Maya Ravichandran

Over a decade ago, alumna Mandy Armes (then known by her maiden name Manousos) participated in the dance commission, served as a class representative and was even in the Homecoming court. This August, Armes came back to the school she calls home to serve as attendance technician.



Armes

After graduating from the school in 2001 and San Jose State University in 2005, Armes was a substitute teacher at SHS and Los Gatos for six years.

"I wanted to experience working in schools before I committed to it full time," Armes said.

In 2011, Armes decided she needed a change in pace, so she started working as an assistant teacher at a private elementary school. But after only one year, she missed the high school's environment.

"I know it was only a year, but still it's like home here," Armes said. "I also wanted to

still work in a school environment but not necessarily as a teacher. When this job [as attendance tech] came up, I jumped at the chance."

Armes said the campus has changed significantly since her years at school.

For example, she is glad a new science building has been built because she used to take biology in teacher Steve McCue's art room. Furthermore, Armes said technology has altered many aspects of the school, from the newly established Media Arts Program to the mere act of taking attendance.

"When I was here for high school we had the office aids—I was one-fill in little bubbles to check off who was here," Armes recalled.

"I would go around to pick up all the attendance from all the classrooms."

Armes is excited to work at the place where some of her best memories took place.

"High school is one of the best times in your life," Armes said.

"Savor it." ♦

Seniors' college stress unwarranted

BY Aashna Mukerji & Akshara Sekar

>> candid caricatures

Fear. It's the dominant sensation on the minds of all seniors at this time of year. Not because they can't remember the fourth economic one-liner or because they think they failed their AP Lang midterms, but because of the social pressure that seems to ooze out of every corner of the school.

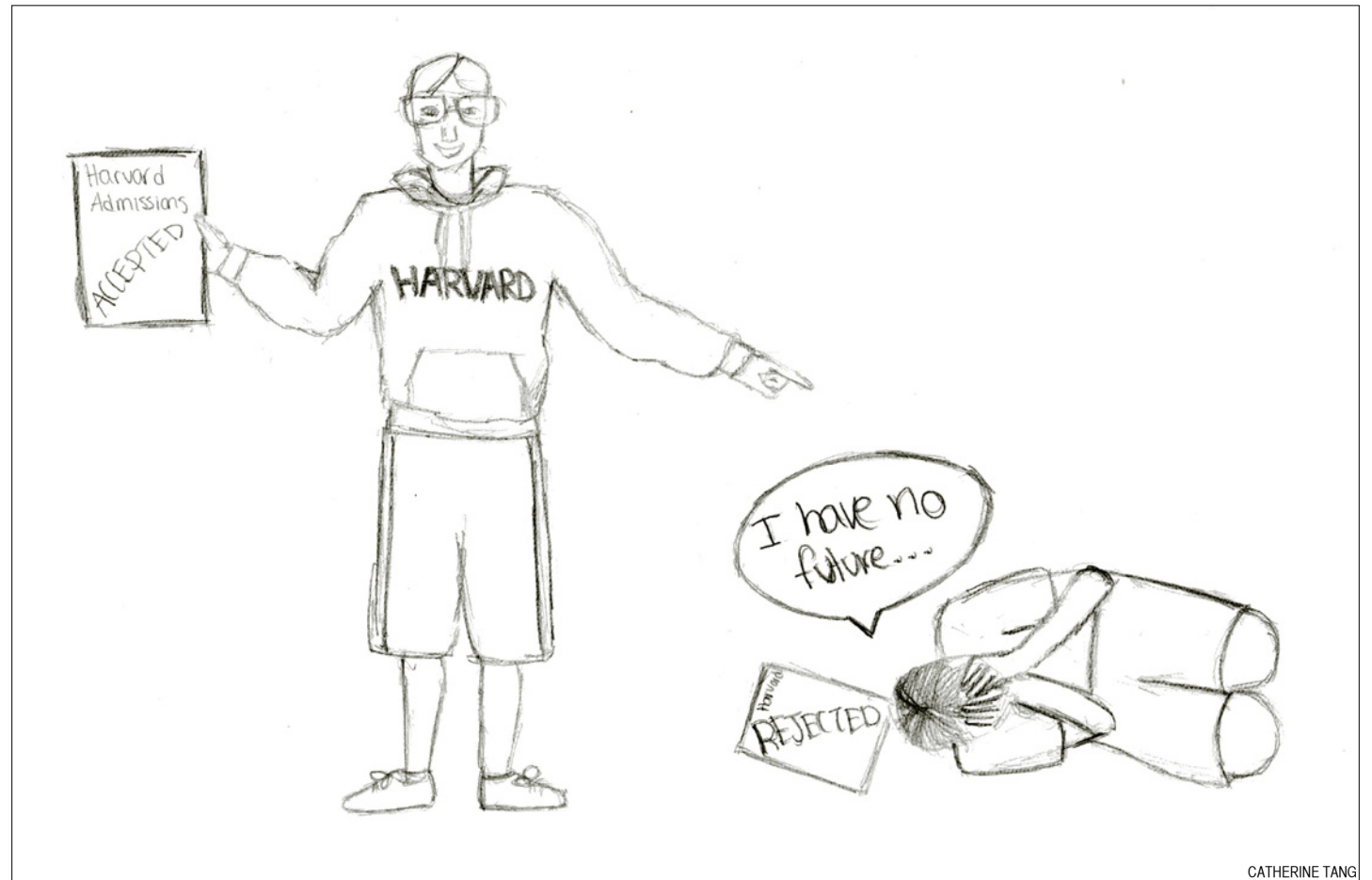
Logically, it should appear that because early packets for college applications have already been turned in, seniors would feel more relaxed. But the looming due date for submission just confirms that the excuse "I'm not really sure where I'm applying early" is no longer sufficient.

All the secrecy surrounding the college-application process is overhyped and unwarranted. Why should it matter if she applies to Brown early or if he wants Carnegie Mellon? People shouldn't be gossiping about such drastic and personal life decisions (and, continuing along that vein, people shouldn't be gossiping much at all).

Here's a tip: If you're frank and open about where you're applying, it takes power away from the people who might try to judge you. There's no shame in applying to "reach" schools, and there's no point keeping your "targets" and "safeties" a secret from your peers.

Believe it or not, they aren't your competition. They're your friends. Instead of refusing to acknowledge the subject or making snide comments, let's try supporting and guiding each other through the process.

And along those lines, remember that no one likes the sneaky little brown-noser with the hidden



agenda. Unless you are particularly liberal with your own college decisions, you should not be pestering fellow seniors about where they are applying. It's common courtesy not to ask for someone's weight—the same politeness should be extended with respect to applications. Some feel like if they say it out loud, they might jinx it.

Others simply aren't comfortable sharing such personal goals with anyone. Students have a right to keep their decisions private. Instead of speculating whether that straight-A student with stellar extra curriculars will get Harvard early

or not, let's worry about our own applications.

Perhaps more importantly, don't judge your chances for admission based on other students' outcomes. Every college has a unique set of standards for every individual applicant. Even if two students are identical on paper, their essays and involvement in extracurriculars will distinguish them, in addition to a host of external, uncontrollable factors. It's scary, but it's true.

Although rejection may seem like the epitome of all evils right now, keep in mind that more than half the students applying early get

rejected. For example, last year 74 students applied to Stanford University from Saratoga High, and only four were ultimately admitted. As much as we all want to avoid rejection, it's going to happen to all of us, whether it's now or later. Even more importantly, rejection isn't the end of the world. Those 70 seniors who didn't get into Stanford will still end up with stellar educations and numerous opportunities.

The bottom line is that we will all be accepted somewhere next spring or earlier, and it will likely be a pretty good fit. In the meantime, we should all just relax. ♦

New learning standards will be beneficial for all

BY Jennifer Jin

While Saratoga High prides itself on its rigorous academics, the same cannot be said for many other schools in California. In 2012, at Saratoga High, only 12% of students scored below proficient on CST exams, compared to 50% of California high school students overall.

In order to help close this academic gap, California adopted the Common Core standards in 2010, and an implementation plan was approved early in 2012. It ensures that students "will graduate high school able to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing academic college courses and in workforce training programs."

There are four anchor standards or strands: reading, writing, speak-

ing and listening and language. Each strand has specific standards that students must reach.

These standards are not specific to subjects; instead, they will focus on interdisciplinarity, the combination of two or more academic disciplines into one activity, similar to the current MAP program at Saratoga High.

For example, standards in reading will also be the responsibility of the science and social studies classes, not only English classes. In 11th grade English, students must cite thorough textual evidence to support what the text says and where the text leaves things ambiguous. In science, students must cite textual evidence in science and in technical text, and in history, students must cite thorough textual evidence in

historical readings.

The standards are well articulated and clear. However, they still allow teachers flexibility.

Currently, every state has a different set of standards, making it hard to fairly compare one state's educational achievement with another.

However, Common Core standards are standardized across the nation and can be used to compare standardized scores equally among the states.

While some argue that the Common Core standards would lower standards of high achieving states to find middle ground with lower achieving states, the Common Core website states that no state will have to lower its standards.

In a 2009 study by the Organiza-

tion for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 15-year-olds in the United States ranked 25th among students of the same age from 34 countries on a math test.

In order to improve its international educational rankings, the Common Core standards are internationally benchmarked so that United States standards will compare favorably to standards of other countries. These clear standards for requirements of each grade level will be beneficial for everyone.

Although it may be hard for students and teachers to adjust at first, it can only mean a new beginning for the United States' lackluster primary and secondary education. It is time for the United States to make a change and improve its educational system. ♦

>> falconfigures

70 Seniors rejected from Stanford last year

12 percent of Saratoga High students scored below proficient on CST exam

50 percent of California high school students scored below proficient

25 US ranking on a math test compared to 34 other countries

THIRDPERIOD

STAFFPOLICY

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*Various contributions were also made by the fourth-period newspaper staff

Future mandatory P.E. policy for freshmen unnecessary

>> candidcaricatures

On Oct. 2, district leaders held a board meeting at which students, parents and teachers expressed their outrage at the policy change that would make P.E. mandatory for all incoming freshmen next year, regardless of whether they already participate in athletics, marching band or Color Guard. Though athletes and band members are currently exempted from P.E. freshman year during their sport season, the new policy seems destined to change this.

To combat the controversial policy, athletic teams and band members have voiced their complaints through multiple outlets. The Saratoga Music Boosters, for example, sent out an email to its members notifying them of the negative effects this policy will have on music members and asking them to attend the board meeting to express their opinions on it.

The outrage sparked by this policy change is well deserved. The point of the policy is to ensure that all students learn about healthy lifestyles and exercise sufficiently; however, sports and band members already lead physically active lifestyles due to the nature of their respective activities.

These students already spend more daily time exercising than P.E. students; to assign them an additional P.E. class is pointless. If the California Educational Code's state standards are the issue, the district should seek a waiver or modification to continue to exempt these students from P.E.

The new policy also would eliminate the semester-long Health/Drivers Ed class currently provided for



all freshmen, instead combining the Health curriculum with P.E. in a joint P.E./Health course. Students will spend less time in P.E. actually doing physical activity to compensate for additional material from the Health curriculum, while students who wish to take their permit and license tests must find private Drivers Ed classes and pay for them on their own. This tradeoff benefits no one.

Those in favor of the policy say it will have little effect on the band and athletic departments.

However, school-related extracurricular activities, including athletics and band, are a major aspect of student life and school spirit.

Removing the exemption of these

students from P.E. discourages involvement in these activities, because an additional class means less time after school, more homework, later practices and less sleep.

Freshmen will need to take seven classes and then head off to their activities.

For next year's incoming freshmen, these restrictions will make sports and band much more difficult to fit into daily schedules, and fewer students will want to participate.

Additionally, the district board did not adequately inform students, teachers or parents about this policy change.

Athletes and band members had no voice in the conception of this change; students were informed of the situation only a few days before the Oct. 2 board meeting. As one student said at the meeting, "Why are none of the board members at [sports and band practices] to see if they are meeting the physical fitness standards?"

Athletics and band are an integral part of the school's climate and energy. Fewer students participating in these activities will help no one. ♦

>> Opinion of the Falcon Editorial

Editor-in-chief
Jackie Gu

Opinion Editor
Paul Jung

Reporter
Michael Lee



The Saratoga Falcon staff voted 34-1 in favor of maintaining the status quo.

PROP 32: A facade of equality

BY Allison Chang

Often they can be underappreciated or unnoticed, but many play a central role in our communities. They are the firefighters, police, teachers and other public sector employees. Without these integral members in our society, everyone would suffer.

Yet California's Proposition 32, also known as the "Paycheck Protection" Initiative, has angered many public servants, such as teachers, as an attack against their livelihood.

Prop 32 restricts the ability of unions and businesses to support political candidates with monetary funds through money given by union members. Many teachers believe that this policy benefits large businesses and corporations while restricting the ability of unions to contribute and let their voice be heard.

"Prop 32 is a way to keep the unions down and raise the importance of corporations, which already outspend unions by quite a bit," history teacher Mike Davey said.

If the legislature truly desires to stop special interest money, the law must be equal for all.

Instead of solely limiting union fund-

raising, a better method of stopping special interest contributions would be to restrict the amount of money donated by large corporations or to equalize the law to encompass all special interest groups.

Currently, Prop 32 would unfairly repress the voice of unions, especially those of government workers, such as teachers, while leaving large corporations untouched.

"Unions don't have any other way of getting funding, so they ask the members to give a mandatory [fee]," history teacher, Matt Torrens said. "Big business can go out and do fundraisers and collect money in other ways, in addition to [member fees]."

In Wisconsin, a similar law was passed limiting collective bargaining for public workers. Collective bargaining is the practice of having worker unions and corporations negotiate for an agreement acceptable to both parties.

Thus, with the restriction of collective bargaining, teachers were unable to protest or compromise when heavier workloads and longer hours were imposed upon them. California teachers fear that a similar situation will occur if

Prop 32 is passed.

"People think that [restriction of payroll deductions] is the first step, and that [the loss of collective bargaining] is the second step," Torrens said. "Once you take away the power to collect donations to fight [decisions] in the legislature, then you make it easy to try to take away collective bargaining."

Supporters of the bill claim that the proposition is equal: No one can contribute money from payroll deductions and this in turn will reduce the amount of interest money pouring into campaigns.

However, large corporations contribute much more money to political causes than unions do, but their activities are not limited significantly by the proposition, as payroll deduction funds do not constitute a majority of the money donated.

Instead of cutting off the minor donations generated from unions, controlling the money spent by big businesses would be much more effective in stopping special interest money.

"Seven of the top donors are wealthy Republicans; only the other three are unions," Davey said. "This is an attempt to squash unions." ♦

Foreign singers not up to American standards

BY CandiceZheng

Listening to FM: 99.7 on the radio as I was driving one day, I suddenly heard the familiar chorus of "Oppa Gangnam Style!" belting through my car. Although initially confused, I won't deny that I was already jamming by the time the second verse hit.

Hitting No. 1. on Billboard's "Top 100," currently boasting 400 million views on YouTube and becoming the most liked video of all time, Korean rapper Psy has no doubt achieved mainstream success in the U.S., not to mention all around the world.

The only two English words I caught in the entire song were "coffee" and "style"; despite the language barrier, something about Psy is incredibly appealing to the American public.

Psy's explosive success has come as a surprise to the Asian music market, and the Korean music industry in particular, after other Korean singers have attempted to enter the American music market with little success.

Korean superstars such as R&B singer Se7en and the "queen of Korean pop," BoA, have tried to penetrate this market—and failed.

SM Entertainment, arguably the biggest music label in South Korea, has spent a fortune promoting girl group Girl's Generation in the U.S., releasing English singles, playing their music videos in Times Square and appearing on the "Late Show with David Letterman." Despite the time, energy and money spent propelling these artists forward, none of these efforts has paid off.

All of these shiny, manufactured Asian commercial successes are lacking two important things: novelty and originality. This is exactly what Psy brought and what the rest of South Korea can't seem to understand, the idea that people are attracted to uniqueness.

Big foreign music companies try too hard to be "American" and cater to what they think the American public considers to be acceptable music. Because of this, the tracks of their artists turn out to be mediocre and lack original substance. Pretty to look at, but in the end falling flat.

Another issue that particularly blocks Korean pop, or K-pop, from entering the U.S. music market is the lack of artistry in the acts it is trying to promote.

Most of mainstream Korean music is comprised of boy bands and girl groups performing synchronized dances to their songs; every aspect of the performance is planned out, from dance movements to gestures on stage.

Although some groups may lend a hand in producing their own music, in most cases the "artists" only record the songs produced for them by their company labels, and learn and perfect the choreography taught to them. This highly perfected system may make revenue in Asia, but the average American will be left skeptical.

The most overlooked and possibly most important factor that determines foreign success is time.

The American audience is just too big, too wide and too judgemental to take on without ample preparation. To make it big in this country, a singer needs 100

>> candidcaricatures



CAROL SUH

percent devotion to hone his or her skills and understand the culture.

Look at Asian-American hip-hop group Far East Movement, who spent years and years building their discography and recognition before becoming a mainstream success, even without the added burdens of language or cultural differences.

With too many foreign artists trying to promote in America and maintain

their popularity back home, anything short of full devotion is going to end up falling short.

Foreign artists cannot depend on viral success, such as Psy's, to break into the seemingly impenetrable American market.

It is a daunting task, and foreign artists simply do not have the right insight and approach to get the task consistently done. ♦

Muslims overreact to video

BY GraceMa
& AshwiniVelchamy

Thousands of protesters. Riots all over the Middle East. The death of a U.S. ambassador.

The cause? A low-quality, amateurish YouTube video.

"The Innocence of Muslims" is a two part anti-Islam video directed by Egyptian native and California resident Nakoula Basseley Nakoula, who went under the pseudonym "Sam Bacile." Nakoula uploaded part one, "The Real Life of Muhammad" on July 1 and part two, "Muhammad Movie Trailer," a day later.

Featuring badly dubbed video clips of inexperienced actors in modern-day Egypt, "The Real Life of Muhammad" mocks the Islamic prophet Muhammad, claiming him to be a fool and religious fake.

The videos slowly went viral, and on Sept. 9, a clip of the "The Real Life of Muhammad" was broadcast in Egypt.

Two days later, areas in Egypt and Libya broke into protests, followed by other Arab nations and some western nations.

On Sept. 11, Americans were shocked by the death of their ambassador, J. Christopher Stevens, who died when militants broke into the embassy in Benghazi, Libya.

Since then, parts of the world have been in an uproar, wondering if America's "freedom of speech" ideals give people too much leeway; some wonder how such a film—brimming with discrimination and bigotry—could possibly exist. How could the filmmaker criticize Islam?

Really?

These riots are borderline ridiculous, showing nothing more than the inability of religious fanatics to take any sort of criticism of their faith. Many even claim that this video infringes on another one of the American principles, freedom of religion.

However, this is not the case. This video is in no way preventing Muslims from practicing their faith.

Besides, "The Innocence of Muslims" is not the first ever bold attack on religion—the press coverage, Nakoula's eventual jail sentence and the violent protesting just make it seem like it is.

At some point or the other, every religion has received its own share of ridicule.

Comedy Central's "The Daily Show" pointed out that the Monty Python movies have been mocking Christianity for ages without any large-scale riots, murders or embassy burnings.

Many people worldwide are simply jumping onto the bandwagon, forcing Google to block the video in the rioting countries and believing that Americans should not condone the expression of such bigoted views. What they fail to realize is that the actual protests in the Middle East are protests by a minority.

In fact, counter-protests took place soon after the original protests as Muslim leaders asked their people to ignore the provocative video.

Yes, many Muslims were offended—who wouldn't be?—but most firmly rebuked the violence that occurred.

These overreactions by extremists have reached a point to where Cindy Lee Garcia, an actress in the videos who claims she had no part in the offensive voiceovers, filed an unsuccessful lawsuit ordering YouTube to remove the video from the website.

Not only do attempts at forced removal violate the ideal of free speech, but the lawsuit represents the irrationality of these extremists.

Sure, this video insulted a particular religion, but should anything that criticizes any religion be banned as well?

Unlike many other places in the world that do not allow or fully understand free speech, our country guarantees it to us. Condemning "The Innocence of Muslims" undermines this privileged right. ♦

'Amazon tax' supplies fiscal benefits to state

BY KarenSung

When Amazon.com announced its decision to tax all items sold directly by the company, effective Sept. 15, dedicated Amazon customers everywhere bemoaned this new law.

Gone were the deals on textbooks, bulk food and electronic appliances that had all been significantly cheaper than in-store prices.

Previously, Amazon had only been able to avoid charging a tax on its customers in California thanks to a loophole that began in 1992, when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that states had no power to collect taxes from companies not physically present within that state. And as the practice of online shopping expanded along with the Internet, websites like Amazon continued to evade collecting sales taxes for the state.

By 2011, though, Gov. Jerry Brown signed a measure requiring Amazon customers, along with other online retail buyers, to pay a sales tax on its products.

In return for a year's reprieve, Amazon has promised to create at least 10,000 full-time jobs for Californians by adding two in-state fulfillment centers, one in San Bernardino and the other in Patterson.

Thus, although this decision may appear as an unnecessary annoyance and hindrance, the new required sales tax may play a fundamental role in reinvigorating the state's economy.

Not only will job opportunities open, a change dearly welcomed in a state with a rising 10.6 percent unemployment rate, California will also earn an additional \$200 million annually from online sales taxes alone.

Traditional brick-and-mortar stores are celebrating this newly implemented tax, whereas before these stores often served as "showrooms," in which a cus-

tomers browsed through their products in store but ultimately bought the item online tax-free. Now, with online retailers like Amazon losing their competitive edge, the gap has been lessened.

And even though faithful Amazon shoppers may feel that they can no longer escape the dreaded 8.5 percent sales tax in California, another agreeable outcome looms on the horizon: same-day delivery, an upgrade from the current minimum of one business day shipping, because Amazon's warehouses will be closer and more convenient.

All is well—now every business can play by the same rules. Meanwhile, California can utilize this law to help cut its deficit and lower the unemployment rate.

That's a win-win situation. ♦

>> falconfigures

8.5 Percent sales tax in California to be added to Amazon purchases

10 Thousand full-time jobs Amazon has pledged to create

200 Million dollars of additional revenue from online sales tax

500 Million dollars invested by Amazon in California facilities

Winning Wings:

NEW CHICK-FIL-A LOCATION EXCEEDS HIGH EXPECTATIONS

BY Ingrid Hong

Finally, another casual dining business that lives up to its claims of great food and service.

Chick-Fil-A has been compared to In-N-Out in its quality of food and customer service. In my opinion, it has reached In-N-Out's high standard.

On Aug. 23, the long-awaited opening of Chick-fil-A in San Jose, near Great America, finally arrived.

Chick-fil-A knows how to celebrate a grand opening. It gave away a one-year supply of free Chick-fil-A meals to the first 100 adults in line on opening day, a deal worth about \$350 each.

I had heard of Chick-fil-A prior to going there, but I never knew what I was missing out on until then. I ordered the original Chicken Sandwich, described as "a boneless breast of

chicken seasoned to perfection, hand-breaded, pressure cooked in 100 percent refined peanut oil."

Advertisers couldn't have said it any better: It was fried to a point of perfection, not too crisp or too soggy. It was, in the words of a children's poem, "just right."

Although I had to purchase the fries separately, I got a generous amount of them for the price, and I liked them better than that of any other fast food chain's.

The chicken breast was plump, juicy and savory, unlike the bland, dry and hard chicken I've had at other

fast-food places.

The waffle fries, like the chicken, were just the right amount of crispy on the outside, and plump and soft on the inside.

You really just can't deny the quality of Chick-fil-A in the quick-serve industry.

My order all together was about \$15. For about five items and their

Chick-Fil-A



(OUT OF FIVE)

Where: 53 Headquarters Street, San Jose

Type of Food: American

Price range: \$\$

Reporters Favorite: Spicy Chicken Sandwich, Chicken Strips, Waffle Fries



Courtesy of YELP.COM

Chick-Fil-A opened location on August 23, 2012 in San Jose on 53 Headquarters Drive.

quality, I thought that was a reasonable price. Most of the restaurant's items are priced from \$2 to \$5. Although service is going to vary by location, I have found the people working at the San Jose location to be very friendly.

They keep the sauces behind the counter—to prevent pilfering, I suppose. I usually don't gravitate toward any sauces, but the sauces at Chick-Fil-A are to die for.

Something I found admirable was the policy behind Chick-Fil-A being closed on Sundays. This is a corporate policy so that the employees can spend the day with their families.

As a fan of tasty chicken, this decision disappoints me, but I do have a lot of respect for the restaurant for choosing to do this.

What Chick-Fil-A offers that other

chains do not is the above-and-beyond attitude for customer service. It's in the Bay Area, but it maintains a southern hospitality and charm.

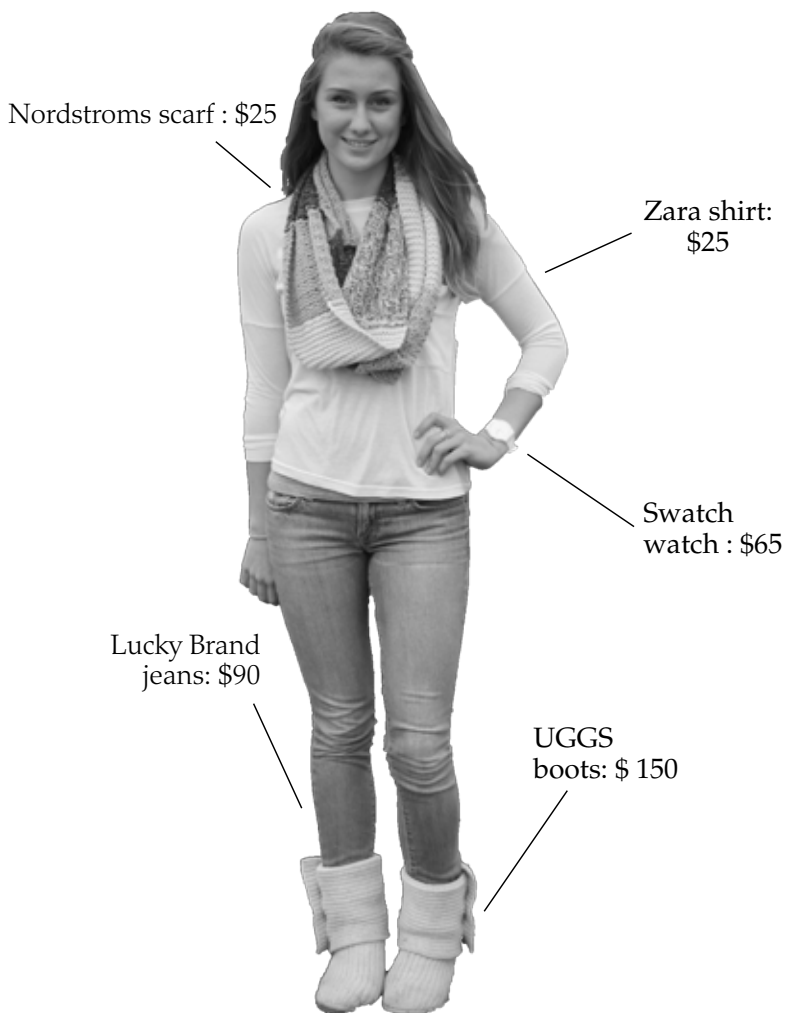
There is a steady flow of customers at any given hour, but they are always fully staffed and capable of handling the extra traffic.

Chick-Fil-A is a nice break from all the typical fast-food joints that specialize in beef burgers.

Even though their food is a bit on the pricier side compared to other fast-food chains, it is definitely worth it.

Be sure to check out my favorites: the chicken strips, chicken sandwich, waffle fries and lemonade. And for my fellow foodies out there, feel free to indulge in some "fried" chicken without as much guilt, thanks to their pressure cooking. ♦

STYLE FILES



Nordstroms scarf : \$25

Zara shirt: \$25

Swatch watch : \$65

Lucky Brand jeans: \$90

UGGS boots: \$ 150

Isabel Malcolmson, 11

iPhone 5 a slight upgrade

BY Matt Foley & Dylan Jew

With the release of the iPhone 5 students may be wondering whether it is worth it to upgrade. While it may not seem as if the iPhone 5 is a major change from the iPhone 4S, Apple has taken the opportunity to refine the hardware and software of the phone.

The hardware

The hardware of the iPhone has gotten an overhaul since the previous generation. The phone now supports the LTE wireless network, which cellular companies claim is capable of up to 100 mb/s download speeds. While this is an improvement, other companies have had the LTE technology implemented in similar phones for a few years.

An important change from previous iPhone owners is the transition from Apple's old 30-pin connector to the new "Lightning" connector. This change means that accessories using this old connector will be incompatible with the new iPhone unless an adapter is purchased, and even then, many accessories are unusable.

Since some accessories may have to be repurchased, the cost to upgrade to the iPhone 5 may be more than meets the eye. As of now the increased speed from the connector does not outweigh the extra costs it brings with it.

The software

As with every next generation iPhone, the iPhone 5 brings a new operating system along with it. The biggest change is the new maps app, replacing the Google Maps used in earlier systems.

The new Apple map application boasts turn by turn navigation, compatible with Siri's voice recognition; however, it does not seem as refined as

Google's old application. Apple CEO Tim Cook admitted in a press conference that the new application at the moment is inferior to that of Apple's competitors and even recommended that those other applications be used while their Maps application is improved.

The verdict

Anyone currently without a smartphone would be satisfied with the iPhone 5 and love the features. Previous owners with the iPhone 4 or older should also consider upgrading. The new processor provides an increase in the speed of the device, and the larger screen allows users to enjoy the features at their fullest capabilities.

However, owners of the iPhone 4S should stick with their current phone and wait until the next generation iPhone is revealed, because the hardware changes in the iPhone 5 do not facilitate an upgrade. Also, previous owners will have to spend money on new accessories that support the iPhone 5.

Overall, the iPhone 5 does not present any special innovations, instead further refining the tried-and-true aspects of the popular iPhone. ♦

>> thebigidea

iPhone 5

What is different?

It now supports the LTE wireless network and has a new lightning connector port.

New software:

There is a new Maps application with the new iOS 6.

Is it worth buying?

If upgrading from smart phones with technology earlier than the iPhone 4.

Freshmen:



My favorite celebrity is Cher Lloyd, she's so cute. For Yu, it's probably someone hot.

>> Freshman Ai Asai

My favorite celebrity is Tom Daley, because he's hot.

>> Freshman Yu Asai

Favorite:		Response	For twin
Color	Yu	Purple	Blue
	Ai	Hot Pink	Purple
Book	Yu	Divergent	Hunger Games
	Ai	Hunger Games	Divergent
Word	Yu	Gentle	Love
	Ai	Love	Gentle

TWINS FROM EACH GRADE WERE GIVEN A QUIZ TESTING THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF THEIR TWIN

Twibling twoubles

by AsimNaqvi

At first glance, juniors Sam and Will Guy seem to have a lot in common. Both are 6-foot tall and between 150 and 170 pounds. The two share many interests and activities. For example, they both take AP Chemistry and they both run for the varsity cross country team. Both exhibit a little bit of swagger in their strides.

They are, after all, fraternal twins. But besides the obvious similarities in physical appearance, not a whole lot accompanies the twin bond in terms of their personalities and preferences. When both twins were asked to take a quiz testing their knowledge of the other, the results drew unclear conclusions.

The first aspect of the quiz, which grilled the twins on their favorites, showed that while the twins shared certain favorites, they apparently weren't aware of it. Will and Sam's vacation destinations of choice are both Virginia, although Sam was of the understanding that Will would prefer singing and swinging in Hawaii instead.

In terms of movies, however, both knew of the other's affinity of the Lord of the Rings series. They also knew that they both were soccer aficionados.

Along with sharing favorites, the twin brothers succeeded in guessing a few of

their differences. Will correctly guessed Sam's favorite food as steak, while Sam knew that Will prefers to stuff his face with spaghetti.

Perhaps the most amusing results of the quiz were derived from a section regarding aspirations, as Sam's answers were consistently more outrageous while Will's answers were more reasonable. For example, if Sam could break one law, he would partake in public nudity, while Will would prefer to quietly accelerate past the speed limit. Before he dies, Sam wants to elaborately retaliate against Dick Cheney by staging an unfortunate rifle-related accident during a hunting trip; Will only wants to climb Mount Everest.

With a million dollars, Sam would go ahead and "blow 200 grand on a Ferrari," as Will would put it. Will, on the other hand, would choose to buy a "good house."

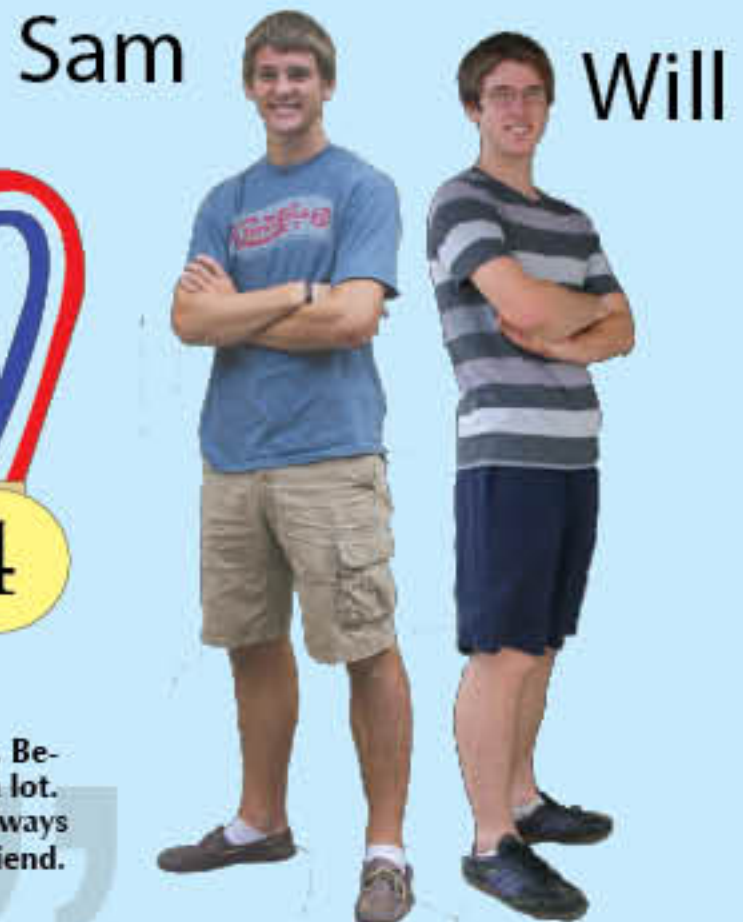
While the brothers have striking differences in these interests, they share certain similarities as well. Will and Sam are living proof that while the twin bond is powerful, each twin is his or her own individual.

However, one answer to the quiz summed up the entire ordeal: The one thing Sam would bring if he were to be stranded on an island?

"My brother," Sam said. ♦



ALL PHOTOS BY SIMI ERMASTAVA GRAPHICS BY D



Juniors:

We compete in almost everything. Because of this, we end up fighting a lot. It can get annoying because he's always around, but I also always have a friend.

>> Junior Sam Guy

Caitriona

Sophomores: Cian

“We don’t spend a ton of time together because we don’t have classes together and we have different after school activities.”

>> Sophomore Caitriona Costello



What is your:

	Response		For twin
Biggest fear	Caitriona	Spiders Dark	Spiders
	Cian	Spiders Heights	Spiders Insane people
Favorite super-power	Caitriona	To fly	To fly
	Cian	To fly	To read minds
Favorite subject	Caitriona	English	Math
	Cian	Math	English

TWINNS

EWIWIN!

Seniors:

“We used to not be able to say each other’s names, and so I would call him Titi and he would call me Kiki.”

>> Senior Kristen Jensen



Seniors have Jensen connection

BY Katherine Chang

You would think twins would know a lot about each other and might even have a psychic connection or maybe even something supernatural.

Sadly this isn’t the case for senior twins Kristen and Stephen Jensen.

Despite confident predictions, Kristen and Stephen do not have as solid twin connection as they originally thought. Estimating at least half to be correct, Stephen ended up getting the most correct of the two, with about a fourth correct.

Asked to complete a quiz about their twin with questions ranging from favorite word to the first thing that comes to mind with “#YOLO,” the two had a harder time picturing what their twin would say than they expected.

“I didn’t expect that I would need to know his favorite word,” Kristen, the younger of the two said. “I was having fun with this [though].”

Although Stephen may have been able to correctly guess that Kristen’s favorite TV show is “Grey’s Anatomy,” and Kristen that Stephen’s is “Breaking Bad,” none of their answers matched each other. Their opinions of topics contrasted each other’s often, sometimes as a result of their gender differences; Kristen saying Justin Bieber is “kinda hot,” to Stephen’s “meh.”

“We have different personalities and have just as different interests,” said Stephen.

The two were able to answer the favorites with reason-

able ease, but some of the questions tripped them up. When it came to the first word that came to mind with the emotions “happy,” “anger” and “embarrassment,” Stephen was stuck, saying, “I have no clue.”

However, their similarities still showed through, both commenting that falling over was the first thing they thought of as embarrassing, despite having guessed different answers for each other.

Even though, according to Kristen, they were closer when they were younger, they still believe they know each other well.

“We used to hang out all the time together, but I don’t keep track of Kristen,” Stephen said.

Being the same grade, it is inevitable that they are sometimes in the same classes. These experiences had some negative impacts. One of the cons of having a twin, Kristen said, was that there would often be competition in classes about grades.

Despite the initial weirdness of being in the same class, Kristen and Stephen still enjoy having a sibling the same age that they are able to hang out with.

“It is cool to have a sibling the same age as me, its something that not everyone has,” Stephen said.

When asked if they would want a twin given the choice, the answer was unanimous.

“Yes.” ♦

Kristen



Stephen

BBC's 'Sherlock' redesigns a classic

BY Deepthi Kannan
& Wren Sutterfield

The infamous Sherlock Holmes strolls into the yard and examines every detail of the scene. The flower beds have been trampled with footprints. The footprint of the right leg is more prominent than that of the left, suggesting the culprit walks with a limp. Sherlock grins with a twinkle of discovery in his eye, immediately deducing who the murderer must be.

These brilliant deductions are cherished in the BBC television show "Sherlock," a modernized revitalization of the classic Sherlock Holmes mysteries by Arthur Conan Doyle. It focuses on the cynical detective Sherlock, played by Benedict Cumberbatch, and his friend John Watson, played by Martin Freeman, as they investigate classic cases with a modern perspective.

"It [takes] the old story and [makes] it more attractive for people to watch," junior Susanna Lee said. "People today really like to see the old stories with a new, fresh face."

Lee said the BBC show revamps episodes by changing certain details. For example, the writers of the show took



British actors Benedict Cumberbatch and Martin Freeman play Sherlock and Watson.

the original story "A Study in Scarlet" and morphed it into an episode titled "A Study in Pink."

With its colorful language and details, English teacher Amy Keys says "Sherlock's" popularity stems from its British appeal.

"British humor is much more verbal and much more based on language," Keys said. "Sherlock has that capacity to astonish with quick-witted language and precision of language."

Freshman Ingrid Pan also appreciates the show's British approach.

"Obviously, you can't deny the awesome British accents," Pan said. "British TV is also a lot more thoughtful than American television."

Keys said the modern version shows off the timelessness of Sherlock Holmes.

"I like the way the show updates it in context of the post-Iraq war and shows how relevant it is for all times," Keys said.

Many fans of Sherlock also appreciate its in-depth character development.

"My favorite character is Watson," Keys said. "I think he is a really interesting, complex and sympathetic character."

Keys also enjoys the portrayal of the character Sherlock and his ingenious mind at work.

"I love it when Sherlock walks into a room and you get to see his mind operate like a computer, sifting and sorting data that it's taking in," Keys said. "After I watch that show, the next time I walk into a room I try to notice details about people or situations."

Keys believes that these important details play a significant role in science fiction novels, a concept which she aims to teach to her students.

"How the detail informs who the character is is a big part of teaching literature and understanding literature," Keys said. "Every detail is chosen for effect."

With its intricate plots, characters and language, "Sherlock," as a modern adaptation of a classic story, is a must-see for fans of British television.

"Watch the show and be completely captivated!" Pan said. ♦



God save the eagle: America's obsession with Britain

Disclaimer: The following should be read in an English accent for full effect.

It is a truth universally acknowledged that every American

in possession of Internet access must be in want of something inherently British (usually an accent). Some desire websites where users can analyze a boy wizard's escapades in the wee hours of the morning; some are merely content to peruse pictures of the unamused queen and her pet corgis.

In 1776, the American colonies refused to be associated with England. Today, there's nothing we seem



AASHNA
MUKERJI
Aashnananana
Batman!



ASHWINI
VELCHAMY
Wini-the-Pooh

to want more. Why is it that every major fandom's roots lie in Britain? "Harry Potter," "Doctor Who," The Beatles and "Pirates of the Caribbean" are all rooted in England ... while America sits in the corner reading "Twilight." The only modern craze we can really take pride in is "The Hunger Games."

Count the number of friends you've made through a shared British hype. The American knock-offs of "Skins" and "Sherlock" scarcely compare to the originals for good reason: the actors, storyline, and cinematography leave much to be desired.

Now, make a list of the first 10 actors who pop into your head: Johnny Depp, Emma Watson, Benedict Cumberbatch, David Tennant. The list goes on ... and nearly everyone on it is from England.

Modern media is dominated by British culture, but why? Did they just get a leg up in years (we are several centuries behind, after all) or is there something magical in that tea of theirs?

On the other hand, America has a lot to be proud of. Take hamburgers, for instance. Where would the world be without Big Macs?

But in all seriousness, the United States controls specific regions of the mediasphere from which it can glean considerable satisfaction. "The Office" can be considered an American claim to fame, having far outstripped its British counterpart and gained a devoted, worldwide audience. "Community" and "How I Met Your Mother" have considerably large fan-followings. Titanic remains one of the most successful movies of all time. Some people even prefer Katy Perry to Lily Allen.

Who knows, maybe someday we Americans will catch up to the horse-racing, monocle-wearing, top-hatted Brits. But until then, you'll find us re-reading our old, tattered copies of "Harry Potter" for the umpteenth time, singing obnoxiously to One Direction and fervently wishing we were British. ♦

Wibbly-wobbly, timey-wimey stuff: Exploring 'Doctor Who'

BY Deepthi Kannan & Wren Sutterfield

If you had a machine that could travel anywhere in time and space, where would you go? With new worlds, intelligent life forms and the mysteries of the universe

to explore, the BBC science fiction television hit "Doctor Who" explores the endless possibilities offered by this machine. In this show, which began in

1963, a man called the Doctor from the planet Gallifrey travels the universe in his time machine, or TARDIS, accompanied by various human companions. While journeying through time and space, he fights hostile aliens and saves the peoples of the universe countless times.

The show has featured 11 actors playing the doctor, because whenever the character dies he regenerates into a new body. This use of multiple actors has enabled the show to run from 1963-1989 (the classic series), and more recently from 2005-present (the modern series).

"Because it's a time machine, there are no constraints to it," sophomore Helen Wong said. "It's inspiring because you can go anywhere and do anything."

"Doctor Who" is also not just about time travel. It has aspects that appeal to all audiences, said English and Drama teacher Sarah Thermond.

"I think it's very quick-witted, which I enjoy," Thermond said. "I like that they're not afraid to be funny, zany and over the top in one episode, and then serious and dark in the next."

What also sets it apart from American television is its British background. The show is enormously popular in England, making it a national treasure.

"Throughout the entirety of England, you can make a 'Doctor Who' reference and anyone will understand," Wong said. "It's become a cultural thing that

has spread to the younger generation."

Junior Janey Heyman said the show also incorporates writing and plot development that captures viewers.

"I fell in love with the show because the episodes are addicting and the acting and writing is truly fantastic," Heyman said. "There's something about it that really touches your heart."

Thermond, who also appreciates its intricate plots, showed an episode of "Doctor Who" called "Blink" that

functions as a

penseful short story to her sophomore English class as part of her lesson plan.

"I wanted them to pay attention to how TV writers can create the same suspense that a novelist can," Thermond said.

Wong said another interesting aspect the show is its special effects, ranging from advanced graphics in the modern series to the primitive solutions used in the classic series.

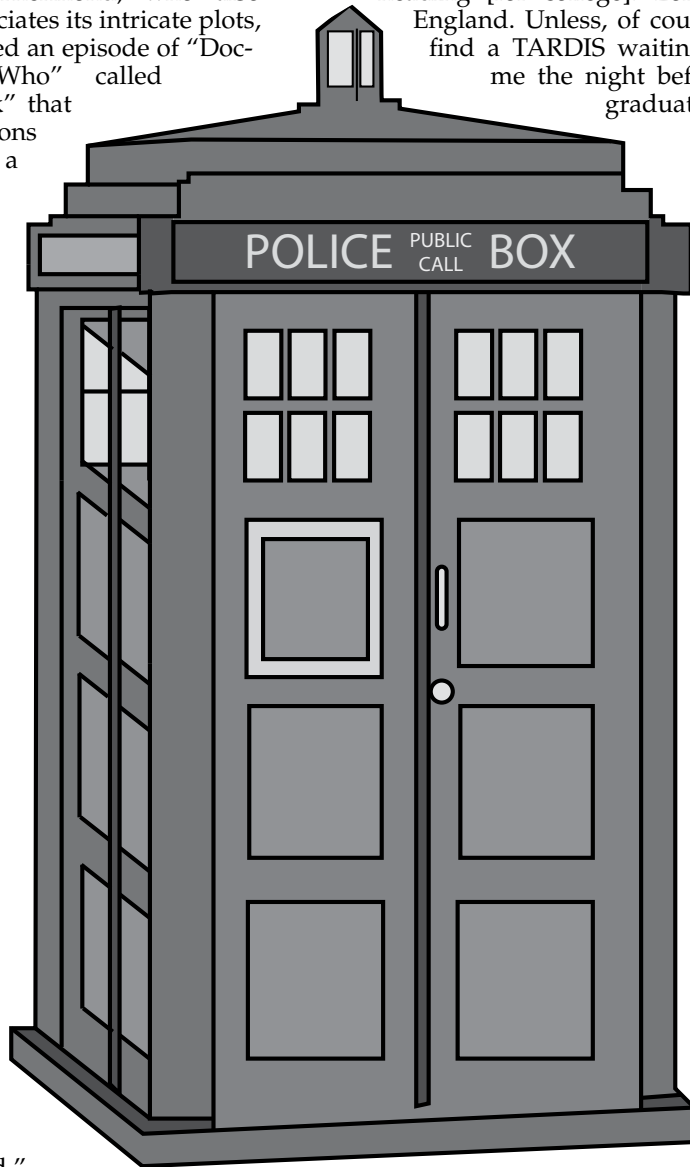
"When [the first doctor] regenerated into the second doctor, they did this cool thing with water, a camera and sand," Wong said. "When

they moved the camera and poured the water over his face, his face actually appeared to shift very realistically."

Heyman said shows like "Doctor Who" have had a lasting impact on her growing fascination for British culture. "British TV is what ultimately led me to fall in love with British culture," Heyman said. "Now I know where I'll be heading [for college]: London, England. Unless, of course, I find a TARDIS waiting for me the night before I graduate." ♦

There are no constraints to it. You can go anywhere and do anything.

>> Sophomore Helen Wong



GRAPHICS BY GRACE MA

'Skins' for dummies



DYLAN JEW

Jew wish you were Dylan



AKSHARA SEKAR

Simply Akshara

"Skins" is a British television series on the air since 2007. The show follows a group of teenagers who navigate through controversial topics, like drugs, alcohol, mental illnesses and death. Despite this material, or even because of it, the show has an enormously devoted fan following.

In 2011, MTV aired an American adaptation of the series, only to fail since many viewers took offense at a show that portrayed such young teens dealing with such serious issues.

Show explores homosexuality

Homosexuality is one of the controversial topics present in both generations of this series.

Like some modern American television series, "Skins" has a gay lead, Maxxie Oliver; however, it takes a different approach to the subject.

For the most part, "Skins" treats him similarly to the other characters, with his sexual orientation playing a minor role in the plot.

In the first generation, Maxxie Oliver is an openly gay character who is accepted in his social group and known for being a talented performer.

The only part of the first two seasons when Maxxie's sexuality hinders the plot is his desire for his best friend, Anwar, to tell his father the truth about Maxxie's interest in boys.

The plot doesn't stress this topic as much as the seasons of the second generation.

First generation stuns

The secret to the show's cult status may lie in its candid depiction of teens using and abusing alcohol.

These were molded into the first-generation characters, and viewers related each provocative party or controversial topic to its respective character.

The second generation almost seemed to resemble the first two seasons too much. The love triangle, struggle with homosexuality and epic character death were too reminiscent of the adventures just completed in the first two seasons.

Another reason the first generation of "Skins" is better than the second is that Tony is a much stronger lead than Effy.

Tony appears to be selfish and uncaring, but in reality he is compassionate and capable of loving others.

This makes him impossible to hate, despite some of his rash actions. Effy, on the other hand, is mysterious to the point that it is difficult to understand her.

She is extremely reserved, and viewers and other characters cannot read her emotions well. The second generation is missing a character like Tony, someone who makes every episode interesting with unexpected outcomes. ♦

Success is heading in 'One Direction'

BY Sabrina Chen

They finished third on the seventh series of "X-Factor." They were the first British group ever to debut at U.S. Billboard 200 with their first album. They have sold over 12 million records and represent a \$50 million business empire. And on top of all that, they have managed to enchant millions of girls from all around the world.

As the Huffington Post proclaims, 2012 is "The Year of One Direction."

Senior Rachel Leonard is one of One Direction's many fans who have followed the band ever since their debut in 2010.

"I really love their music and they are also the most beautiful boys in the whole world," Leonard said. "And honestly, there is not one thing I don't like about them."

The five boys who make up One Direction—Niall Horan, Zayn Malik, Liam Payne, Harry Styles and Louis Tomlinson—auditioned as solo candidates for Britain's "X-Factor" television music competition in 2010. They each failed to qualify for the boys' category, but were then put together to compete as a group, as suggested by guest judge Nicole Scherzinger.

After winning third place of the 2010-2011 season, they signed a deal with Simon Cowell's record label Synco Records.

"Harry was the one who thought of the name of the band, One Direction," Leonard said. "Ever since then, they've been the biggest boy band of all time."

Another so-called Directioner, sophomore Nidhi Vellanki, said she loves the band's camaraderie.

"I love how they are all really good friends, even though they didn't really know each other when the band was first created," Vellanki said.

According to Leonard, One Direction appeals to teenagers not only because of their looks but also because of their personalities.

"[In] interviews, they are all super funny, but they are also super nice and genuine and you can just tell that they are good people," Leonard said. "They do a lot of charity work, and mixed in with their personalities and their looks, it just all goes together perfectly."

Leonard added that another reason for One Direction's popularity is that "they dress really nicely" and have appealing British accents.

"Being British is probably part of the reason why I love them," Leonard said. "The accents make them even more attractive."

Leonard said Horan is their favorite boy in One Direction because "he is adorable and his laugh is amazing."

"I love Niall and I want to marry him," Leonard said. "It's actually going to happen." ♦



Band members Liam Payne, Louis Tomlinson, Niall Horan, Zayn Malik and Harry Styles pose in the music video for their new song, "Live While We're Young."



Students hope for non-block schedule

BY Derek Sun

Arguably the biggest transition from middle school to high school is the block schedule all freshmen must get attuned to. Instead of 45-minute periods that they knew so well from Redwood Middle School, the school throws new students for a loop with 95-minute classes, four out of five days of the week.

Yet the school did not always have a block schedule. Eight years ago, during the 2005-2006 school year, the school decided that a block schedule would help lessen the homework load on students, so that they would not have to do seven classes of homework a night. While this change seemed beneficial, some students wish it had never happened.

Junior Kip Ringsrud prefers a simpler schedule.

"Even though we would have seven classes a day, teachers would know that students wouldn't be able to do that much homework in a night so they would assign less," Ringsrud said.

He said teachers often feel obliged to give more homework because they have class for nearly double as much time, sometimes resulting in double the amount of homework. Ringsrud believes that if schedules were changed back to seven classes a day, the homework load would actually decrease rather than increase.

"Homework is meant to review the material learned in class and if we learn less material in class, then we would have less homework," Ringsrud said.

Sophomore Ken Wu agrees. He believes that the non-block schedule would help students maintain focus in the classroom because there is a five 5-minute passing period every 50 minutes rather

than one every hour and a half. Wu believes that these five minutes are crucial in maintaining focus.

"When I can walk around, I can refocus and see the task at hand, but when I'm sitting down for long lengths of time, I can't maintain my concentration," Wu said.

According to Wu, this break in focus goes a long way towards helping in his studies. He finds that during homework, the concepts taught in the later part of class are always harder for him to remember.

"It's really hard to concentrate at the end of class so when I do homework, I can really feel it," Wu said.

Fortunately for Wu and Ringsrud, the school implements this seven-period day once a week every Monday.

"It's nice to be able to have at least one day where we have seven classes," Ringsrud said. "While the homework load might be heavier, I really understand the material better."

While there are revisionists in school, there are also believers in the block schedule. Senior Eric Tang likes the block schedule because "it allows for procrastination to the maximum."

"Homework is a lot less in comparison to the seven class schedule because I can have an extra day to do three classes worth of homework," Tang said. "That really helps me stay on track."

Yet Ringsrud believes that with proper diligence, the block schedule would be unnecessary. According to Ringsrud, simplicity is easier, and in this case, the seven-period schedule would keep his life nice and simple.

"The block schedule just complicates things and makes high school more stressful," Ringsrud said. ♦

>> THE breakdown

Non-block Schedule

Reasons for change

Students believe they would be able to concentrate better in class with shorter class periods.

Obstacles

Many students believe that the block schedule allows students to have less homework per night.

Should Saratoga offer Multivariable Calculus?

BY Samuel Liu

When it was time to select classes last fall, senior Kabir Chandrasekher looked down at the West Valley class schedules and knew that he had a problem. After taking AP Calculus BC at Saratoga High, Chandrasekher hoped to take Multivariable Calculus, the branch of calculus immediately following BC, at West Valley College.

"[It helps] provide the base for all of the cool stuff like analysis and abstract algebra," Chandrasekher said.

However, the available time slots for West Valley's Multivariable Calculus classes were 3:15 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.—directly conflicting with Chandrasekher's after-school activities.

"I've looked at every community college in a 30-minute to one-hour [driving distance] radius," Chandrasekher said. "None of them fit my schedule."

Such is the case of many students, who find themselves unable to take Multivariable Calculus outside of school because of extracurricular activities. Although community colleges also offer the class online for college credit, Chandrasekher said students miss out on the "traditional classroom setting."

Last year, junior Mostafa Rohaninejad, who is currently in AP Calculus BC, started a petition to add Multivariable Calculus at the school. He collected about 60 signatures of students willing to take the class if it were offered here.

Rohaninejad said, "In a school where math is a way of life, it's ridiculous the teaching staff do not satisfy this thirst by providing the most difficult and engaging classes."

His petition was rejected by the math department. Math teacher PJ

Yim said offering Multivariable Calculus would be impractical and would be for no credit.

"If it was offered, there would be no AP... no honors, no college credit," Yim said. "What it becomes is a no credit [class], that colleges will not recognize."

According to assistant principal Brian Safine, Multivariable Calculus would count for credit only if it were taught by a community college professor. Since the College Board does not recognize Multivariable Calculus as a high school class, it offers no AP exam in the subject.

At Lynbrook High School, a college professor hosts a Multivariable Calculus on campus. Since West Valley College is within walking distance from Saratoga, doing something similar at Saratoga would be impractical, Yim said.

Additionally, Yim fears that adding a Multivariable Calculus class would simply add to the "rat race," where students will take the class simply because others are taking it.

"[It would] make people feel inadequate," he said. "The level of math you are taught does not necessarily mean you know more math." ♦

[It would] make people feel inadequate.

>> Math teacher PJ Yim

>> THE breakdown

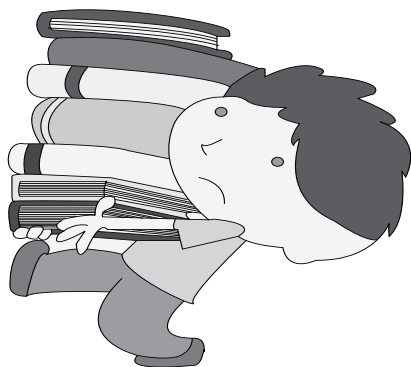
Multivariable Calculus

Reasons for change

Advanced math students would be able to take Multivariable Calculus without fear of conflicts with after school activities.

Obstacles

Students would not be able to take the class for college credit. There would be no AP exam.



>> togatalks

What changes would you make to the school if you were principal for a day?

"I would make a full block schedule."



sophomore Alvin Kim

"I would make tutorial take place every day."



junior Sachi Verma

STUDENTS DISCUSS SCHOOL CHANGES THEY WOULD LIKE TO SEE

only...



ALL GRAPHICS BY GRACE MA

Students suggest Korean classes be implemented into school curriculum

BY Megan Iyer

Sophomore Joowon Lee spent the first four years of his life living in South Korea. While there, he built up his Korean vocabulary and language skills.

Once Lee moved to the United States, he spent countless hours in Korean school and was able to build up an extensive Korean vocabulary at an extremely young age.

"I watched a lot of Korean shows and dramas, which helped build up a better vocabulary," Lee said.

He said being bilingual helped him learn to handle "having more than one thing on my plate at once."

Additionally, Lee said many students here are Korean by birth but do not get the chance to speak it at home. He believes it would be beneficial for them to

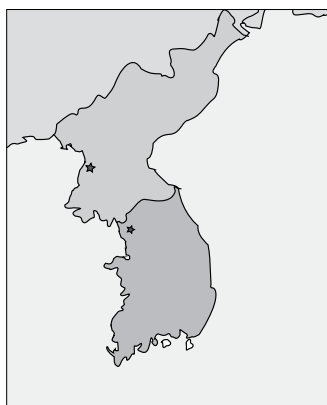
learn the language.

"[It's hard for other students to learn] because their parents cannot speak Korean themselves or the student has no place time to go learn somewhere else," Lee said.

In addition, Lee said he would like the Korean classes to focus on subjects like history and culture.

"Korean classes are useful so students can learn about Korean culture," he said.

Like Lee, sophomore Adrienne Kim speaks Korean proficiently, since she travels to South Korea often, and both her grandmother and father speak to her



in only Korean.

"My mom always speaks to me in 'konglish,' which is a mixture of both Korean and English," said Kim.

Kim believes that though Korean grammar is difficult, it is a useful language to know because of all the latest Korean entertainment that has infused itself into Western culture, such as music, like the recent hit "Gangnam Style" by Psy,

and television shows. Additionally, Lee said that because most history classes do not put much focus on Korean history, Korean-based classes would help students to under-

stand and appreciate the Korean culture.

"Many people think Korea is a small, unimportant country," Lee said. "If we had classes completely Korean based, they would realize that it actually has thousands of years [of history]." ♦

>> THE breakdown

Korean Classes

Reasons for change

Students would get the opportunity to embrace Korean language, history and culture.

Obstacles

With three languages already taught at the school, there might not be enough interest to form full classes.

Athletes wish for variety in school sports

BY Jennifer Jin

Dancing. Yoga. Equestrian. Though these unusual sports are not offered at the school, dozens of students devote hours to them each week.

Many of them, including junior Amelia Troyer, who studies hatha yoga at the Bikram Yoga Studio in San Jose, hope their sport will eventually be incorporated into the school's athletic program.

"In such a highly stressful school, it would be lovely for Saratoga High to incorporate yoga into its offerings," Troyer said. "However, its scarcity in schools wouldn't make it easy to hold the competitions."

Although Troyer isn't sure students would not take hatha yoga seriously as a sport, she still encourages everyone to try it.

"Many people fail to acknowledge the competitive aspect that yoga can offer as well as its physical and mental benefits," Troyer said. "Bikram yoga has given me a solid ground to stand on, both mentally and physically, and I'm so happy to be able to gain [P.E.] credit doing what I love."

Troyer says that it is extremely beneficial for any student.

"The postures are incredibly therapeutic and healing for anyone in any sport," Troyer said. "My practice has for sure helped me stay sane during school."

However, students such as equestrian show jumper, senior Elizabeth McAfee, find that some sports may not be realistic to incorporate into a school setting.

"It's hard to have a horse-back riding team in high school mostly because of the lack of talented horses," McAfee said.

Senior Brynn Littlehale, who also participates in equestrian, agrees.

"It would be very hard to implement a team, especially with there being so many different styles of riding and not a great location nearby," Littlehale said. "But I do know several private schools that have competition teams, so it is plausible."

Sophomore dancer Joy Tang is having more success with implementing her sport at school.

Tang decided to start a dance team because her friends at her dance company



Courtesy of BRYNN LITTLEHALE

Senior Brynn Littlehale believes that equestrian would be a rewarding sport for a school team, although there would undoubtedly be difficulties in accomplishing this goal.

made it into their school dance team so Tang wanted a similar experience.

Tang is working with assistant principal Kerry Mohnike to form the team. There is currently a signup list on Mohnike's door for interested students.

According to Mohnike, they are trying to gauge interest in the team before creating it.

The main obstacle in forming the team is finding a capable coach.

"We're looking for coaches, trying to figure out how to pay the coaches and what the rehearsal schedule will look

like," Mohnike said. "I'm hoping to find somebody who knows about the competitive environment out there."

The school used to have a dance team, but it was eventually merged with the spirit squad. However, the kind of competition that spirit does is different from what the students who are interested in this dance team want to do.

"Even though dance takes up a lot of my time, I am not willing to give it up because I love it so much," Tang said. "I hope that this team can be formed so I can help represent Saratoga High." ♦

>> THE breakdown

New School Sports

Reasons for change

Students who participate in sports the school does not offer would have the chance to represent SHS.

Obstacles

The cost of implementing these sports as well as finding other schools to compete against would be difficult.

Transfer kids find home at SHS

WITH TIME, STUDENTS TRANSITION TO ENVIRONMENT OF NEW SCHOOL

BY Sabrina Chen

When sophomore Kimberly Zai entered her first-period Trigonometry/Precalculus Honors class on the first day of school, she found a room full of unfamiliar faces.

She silently wished she was back at Los Gatos High School, with familiar friends and a familiar campus.

But as her time here has passed, Zai has become involved in clubs, made new friends and began to enjoy the new atmosphere.

"The community here is really great, and the students are very friendly," Zai said.

Zai said the transition was pretty smooth, though the schools are rivals.

"Some people joke around saying stuff like, 'Oh! You're a Wildcat? Get out of here!'" Zai said.

"But no one is serious, and the students here are really friendly."

Though Zai enjoys the Saratoga students and community, she said she

misses the Los Gatos campus.

"Los Gatos has a much more beautiful campus, but the Saratoga quad is pretty nice too," Zai said.

"The student-teacher environment at Saratoga is pretty good also."



Zai

Zai said that contrary to what many students believe, the academics here are similar to those at Los Gatos.

"There isn't any big jump in homework," Zai said. "But while the classes at Los Gatos aren't easier than [at] Saratoga, the people in them don't do as well. People are more competitive and work harder to get good grades here."

Junior Isabel Castellanos, who transferred from Notre Dame High School in San Jose this year, agreed that Saratoga students are more motivated to get good grades.

"At Notre Dame, it was a much more relaxed education-wise, but the school rules were a lot stricter—we had to wear uniforms," Castellanos said.

"I just love going off campus for

lunch. It's pretty awesome."

Castellanos added that Notre Dame had more clubs, although the club sizes were much smaller than Saratoga's.

"We had a Harry Potter club, a book club and a lot of weird clubs," Castellanos said. "We had a club for everything."

According to Zai, the sports program at Saratoga is not as emphasized as the sports program at Los Gatos.

"The sports day at Los Gatos is really huge, and the one at Saratoga wasn't as big," Zai said.

"From my experience, I see that Los Gatos is more sporty and not quite as academic, while Saratoga is competitive in academics, but not so much in sports."

Zai said that her favorite part about Saratoga so far is the openness of the environment and the people.

"Maybe it's because I'm new, but people are really reaching out to meet me, [and] it's really nice," Zai said. ♦

>> falconfigures

91 Number of transfer students at SHS

1 Number of foreign exchange students

5 Number of transfer students from Los Gatos High School

32 Number of transfer students from private schools



Lynbrook and SHS display array of similarities

BY Catherine Tang

Although many people often immediately compare Los Gatos High School to Saratoga High, Lynbrook has become an increasingly prevalent comparison over the years.

Lynbrook is ranked as the No. 22 best high school in California according to US News and World Report, whereas Saratoga High is ranked No. 31.

Lynbrook has a higher enrollment rate at 1,837 and Saratoga High at 1,368. Within the enrollment, Lynbrook has a much higher Asian to white enrollment rate.

Lynbrook is 78 percent Asian and 17 percent white, whereas Saratoga is 53

percent Asian and 36 percent white.

According to sophomore Anisha Nagarajan, both schools are stereotyped as academic schools and not very athletic; she believes the latter stereotype inaccurate.

"[Saratoga High] is very academic, but our sports are better than people give us credit for," Nagarajan said.

Nagarajan believes people stereotype Saratoga High students as unathletic because they are academically strong. Similarly, Lynbrook sophomore Diana Zhao believes her school deserves more athletic recognition as well, but she says academic recognition makes up for it.

"Although our sports aren't the best, we do deserve more recognition; however, [Lynbrook] is really competitive academically and there are lots of really nice opportunities for students," Zhao said.

Math and science competitions are big events at Lynbrook, and students prepare months ahead for a few major ones; in 2010, eight students took home awards from the Intel Science Talent Search, where 1,611 student scientists from 59 different countries competed for over \$4 million in awards and scholar-

ships.

"From what I hear, Lynbrook students are really good at math and science, and they take it really seriously," sophomore Amanda Le said.

Academic stereotypes aside, Lynbrook students are also known for valuing school spirit and school activities, such as Homecoming.

"Although [Lynbrook] is a pretty academic school, we are really spirited and put a lot of effort into Homecoming," Zhao said.

Homecoming is, arguably, the biggest event of the year at Lynbrook.

While students at SHS start preparing for Homecoming a few weeks in advance, Lynbrook students start preparing months in advance, starting at the beginning of summer.

At Lynbrook, instead of each class having its own designated section of the quad during Homecoming, each class has a designated day for its gauntlet, a decorated walkway which leads to the quad.

Instead of having a whole weekend to build, students are only allowed a few hours the day before.

According to Nagarajan, Saratoga High can still improve on its school spirit.



sophomore Anisha Nagarajan

“Since both schools have academic reputations, Lynbrook may prove to be a rival like Los Gatos.”

"I think more people should participate in Homecoming because right now it's just a few people doing a lot, and Homecoming is supposed to be for everyone to come together," said Nagarajan.

While only a fraction of Saratoga students are involved in school spirit, most Lynbrook students participate in school activities.

"I feel like Lynbrook has more support from the students compared to us, such as more attendance at games and more participation for Homecoming," Le said.

Principal Paul Robinson is trying to increase school spirit at Saratoga High by having Red Pride Fridays, where everybody wears red to school.

Aside from the disparity in school spirit, Nagarajan believes Lynbrook to be more similar in academics to Saratoga than the traditional rival, Los Gatos, since both schools' test scores are very similar.

Lynbrook's 2011 Academic Performance Index is slightly higher than Saratoga High's with 938 and 931 respectively.

Both schools have 71 percent participation in AP testing; however, 96 percent of Lynbrook students pass while 88 percent of Saratoga High students pass.

"Since both our schools have an academic reputation, Lynbrook may prove to be a rival for Saratoga like Los Gatos," Nagarajan said. ♦

>> thebigidea

Lynbrook High School

The common stereotype
Purely academic environment.

The reality
Students highly value school spirit.

Compared to SHS
Both schools are known for their academics, and their sports programs are underestimated.

Former Harker eagle speaks out



Sleepless nights, a mind-blowing amount of American History homework, impossible demands from parents and back-breaking academic pressure. Sounds like junior year at SHS, right? Wrong.

I'm not describing the sleep-deprived lifestyle of a junior, but that of an eighth grader at the Harker School.

I'm sure most of you have heard of Harker, that so-called pompous, rich school stationed in San Jose.

Harker students are often unjustly characterized as either spoiled brats or unrivaled prodigies.

As a former member of that supposedly prestigious school (having attended from fourth to eighth grade), I never realized how misunderstood Harker was. After enduring numerous reiterations of the same stereotypes over and over, I have decided to once and for all clarify some myths about Harker.

Myth 1: All Harker students are smart.

This is the most common misconception. I'm sorry to say that not all Harker students are geniuses. In fact, they are about average (in relation to SHS students).

I've lost count of how many times I

have heard, "Oh my gosh! You came from Harker? Are you super smart then?" whenever anyone hears about my elementary and middle school alma mater.

An especially frustrating and inaccurate measure of academic ability is the number of AP courses Harker students take.



ALLISON CHANG
aka Bella Swan

Yes, Harker allows freshmen to take classes such as AP Computer Science and AP Calculus.

But remember that Harker is a private school (with a whopping annual tuition of about \$36,000), capable of supporting more teachers and courses than public schools.

Therefore, the administration has no qualms about allowing students to take as many AP courses as students desire.

So really, the next time you hear Harker students complaining about how many AP classes they take, don't immediately assume "Whoa! They can take that many AP classes that early? What geniuses!"

They are pretty similar to SHS students, just with some extra resources.

Let's face it, if given the option to take as many AP classes as we wanted here, freshmen and sophomores would be flocking to the office for slots.

Myth 2: Students are rich.

The popular idea is that all Harker students are spoiled trust-fund babies.

If Harker students are spoiled, Saratoga students aren't that far behind.

The average income of Saratoga is pretty impressive.

Last weekend, I could have sworn I saw a million-dollar Bugati leisurely coasting through Saratoga downtown. Of course, that's no big deal for us.

If Harker students are made of cash, then Saratoga students are made of solid, 24-karat gold. Embedded with diamonds.

Some of my former classmates even reside in our humble town, but most of them live in cities with lower average household incomes, such as San Jose and Cupertino.

The difference is that their parents have decided to invest into Harker, rather than other expenses, like million-dollar homes, perhaps?

Myth 3: Students have no social life.

Unfortunately, I actually may have to confirm this myth. (Just kidding.) Seriously, though, where do people get these ideas?

Harker students are plenty social! It's

just that their idea of socializing is a bit different.

You see, they like to do homework while socializing—so much more productive!

OK, I'll give you that one. Scattered all over the Silicon Valley, Harker students can't just walk a few houses down and be at their best friend's doorstep or meet up at the local library within a couple minutes.

Overall, though, before making sweeping judgements, please get to know each individual student first.

Some Harker students are actually athletic! Some of us get B's and C's! (Gasp! Sacrilege!)

But on a more serious note, haven't you been hurt before when people from other schools give you "the look," when you say you are from Saratoga? It hurts.

So please don't do it to Harker students.

They aren't aliens from another planet, just from another school that happens to cost more than Saratoga High. ♦

STUDENTS FROM AROUND THE BAY AREA DISCUSS THE STEREOTYPES OF THEIR SCHOOL COMPARED TO SHS AND OFFER NEW PERSPECTIVES.

Harker School Bellarmine College Preparatory Source: GOOGLE IMAGES

Bellarmino's athletic strength overshadows other aspects

BY Trung Vandinh

Many students only recognize Bellarmine College Preparatory as the Catholic all-boys private school with a phenomenal sports program.

Fielding a total of 34 teams in 13 different sports of the West Catholic Athletic League (WCAL), the Bellarmine Bells are often ranked nationally and have been the state's best in a variety of sports over the years. But despite its athletic strength as a school, at least

some members of the school community wish they had a more well-rounded reputation.

"We are proud of our athletic tradition at Bellarmine," the school's athletic director Mike West said. "But it is not what defines us as a school."

West believes that what does define Bellarmine are the "great students, as well as the gifted teachers, coaches and staff members who work very hard in everything they do on campus."

In many ways, Bellarmine can be likened to Saratoga High. School spirit has always been a strength for Bellarmine. Students generally don't mind or rarely notice the lack of girls on campus.

"It makes the environment more relaxed," Bellarmine senior Kshithij Shrinath said. "It's weird not interacting with girls that often, but it's not as big a deal as you might think."

According to Pascal Nguyen, a sophomore at Bellarmine, both schools have strong speech and debate and journalism departments; both schools also participate in For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology (FIRST) com-

petitions.

"I chose to go to Bellarmine because I thought that I would have more options than at Saratoga," Alex Lyon, a freshman at Bellarmine, said. Lyon attended Redwood Middle school but decided to enroll in the private school.

Despite sharing the same hard-working mentality, students believe the two schools generally have differing priorities.

For instance, Bellarmine does not force Catholicism onto its students, and students with other beliefs are accepted if they are willing to participate in the morning prayer and mandatory religion classes.

While many SHS students like the academic aspect of high school, Bellarmine students are more likely to participate in numerous activities at once, contradicting the stereotype that private schools focus too much on their grades and homework while public schools don't focus on them enough.

"Private schools are generally narrow-minded since they only focus on grades," junior Sam Kobara said. "But from what I've heard, Bellarmine would be the exception." ♦

>> togatalks

What do you think SHS is best known for?

"I think it's best known for our academics and our band."



junior Raiza de Vera

"I feel that we are gradually getting known for our sports."



senior Shreyas Doshi

"We're known for our music department in general. And grades."



sophomore Damee Moon

>> thebigidea

Bellarmino College Prep.

The common stereotype
A school focused on sports.

The reality
Bellarmino students participate in a variety of activities.

Compared to SHS
SHS students are also well-rounded, and students from both schools participate in many of the same activities.

FOOTBALL

Falcons bounce back for Homecoming

BY Nikil Ramanathan

The Falcons got back on their winning track on Homecoming night Oct. 12 with an emphatic 56-7 win over the Homestead Mustangs, emerging strong after a good week of practice.

After a three and out on their first defensive series, the Falcon offense took over and struck first with a long pass from junior quarterback Jonathan Walters to junior wide receiver Grant Faylor. Senior Fred Feysi kicked the extra point, which put the Falcons up 7-0.

On their third drive, the Falcons scored on a touchdown pass from Walters to junior wide receiver Travis Stokes, and with another extra point, extended the lead to 14-0.

In the second quarter, the Falcons offense took flight, adding four more touchdowns. Walters threw touchdown passes to Faylor, senior wide receiver Austin McMath and senior running back Ryan Kane. Kane also added a rushing touchdown.

The Mustangs managed to score one touchdown in the second quarter, making the score 42-7 at halftime.

The scoring stopped for the Mustangs in the second half, but the Falcons added two more touchdown passes: one to senior wide receiver Kyle Dozier and one more to Stokes, making the final score 56-7.

Senior linebacker Henry Wei said the

game against Homestead was a good night for both offense and defense.

"Overall I think we dominated on both sides of the ball," Wei said. "The offense really clicked, and we had great blocking from the line, which was key. For the defense we read our keys and got to the football and rallied to make tackles."

The Falcons suffered a tough loss away on Oct. 5 to the Santa Clara Bruins. Saratoga drew first blood with a touchdown pass from Walters to Dozier in the first quarter.

However, some confusion on a play call cost the Falcons and gave the Bruins a safety, making the score 7-2 Saratoga. The Bruins then scored a touchdown and a two-point conversion, giving Santa Clara the lead 10-7. An added field goal before the half made the score 13-7 Santa Clara at halftime.

The Falcons came out strong in the second half, however, and senior defensive back Eric Castronovo forced a fumble to give the ball to the Falcons.

Soon after, Walters and Dozier connected on another touchdown pass, giving Saratoga the lead. However, with another touchdown and two-point conversion, the Bruins took the lead 21-14.

In the fourth quarter the Falcons responded with a touchdown pass from Walters to sophomore receiver Joey Medeiros, tying the game 21-21.

With 1:45 left to go, however, special



FALCON // SIMI SRIVASTAVA

Junior center Clark Rothenberg prepares to snap the ball at Homecoming on Oct. 12.

teams cost the Falcons, and the Bruins scored a touchdown off a punt return, giving them the lead 28-21 with about 1:30 left to go.

The Falcons attempted to drive down the field and tie the game again, but good defensive play by the Bruins ended the Falcons' chances for a comeback. Saratoga was handed its second loss of the season, the first from a 51-35 loss to perennial powerhouse Wilcox at home on Sept. 30.

For the next game The Falcons look to start a winning streak and get win num-

ber five in their home game against the Mountain View Spartans on Oct. 19.

McMath said that the game will be a tough fought battle and added that the defense needs to play stellar in order to help secure another win. He also said that this game is big because it could turn into a potential rivalry.

"Something I don't think the school knows is that this is going to be a rival game for us," McMath said. "Last year we lost Henry [Wei], [alumni] Jerick [Lee] and Troy [Doles] to these guys, and now we are out for revenge." ♦

GIRLS' TENNIS



FALCON // WREN SUTTERFIELD

Captain senior Niharika Bedekar prepares for a shot in an Oct. 4 game against Palo Alto.

Team still second in league despite coaching change

BY Evaline Ju

After a Sept. 25 loss to Monta Vista, coach Ashvin Soan announced two days later that he would step down as head coach of the girls' tennis team for unstated personal reasons. Assistant coach Florin Marica decided on Oct. 3 to take the position with Jonathan Chui as the new assistant coach.

Marica has been giving lessons on the Saratoga courts for years and has become a prominent figure in the local tennis community.

"I think Florin is a great addition to the team," No. 4 singles player sophomore Arathi Sabada said. "[He] has all the necessary expertise to lead the team. He has a great sense of strategy and gives helpful advice."

No. 3 singles player sophomore Smita Sabada agreed.

"Because we already know him so well, we are comfortable around him rather than having a complete new stranger [as] coach," she said.

Near the end of the league season, the team remains second in the De Anza League after dominant Monta Vista.

"I think we've really progressed as a team," captain senior Niharika Bedekar said. "Our doubles teams have gotten stronger, and we've gotten used to playing with each other. We're finally starting to act like a team."

The girls won 5-2 against both Los Altos on Oct. 9 and Milpitas on Oct. 11.

Despite the absence of No. 1 singles player junior Kalyani Narayan on Oct. 2 and Oct. 4, the team defeated Mountain View 5-2 and Palo Alto 4-3.

The team lost 6-1 to Monta Vista on Sept. 25. The lone win came from Arathi Sabada, who won 6-1, 7-5 against junior Jenna McGuirk. The No. 3 doubles team of sophomore Sonal Pai and freshman Shaya Nikfar lost a close first set 7-5.

As of Oct. 15, the team has an overall record of 10-5 and a 8-1 league record.

"I'm really proud that we're [8-1] even though it is a rebuilding season," Bedekar said. "We're still at the same level as we were last year."

The girls faced Monta Vista for the second time at home on Oct. 18 for the team's senior day. Their last league match will take place at Mountain View on Oct. 25. ♦

GIRLS' GOLF

Consistency is key

FALCONS HOLD FIRST-EVER 10-1 RECORD

BY Aashna Mukerji

Senior Sanjna Verma took a deep breath, cleared her mind and focused on the ninth hole. A small swing back and a clean follow-through pushed the ball straight into the hole for a par 3 on Sept. 17 during a match against Leland High School. Exasperated, her opponent flung her club at the ground for the third time that day.

That's the kind of frustration that is mounting for opponents of the girls' golf team halfway through their eight-week season. The Falcons' record is 10-1 as of Oct. 15.

The players attribute their success to daily practice.

Verma believes that most of the other teams in the Blossom Valley Athletic league are less consistent. Their No. 1 and No. 2 players shoot very low scores, "but numbers four, five and six shoot in the high 50s and 60s," Verma said.

The girls play nine holes in matches. All six players that compete regularly for Saratoga High get scores in the 40s and low 50s.

"That helps us a lot because that way we don't have any outliers," Verma added.

The team underwent radical changes last season, which included a new coach, home course and routine.

"It also helped that coach had try-outs last year, and only the top six played in matches," No. 1 player senior Samika Kumar said. "We were al-

ways competing against each other for spots, and we're all really dedicated."

This is the first time that the team has won more than five matches in a row.

"We're getting very consistent play from everybody," Coach Dave Gragnola said. "Some of our players could even go lower and have better scores, but so far, because of our consistently decent scores, we're beating everybody else."

While the team may not make it to CCS as a whole, several players—seniors Kumar, Verma, Sara Pettersson, junior Sachi Verma, sophomore Vivian Roan and freshman Ankitha Sarvesh—are expected to qualify individually.

Gragnola believes that the team has "a good chance of tying [with Leland] or winning the [Blossom Valley Athletic] League."

Kumar feels that the players "had a lot of potential at the end of last season because everyone was so dedicated."

Because the girls spend nearly every day practicing together, they have become much closer to each other.

"We're like one big family," freshman Ankitha Sarvesh said. "We have a lot of fun out there."

A winning streak isn't quite good enough for Gragnola, however.

"I want to get that 'Girls' Golf' banner [for a CCS Championship] hanging up on the wall of the gymnasium," he said. "That's my goal for this season." ♦

Some of our players could go lower and have better scores, but so far, because of our consistently decent scores, we're beating everybody else.

>> Coach Dave Gragnola

GIRLS' VOLLEYBALL

Falcons work hard to finish games well

BY Sierra Smith & Catherine Tang

After a month of preseason games, the girls' volleyball players have refined their skills and teamwork. However, players say they have yet to learn how to perform to the best of their abilities when it matters.

"I think that sometimes our team gets ahead of themselves when we are ahead, and we start to lose the intensity needed to win games," junior outside hitter Tivoli Sisco said.

In a match against The Kings Academy at the Cupertino tournament on

Sept. 22, the girls won the first game 25-13. To the players and everyone else watching, it seemed like they were going to take home another win in two games when the score was 22-17, but a missed serve and a few bad passes later, the Falcons lost 26-24. They were unable to return many balls in the third game and lost 15-6.

"I think it's because when someone starts to play down, it affects the whole team, and we start to give up," junior outside hitter Julia Lee said.

The team had a particularly disappointing night on Sept. 27 in a match against Notre Dame Belmont. The gym

was unusually quiet during the match, and team morale seemed to be low. They lost 25-18, 25-12 and 25-14.

"We've had moments of brilliance this season, but what we still need to work on is learning how to play our best when it really matters," coach Brad Frederickson said. "And that's what we're focused on right now,"

Despite these disappointments, the girls are confident they can improve their ability to finish games.

"I think we can improve by having more intense game situations so we can learn how to keep our intensity up," Sisco said. "We also need to learn from

those mistakes."

Although they ended with a preseason record of 5-9, this record is second best among all the teams in the El Camino league with the exception of Cupertino High, whom they defeated at the Cupertino tournament in three games on Sept. 22.

The team has gone four for four in season games so far. They defeated Wilcox on Oct. 2 in 3 games with scores 25-16, 25-9 and 25-27, and on Oct. 4 they defeated Fremont in 3 games with scores 25-22, 25-13 and 25-23. On Oct. 9 they defeated Santa Clara and on Oct. 11 they won in a match against Milpitas. ♦

GIRLS' WATER POLO

Underclassmen make a splash in varsity waters

BY Maya Ravichandran

At 5:45 a.m., the air on the pool deck is frigid and the sky a dark, uninviting mass.

For sophomore water polo player Amanda Moriarty, the cold temperatures aren't that bad, especially after she has warmed up in the water. Moriarty, who plays on the four five side—the right side—of the cage, has been playing water polo for just two years, not as long as some of the other players on the varsity team.

"I chose to play water polo because it is such a fun sport, and the team is like a second family to me," Moriarty said. "I love all of them."

On the other hand, freshman Alexa Frieberg had already swum competitively and played water polo since fifth grade when she joined the team. During games, Frieberg plays the set position, the player directly in front of the cage.

Both Frieberg and Moriarty look forward to playing other schools every week.

"[The best] moment [is] right before a ball goes in the cage," Moriarty said. "For me time always seems to slows

down, and you can see the ball flying perfectly into the net. It's such a great feeling."

Varsity games are much more intense than JV, said sophomore Madison Gress, who plays either wing or driver.

"[In] JV, we could win a lot, but mainly because we were just fast and could swim down the pool and score on counter attacks," Gress said. "In order to win [in varsity], you need to have a lot more skill/strategy."

In the Sept. 25 game against Mountain View, Gress made four of the nine goals that the Falcons scored to triumph.

Despite the increased pressure that varsity brings, Gress said she enjoys playing the sport at a higher level. She said varsity opponents are "stronger, bigger and better."

Though moving up to a higher level can be overwhelming, the transition was smooth for Gress. Gress said her teammates "are really nice, and everyone is really close."

During the home game on Sept. 27 against Monta Vista, the Falcons beat the Matadors 6-4. On Oct. 2 and Oct. 4, the team beat Cupertino 25-1 and Harker 6-3 respectively. ♦

"I chose to play water polo because it is such a fun sport, and the team is like a second family to me."

>> Sophomore Amanda Moriarty

GIRLS' CROSS COUNTRY



Courtesy of KRISTEN ZUNG

Freshman Hannah Leney runs with determination in her Saratoga meet on Sept. 18.

Team unites with spirit

BY Deepti Kannan & Sherrilyn Ling

On a normal Friday after school, a few cross country girls make their way down to the track for practice. When they arrive, they find the Powerpuff girls jogging around the field, Peter Pan talking to the coach and Mickey Mouse drinking from the water fountain.

Every Friday, the girls hold spirit days when they dress up according to certain themes such as cartoon characters.

With celebrations like spirit days and Senior Day, the team has come together with plenty of excitement.

At the home meet on Sept. 18, the girls celebrated Senior Day, dedicated to the 18 seniors on the team. The underclassmen painted posters for the seniors, gave them gifts and made T-shirts based on the candy theme.

Aside from special celebrations like Senior Day, senior captain Courtney Schlossareck said the girls also dress up, play games such as relays and "Sharks and Minnows" during spirit days and eat snacks during spirit days,

"I think making a competition out of [running] allows the girls to have fun, but at the same time work hard and train," Schlossareck said.

Seniors Olivia Whiting and Abby Wolfe, who organize spirit days, said some of the past themes include neon colors, animals, ninjas versus pirates, princesses and more.

With the growing spirit that the team has developed throughout the season, the girls competed at Central Park in Santa Clara on Sept. 25, where varsity placed fourth out of 14 schools and junior varsity placed seventh out of 13 schools.

The team also ran Crystal Springs on Oct. 9, a challenging, dusty 2.9 mile course with many hills and turns. The freshmen placed sixth out of 13 teams, the sophomores placed eighth out of 14 teams and the seniors finished 4th out of 14 teams.

The following meet was at Baylands on Oct. 16, the longest meet of the season at 3.1 miles. The next meet will be at Lynbrook on Oct. 25, a 2.1 mile course which they will run for the second time this season. ♦

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BOYS' CROSS COUNTRY

Sum almost breaks old course record

BY Aasim Naqvi
& Derek Sun

Sophomore Steven Sum ran a time of 9:50 for the 2-mile Saratoga Invitational on Sept. 18, only 2 seconds away from breaking a 29-year-old course record.

The win came on the heels of several dominant performances for the young athlete. Behind Sum's performance, the team ended the first third of the season with excellence.

The meet, which invited Homestead and Lynbrook to the school's home turf, produced several impressive performances. Sophomore Andrew Harter won the freshman-sophomore race with a time of 10:46, and juniors Daniel Johnston and Sam Guy both finished under the 11-minute mark.

On a more recent note, the team originally planned to race at the nationally renowned Crystal Springs course on Oct. 2; however, 100-degree temperatures forced the indefinite postponement of the meet.

Although many of the runners were excited to get their first crack at the difficult course, coaches throughout the region decided that the athletes would not perform their best in such conditions.

The runners said that the precautionary measures are understandable, given that an athlete fainted at the 2011 meet after experiencing heat exhaustion.

"I always look forward to running Crystal, but it's way too hot for a race right now," senior co-captain David Zarrin said. "Last year someone passed out, and it ended up delaying the progress of the meet for almost an hour."

With the team's immediate meet schedule currently unclear after the

postponement, the team is focusing on building on its promising first third of the season. For example, at the Rainbow Park Invitational on Sept. 5, the team received contributions from the entire varsity squad.

Sum won the varsity race, and Guy and Johnston were the next from the team to finish.

"As a team, we ran very well," Guy said. "Usually Stevie carries us, but we all ran very well today. Every runner contributed from one to seven."

The seven-man varsity team this year is very strong with many returning runners such as Guy, Harter, Zarrin, Sum, Johnston and senior Aasim Naqvi.

The team is relatively young, but they have plenty of experience. Harter and Sum were both varsity runners last year. Sum not only competes for the school, but he also races at the national level.

With the high level of experience and talent on the team, the future is bright.

"We have a lot of talent on this team," Guy said. "Along with that, we are willing to work hard and push ourselves to the limit."

This sense of dedication and hard work had often been the missing key ingredient in the past, runners said. According to Guy, the talent has always been there, but this year, everyone is working together to help each other improve and succeed.

With the season steadily approaching its halfway point, the team continues to train and improve. Zarrin believes that there is still plenty of room for improvement for the entire squad.

"There's a long ways to go in the season," Zarrin said. "We're just looking to get better every day so that we can all run strong races at every meet and eventually at CCS." ♦

"We're just looking to get better every day so that we can all run strong races at every meet and eventually at CCS."

>> Senior David Zarrin

FIELD HOCKEY

Seniors lead varsity team to new success



FALCON // WREN SUTTERFIELD

Senior Neha Vellanki pulls the ball around the Los Gatos defenders at a game on Oct. 4.

BY Sarah Finley
& Ingrid Hong

While last year's field hockey team had only two seniors, this year's team has the opposite situation, with 12 of the squad's 20 players being seniors.

According to senior captain Jenni Miller, these seniors have gained a strong chemistry with each other over the years they have played together.

"It's so great to be a part of a large group of seniors," Miller said. "It's really fun because we have been playing with each other for four years now, and throughout the years we have gotten to know each other really well."

Miller said this dynamic helps to create success on the field.

"This helps out our team because we can infer what runs and plays the others will make, which is not something that can be coached," Miller said. "It just comes from experience, so that's a really cool aspect."

However, Miller said having such a large senior class does lead to issues with playing time. Because there are 11 players on the field and 12 seniors, not every senior gets to start.

Coach Lifon Huynh believes there are both benefits and drawbacks of this large senior class.

"It's a great thing that they all are committed to playing for the program, [but] difficult because of substitutions and roles on the team," Huynh said.

"They can be either a cohesive class or in clusters."

Huynh said she is concerned about how the team tends to divide because of the large numbers.

"It is a good thing but also worrisome [because of their] tendencies to branch off to social circles [and] cliques," she said. "There can be tension within the class for people to step as leaders as a captain or non-captains."

For junior Jennie Werner, the numerous older players on the team help her strive to become a better player.

"Playing with so many seniors really pushes us, the juniors, to our potential and allows us to practice at a high level," Werner said.

On Sept. 26, the Falcons defeated the Los Altos Eagles away 1-0.

On Sept. 24, the girls beat St. Francis in one of the most intense games yet with a score of 1-0. The girls were able to keep the Lancers on their feet for the entire game. They went into overtime, with senior captain Megan Doles scoring the winning goal.

About the win, Doles said, "It was amazing! The private schools always think they're so much better than us, and it's nice being able to show the other teams how serious we are."

The girls beat Presentation 1-0 on Oct. 2, but lost a close game to Los Gatos with a score of 1-2 on Oct. 4.

They will face Gilroy and Leland on Oct. 9 and Oct. 11 respectively. ♦

BOYS' WATER POLO

Sophomores bring fresh talent to varsity team

BY Paul Jung

This year, sophomores Miles Mackenzie and Kia Hosseinian were two new additions to the varsity water polo team, bringing plenty of experience in the pool. Both sophomores were moved up from junior varsity at the start of the season.

"It's fun to be with upperclassmen and get to know more people," said Hosseinian, who plays hole defense. "But it's also hard because everyone on the other teams [on varsity] is pretty good and puts up a good fight in the water."

Because of the difference in skill level between varsity and JV, Mackenzie, a perimeter player, said he has had to adjust his effort in practice and his mindset in games.

"The step up from JV to varsity has been a massive one," Mackenzie said. "I have improved as a player since last year, but the competition is a lot tougher, so I have to be tougher too."

Both sophomores have benefitted from experience in the pool and with water polo, allowing them to play strategically.

"I think that I'm a good defensive player with a good knowledge of the sport," Mackenzie said. "I may not be

the fastest or the strongest guy in the pool, but I play smarter than most people do."

According to senior captain Neal Siganporia, both sophomores have different skill sets that make them valuable assets to the team.

"Kia is a valuable hole defense and a fundamentally sound player who's dangerous on offense and capable on defense," Siganporia said. "Miles is an offensive threat and very good for his size and will become a vital part of the team in the years to come."

According to Siganporia, for these sophomores to contribute to the team in future years, they should not only be devoted to the team but also prepared to lead it.

"They should both play club polo in the off season and do swimming to gain speed and endurance, and they need to become leaders in and out of the pool and lead by example," Siganporia said.

Despite being one of the youngest and newest members on the team, Hosseinian feels that he can connect with the older members of the team and communicate well.

"Sometimes I get messed with, but not ever in a serious way," Hosseinian



FALCON // DAVID SPARKMAN

Sophomore Kia Hosseinian keeps the ball away from another teammate during practice.

said. "Everyone was pretty chill about me on varsity, and I think we all have really gotten to know everyone on the team and work together well."

So far, the team has been doing well in their games, losing only to Lynbrook on Sept. 27 out of seven league games played, as of Oct. 4.

Lynbrook is their biggest rival for the season, and the Falcons will play them

again on Oct. 23.

Overall, it is not about the other team, but about the amount of devotion each player puts into the sport, according to Mackenzie.

"I don't think that who we are playing or anything else matters," Mackenzie said. "What matters is that we come out and play as hard as we can and give it 110 percent." ♦

GOLF

A mental game with comrades in the rough

"I want to tee up first," junior Sachi Verma said enthusiastically as we walked down the dirt path single file to the first tee at the Saratoga Country Club.

After gathering on the wooden deck by the club house that overlooks the course just after 3:30, the girls' golf team decided to play the course during practice on Sept. 26.

On the first tee, I watched the girls strap on their gloves before retrieving a tee and a ball from their matching red golf bags adorned with "Saratoga High School" stitching on the large pocket. The green course was calm and serene, and deer were often grazing throughout the course, grazing between the fairways.

Before each girl hit the ball, she first carefully set her tee into the ground between the two painted rock markers and took a practice swing to the side. Each swing was then followed by commentary from the team, be it "oohs" and "aahs" or advice on form.

As I played through the course with the team, I found that there is a lot more to golf than simply swinging a metal club at a small white ball over and over. The sport depends on muscle memory, something I have not developed. My performance was composed of balls going anywhere between 5 and 35 yards

in random directions, but I had to start somewhere, and the team gave me advice and encouragement.

"I don't think it would be hard to start [playing golf]," Sachi Verma said. "All it requires is dedication and an actual thirst to learn."

Originally I was disappointed to find that my mini golf skills didn't help me at all, but I found that the two activities are not remotely related.



SIERRA SMITH
Sierra Mist

"I think [mini golf]'s harder because of the obstacles, so the shots are more based on chance than skill," senior Samika Kumar said. "But I guess golf is like that too. You can never completely guarantee how you will shoot."

At first, golf struck me as a finesse game that only takes practiced skill, from the details of the grip to the flow of the swing, aspects that commentators often discuss during professional tournaments. This is no doubt a part of the game, one that demands admiration.

"I like the focus on perfection," Kumar said. "Every single detail in your swing will affect the slightest change in degree and distance travelled by the ball."

The other part of golf comes from the mind. Bobby Jones, one of the greatest golfers of all time, had the right idea when he said, "Golf is a game that is



Courtesy of SIERRA SMITH

Senior Sierra Smith tees off on Oct. 13 at the Saratoga Country Club, where she is a member.

played on a five-inch course — the distance between your ears."

I've often heard it said that you can tell a lot about a person's character on the golf course, and I've come to find this true. When one is surrounded by serene nature and given the task of sending a small white ball far into the distance using a stick while battling the threatening par, patience, honesty and a sense of hu-

mor are put to the test.

Luckily for me, the girls' golf team is composed of girls with all of these qualities and who enjoy themselves while partaking in this focused sport. They display a beautiful example of how golf can provide one with a relaxing afternoon—about two hours in a typical practice—and gives one a useful mental skill set. ♦

OUT OF THE COMFORT ZONE

THREE COLUMNISTS TRY THEIR HAND AT SPORTS THEY DO NOT USUALLY PLAY

WATER POLO

Fish out of water

A TENNIS PLAYER ATTEMPTS TO STAY AFLOAT

Consider myself to be in decent shape because I play tennis and hurdle. Consequently, even though I knew that water polo involved a lot of treading water, I didn't think it would be too exhausting. Turns out I was wrong.

As I arrived at the pool, I received questioning looks from the players who were confused as to who I was. When I told them that I would be practicing with them, a few gave me sympathetic looks and wished me luck, so I could only wonder what was in store for me.

While waiting for practice to start, senior Stephanie Chen explained the basics of water polo. There are seven players, one of whom is the goalie. The sport is played like soccer in the water, and players use only one hand at a time to handle the ball.

"So far, so good," I thought. I know how to play soccer, and I used to play softball, so I know I can catch and throw.

After I introduced myself to coach Rafael Alapont, we started warming up, and after a pitiful five minutes of treading water, I found myself struggling to get out of the pool. When I was finally able to summon my arm strength, my upper body flopped onto the deck, and my legs flailed around, attempting to find land.

When warm-up was over, we

practiced passing the ball. I found it hard to concentrate on passing when I could feel the lactic acid building up in my legs and could barely manage to stay afloat. Fortunately, after a few minutes, I got the hang of it and could pass decently, although I had to cling on the wall to make sure I wouldn't drown.

Next, we ran through some drills that focused on shooting. While the water polo players' shots were powerful and precisely aimed, my shots landed softly into the goalie's hands.



JENNIFER JIN
Feed me!

The practice ended with a few laps, which I sat out after I realized I could barely move my legs. Instead, I admired the speed and gracefulness of the water polo players' strokes.

After practice, many players told me that this was the easiest practice they have had all season because they had an intense game the day before. I could only smile weakly and return slowly to my car so I could go home to take a long nap.

Even though I mostly idled around either by sitting outside the pool or floating on a ball and hanging on to dear life, I still found myself slightly sore the next morning.

After this grueling two-hour practice, I've come to understand both the literal and figurative meaning of "being in deep water." ♦

CROSS COUNTRY

Endurance and mentality

If I were to ever experience that cliché movie moment when the girl, hair flowing in the wind, runs in slow motion across a sun-dappled field toward a joyous reunion with her loved one, chances are that I would ruin the moment by stopping halfway through, complaining that any exercise is too much exercise.

Running and I have never been on good terms. During tennis, I am "that girl" — the one who grovels and attempts bribery in futile efforts to avoid conditioning.

So, not surprisingly, I was apprehensive when I learned that I would be joining cross country for an hour-long practice (the things I do for newspaper) starting from 2:40. If I thought running two laps around a single tennis court was unbearable, how could I be expected to run four miles without collapsing?

It turned out to be my lucky day, though, because I escaped from the dreaded Town Loop, a typical practice run around the surrounding neighborhood, and instead ran four laps around the football field with junior Casey Takahashi, who was nursing a shin splint.

I feel no remorse at having run less than one mile, since I discovered that the cross country girls run the four miles in under half an hour. With some calculation, I came to the conclusion that I would've taken a solid hour to complete the run. (The day before practice, I had seriously contemplated bringing a scooter to avoid lagging behind.)

Even with a relatively measly four laps, I experienced protesting leg mus-

cles after the second lap, cramps after the third and a general lack of oxygen by the time I stopped, refusing to continue with a fifth lap.

We followed up with conditioning, which involved core strengthening, with timed exercises like bicycling in the air, crunches and pushups. The following day, I woke up, confused, wondering why my abdominal muscles were aching, until I remembered completing 100 crunches the day before.

After witnessing the ease and grace with which these girls run, my respect and admiration for cross country have increased exponentially.

Never again will I complain about running during tennis practice, where the maximum amount of running is approximately half a lap on the track.

Truthfully, I must say the highlight of the entire experience were the cookies at the end. Offering cookies (with sprinkles, no less) as an incentive to power through practice

is pretty ingenious, I must say.

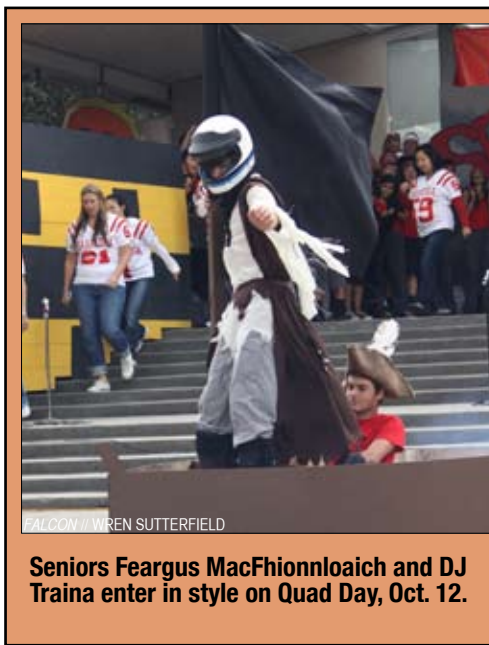
Funnily enough, I have multiple sources reporting that the coach, Danny Moon, has already welcomed me to the team with open arms. Clearly, he's the only one who has faith in my talent for the sport.

Perhaps one of these days when I have every assignment crossed out in my planner (delusional dreams of a junior), I'll put on my running shoes and go for a run, training myself until I finally achieve that runner's high. Or maybe I'll achieve the same effect sprawled out on my bed, stuffing my face with brownies. Whichever's easier. ♦



KAREN SUNG
Karebear

polaroids



Seniors Feergus MacFhionnloaich and DJ Traina enter in style on Quad Day, Oct. 12.



Seniors Oliver Chen and Akshara Sekar study a reading during a Spanish 6 class on Oct. 10.



Freshman Brandon Lee jumps rope during Health class on Oct. 12.



Senior Brian Kim addresses Kirk Abe's Government class during a vice presidential debate simulation on Oct. 12.

In-Depth editors make mad dash for newspaper photos

When you're flipping through the newspaper, we know you find yourself inexplicably mesmerized by pages 18 and 19 — a section that emanates beauty and wisdom. We know you're drawn to the In-Depth double page. Who can blame you? Well, meet the masterminds behind this In-Depth spread. (We accept donations and compliments in the form of food.) We've taken the time to write this story to make a request of our beloved editor-in-chief: payment for the sufferings (that includes working with each other) we endure for this paper.



KAREN SUNG
KarBear



ASHWINI VELCHAMY
Wini-the-Pool

On Monday, Oct. 8, while everyone else was sleeping in and enjoying the holiday, we dragged ourselves out of bed at 10 in the morning for our In-Depth layout. We needed photos of three schools: Lynbrook, Harker and Bellarmine, and we only had an hour to take them because Ashwini had a dentist appointment at 11.

Armed with printouts of Google Maps, we set off to Lynbrook.

Taking pictures was relatively painless, and we were feeling pretty proud of ourselves, even though Ashwini spent five shameful minutes trying to figure how to get off the roof of her Saab hatchback, which she clearly was very familiar with.

We soon went to Harker. Despite Karen's failures at reading Google Maps, we did manage to reach the school surprisingly unscathed, and apart from the curious glances (and a friendly wave) we received from Harker's security guard, our picture-taking went smoothly.

Final destination: Bellarmine. With a solid half-hour left, we were certain that Bellarmine would be just as easy as the other schools. Clearly, we had too much faith in ourselves.

First of all, Ashwini doesn't know how to read freeway signs, so instead of

taking I-880 N, she went on the ramp to 280 S.

We were oblivious to this mistake until we realized that we had passed San Jose Downtown and were speeding toward the mountains.

After taking the nearest exit, we drove around a suspicious neighborhood ("Is this a hick town?"), somehow ending up on the San Jose State University campus.

Realizing we were utterly lost, Ashwini pulled into the parking lot of San Jose Water Works to call her dad and figure out what on earth was going on.

(Karen decided that this would be the ideal situation to start taking selfies.)

After receiving much-needed directions, we pulled out the parking lot and headed on our way again. Five trucks and three missed turns later, we finally arrived at our destination, to our unbridled relief.

You should have heard us scream with joy when we saw the blessed logo of Bellarmine College Preparatory. Clearly, our definition of "happiness" differs greatly from that of a sane person.

Determined to take photos as quickly as possible, we traipsed around Bellarmine, unaware that school was actually in session, and after a few quick shots of the school (or in Karen's case, the hunky football players), we quickly returned to the car.

It's not exactly a secret that when you receive our paper, many of you merely scan the front headline, take a glance at the centerfold and then immediately turn to the final page and settle with reading the Top Ten, the most-read section of our newspaper.

All of us on staff know that, but that doesn't stop us from trying our best to put out the best newspaper every single time.

We still rush every deadline night to finish each issue on time and give our readers a solid publication.

So, please appreciate our page. Relish it. Notice the attention to detail and passion on every page!

(And write editor-in-chief Jackie Gu a strongly worded Letter to the Editor demanding that we poor, overworked souls receive a raise.) ♦

buzzworthy >> Election simulation

BY Katherine Chang

With the presidential election approaching, the U.S. government classes have been participating in a simulation of the presidential campaign. The classes each have candidates for president and vice president for both political parties. They hold debates, campaign in various states and make news reports and ads.

In Kirk Abe's class, senior Sujay Khandekar has the role of the Republican presidential candidate.

"The simulation is actually a great interactive learning session," he said. "Knowing how the whole process works definitely helps me better understand the entire process."

In addition, other roles such as campaign and finance managers, spin doctors/press secretaries, vice presidential candidates, swing state representatives and the media are assigned to various students.

"It tries to incorporate a lot of the real issues that go on in the campaign into the simulation," said Abe.

These roles are all to help their respective candidate win the election. Senior Austin Chang acts in the role of the media in the election, which is one of the more common jobs.

"I played the media and give people the news they need to be informed," Chang said. "I'm supposed to be neutral and fair, but it's hard."

The simulation also helped the students to analyze the way the election process is held.

"In our simulation we only focus on swing states and neglect the rest of the states," senior Caroline Chou said. "It seems like the rest of the people's votes aren't as important."

Noticing the importance, Chou, who has the role of a financial manager, devised a campaign strategy.

"Tailoring the candidates' interests to fit the interest of others, like the swing states would be beneficial," Chou said.

Chou said the most interesting aspect of the simulation was the amount of money spent in the election.

"Politics are expensive. Everything is so expensive, national ads cost \$1 million in the simulation and probably is more in the real election," she said.

While the simulation is far from over, continuing on until the real presidential vote on Nov. 6, the students have already gained lots of knowledge of the election and its works.

"It's fun to dress up, campaign, and watch political ads," said Khandekar. ♦

topten

WAYS TO HAVE A BOMB TIME THIS HALLOWEEN

- 10 **Study for the SAT.** Aaaaaah, those *redoubtable* vocabulary words are scarier than a duet between Justin Bieber and One Direction!!
- 9 **Watch a horror movie.** Or just watch a video of the freshman quad day. Both are absolutely terrifying.
- 8 **Throw a Christmas party.** You probably won't have a chance later since the world is ending four days before the actual day.
- 7 **Join the explosive disposal unit.** You can take all the bombs home and throw a cute little party with all your friends from school!
- 6 **Go trick-or-treating with all your friends.** Make sure you tell your mom to pick you up before the 11 o'clock curfew.
- 5 **Stay Home Alone while your friends trick-or-treat.** We'll know how fun that can be, right? Oh wait. It's ridiculously horrible.
- 4 **Dress up as Freddie the Falcon.** Then even if you are literally standing in the middle of the quad, the sophomore class will act like you're invisible.
- 3 **Take a trip to Halloween Haunt.** Watch out for those evil clowns with a knack for letting their hands operate a little too freely.
- 2 **Stay by your door and wait for trick-or-treaters.** Wait for the looks on their faces when you show them your new "magic trick."
- 1 **Go to a costume party.** You'll be surprised how scandalous those new "naughty Romney" costumes can be.

>> Dylan Jew
Aasim Naqvi

>> THE specialty section



BROKEN, BUT STRONGER

COMING BACK FROM MAJOR SETBACKS

ONCE THE TOP JUDOKA IN THE NATION, JUNIOR LEARNS LESSONS THROUGH INJURY

BY Samuel Liu, Grace Ma
& Candice Zheng

Junior Jason Li's passion for judo began on a dark night 11 years ago. Weidong Li, his father, was hastily walking through the ramshackle streets of inner-city San Jose when tragedy struck.

Mr. Li, who had missed his bus, was worried. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw a group of men approaching him. His heart raced. Before he knew it, he was surrounded.

The men shoved Mr. Li to the ground and tried to take his bag. Mr. Li struggled to hold onto his belongings, but he was overpowered and the bag (which contained presents for Jason) was stolen.

Angered, the men proceeded to kick him and beat him with sticks. When they were done, they left him half-dead on the street, lying in a puddle of his own blood.

The attackers were never caught.

Today, Mr. Li has a limp arm and cannot walk for more than 15 minutes at a time. Years later, Jason Li described the "traumatizing" sight of his father's face after the attack as the reason he took up judo.

"[My father would] always tell me that if I become as big and strong as those

who sent him into the hospital, I should only use my strength to protect others," he said. "My father's accident taught me that I should not take anything for granted."

Over the next decade, Li became a three-time national champion. He was even invited to join the national developmental team. That success, however, did not last because of a serious injury, one so damaging that Li described it as the end of a dream.

"The sky came crashing down," he said.

Childhood: The beginnings of a top judoka

Born in Shijiazhuang, China, Jason Li came to America when he was 4, only a few months before his father was attacked.

At first, judo did not come easily to him. After the first few practices, he had been thrown more times than he had fallen when he was first learning to walk.

"Although 5-year-olds can't do much to each other, it still hurt," he said.

And before he knew it, his parents talked to his coaches and said Li was "too nice for a sport like judo." So Li quit, thinking he wasn't made for the sport. Even today, after all his successes, Li thinks about the first time he quit judo. Remembering all

the pain the sport later brought him, he said, "Sometimes, I wish I had just stopped there."

A few weeks after his first attempt at the sport, Li watched a judo video online. He was inspired by the epic throws and the upbeat background music, but what really caught his attention were the expressions of the champions as they achieved their lifelong dreams.

"I wanted that," he said. "I wanted to be able to throw my arms up and cry in victory."

And it was then that Li decided that he couldn't quit. In his return at his first judo tournament, Li thought he would do well. Instead, he lost all six of his

>> THE big idea

Li's Judo Journey

The Beginning

Li's father was mugged and badly injured in San Jose.

The Apex

After much failure, Li became the top Judoka in the country in his age group.

Injury

In a double overtime match against a good friend, he broke his back. It was his last official competition.



FALCON // WREN SUTTERFIELD

>> **JUDO** on pg. 2

INJURED GYMNAST JUMPS TO HIGHER HEIGHTS

BY Karen Sung
& Sarah Finley

While most students in middle school were in a classroom reading "To Kill a Mockingbird" or creating astronomy posters, chances were that now-junior Maya Srinivasan was in the midst of intensive gymnastics training.

Just a few years ago, Srinivasan was on the track to becoming an Olympic gymnast, until a series of severe injuries ended her gymnastics career.

For Srinivasan, gymnastics has been an important part of her life since age 4.

"My mom just put me in it because she wanted to try it out," Srinivasan said.

At 6, she caught the eye of coaches at Pacific West Gymnastics, who suggested that she enroll in private lessons. From this point on, Srinivasan moved quickly up the ladder of levels in gymnastics, skipping a level along the way and reaching level 7 by fifth grade.

Instead of starting middle school the next year, Srinivasan began an online homeschooling program.

"I was homeschooled for gymnastics [because] I was practicing for nine hours every day," Srinivasan said.

But it was worth it, for Srinivasan said she was on a highly competitive route, one that could have even taken her to the Olympics.

She participated in national training camps for three years and attended an elite training camp in Texas called Hopes when she was 12. But in March 2008, when she was in seventh grade, disaster struck.

Srinivasan was practicing a difficult skill, called a front giant, on the uneven bars, one that often gave her trouble.

Looking back, Srinivasan said, "I was always afraid of that skill. My hands would peel off the bar and I would land on my back."

This time, it was much worse. Srinivasan fell off the bars and onto the ground, landing on the corner of the pit and the concrete.

"I was supposed to go into pit, [but] I let go too early," Srinivasan said. "I don't really know why I let go, I just did. It was completely at the wrong time and I knew it too. I don't know what happened."

The recovery

After a trip to the emergency room, Srinivasan was put in a cast.

"I broke both sides of my ankle bone, and a piece of my tibia came off," Srinivasan said. "Later, one of my friends said she heard a huge cracking sound when I

landed."

After being in the cast for three months, Srinivasan had surgery on her ankle. Even at this point, Srinivasan said she was confident she would make a full recovery.

"It was frustrating, no doubt, but I was sure I would come back," Srinivasan said.

Yet another month and a half passed, and her injury still was not healed. Srinivasan was wearing a boot to help her walk and

at this point, even she was starting to become worried.

"I didn't think it would take so long to heal and I was anxious to start training again," Srinivasan said.

Still, Srinivasan worked to keep in

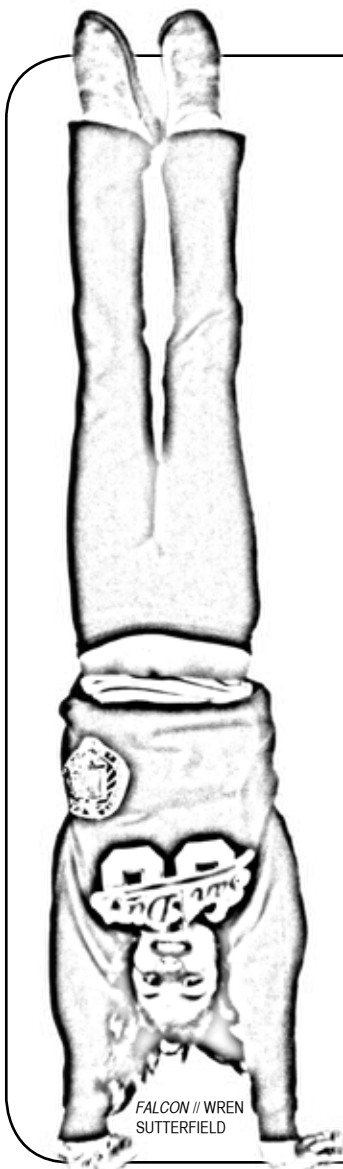
shape, finding other ways to train. "Everybody around me was getting all their new skills for the new season ... but I couldn't do any of that," Srinivasan said. "I had to go to practice every day and sit there for four hours just doing conditioning and keeping my body in shape so that when I would come back I would be able to get right back into it."

Meanwhile, it seemed that the doctors were just as puzzled by the injury as Srinivasan.



junior Maya Srinivasan

>> **GYMNAST** on pg. 4



FALCON // WREN SUTTERFIELD

Near Right: Li took gold at the San Jose Buddhist Invitational, the largest judo tournament in California, in the seventh grade. "I'm scared of heights so I was always super-scared when I went onto podiums ... Some people would even backflip off of them," he said. "And I was always really bad at accepting awards. I never wanted to smile."

Below: Li holds his gold medal from a 2010 San Francisco tournament.



JUDO >> Junior fights his way to the top

Continued from pg. 1

matches.

"I cried that evening and listened to my mom tell me that winning was not all that mattered," he said. "It was something I would hear again and again over the next 10 years, but something I would never accept."

He kept losing.

"Loss after loss after loss ... I became terrified of competition," Li said. "It almost became a routine. Go on the mat, fall, walk off, cry, and repeat until everyone in my division had beaten up on me."

At the Palo Alto Invitational, Li, then 6, lost all his matches. As he walked off the mat with tears swelling up, his coach knelt down and grabbed Li's shoulders. The coach told him firmly to stop crying, saying, "Big girls don't cry."

"Just the shock and strength of his grip were enough to throw off my tears, but what he said brought them back," Li said. "Back then, it was the most inspiring thing I had ever heard."

So in 2005, after about four years of losing in competitive judo, Li set himself a goal that seemed ridiculous at the time.

"I was done with giving other people the spotlight and the podium. I was done crying," he said. "I made it my goal to pursue judo until I had won the Olympics."

Keeping his word

With the losses at the Palo Alto Invitational still fresh in his memory, Li was determined to get better. Now a scrawny 9-year-old, Li started to work out every day. He ran every morning before school. He beat up on his homemade punching bag to build stamina. He practiced his technique at night.

Li often went to bed thinking of new strategies for matches. He tried to pour every ounce of energy he had into judo.

"My coach once said the only way to become the best is to train when others are training, and train when others are not training," Li said. "My passion for judo grew out of those long sessions of work."

Every morning over the summer, his coach woke him at 6, sent him to run in the morning, do weight training before lunch, perform yoga after lunch and finally practice in the afternoon. He trained relentlessly for a month.

"I was pumped. Everything about it was unbelievable," he said.

Li's "rebirth" had a huge impact on his performance. Now 10, Li received a bronze medal at the California State Championships. He won gold at two more state championships in the following years, making him the top judoka (the name for judo athletes) in California.

Li wasn't done. In 2008, Li entered his first national tournament.

"I was ready to become the national champion," he said.

The national championships that year took place in Boston. Li's division had 34 competitors and was double-elimination style.

Li had trained hard to get onto the national stage—and he had made promises to his friends and family back home that he would win. He knew that if he wanted to become an Olympian, he had to win nationals. Here, he had his first chance to vindicate himself, to prove that his hard work was not in vain. His seemingly ridiculous goal now seemed slightly more

"...one night, I wet myself. I woke up embarrassed, but quickly realized I was in trouble. I felt excruciating pain in my back and my legs couldn't move."

>> Junior Jason Li

realistic.

"The day of the competition, my heart hammered against my chest and my whole body shook," Li said.

The national stage

Li lost both matches. They weren't even close.

"I will never ever forget the terrible losses that weekend," he said. "It was as if my dreams were shattered. My training, my suffering, my journey ... it was all for nothing."

"Although I was composed within the arena, I broke down that evening. I knew I had to accept that I did not win despite my hard work and effort."

The day he flew home, his judo coach

called him. Expecting a lecture on how all winners start with failure, Li was instead offered a second chance. Li had forgotten that a second National Championship was held only a month later.

"I couldn't believe my ears," Li said.

Li's coach had already registered him and booked hotels for the National Championship in Fresno. With a month to train for Fresno, Li was under an intensive schedule. He was determined to make his second chance count.

"I can tell you about how hard I trained and all the blood, sweat and tears I went through, but without 'Eye of The Tiger' playing, it wouldn't be all that exciting," he said.

What was truly significant that summer was not how much he practiced, but how much weight he lost.

In order to compete in a lower division, Li lost 21 pounds in the course of three weeks. His parents strongly advised against it, but Li knew it was necessary for him to win at nationals. Little did he know that the very determination that led him to victory would later be his downfall.

"That was the summer I stopped caring about my body," he admitted.

The training paid off, and Li ascended toward the apex of his judo career. He won the national tournament in Fresno in 2008, and he didn't lose a match again for two years. At large national tournaments, he rode the dark horse and worked his way up to the top podium. At small tournaments, he was able to experiment new techniques and coach younger kids between my matches.

No longer the boy who walked off the mat crying loss after loss, Li had taken over four national medals and was a three-time national champion—not to mention that he had gone undefeated for two years.

The "big girl" had become one of the best in the nation.

On the road to the Olympics

By now, it was 2009, and Li had everything except recognition from the United States Judo Federation.

But as soon as his mother had begun her "many lectures on being humble and modest," Li was asked to join the National Team to travel and represent U.S. across the world. This was Li's door to the

World Championships and possibly the Olympics.

Li wrote of the moment, "I fumbled with the letter and tore it open. 'You are the nation's potential in judo,' the letter read. I took two steps, pinched myself and sprinted out of the house."

"It was a top honor—only 18 individuals across America could join the team," he explained. "It had been my holy grail. To me, a spot on the development team was worth infinite medals and trophies—except one, that is. The Olympic Gold."

However, the letter also marked the start of his downfall. The state championships that year was held in San Francisco; it was the very first tournament Li's mother went to see, since she had always feared to see him fight and get injured before her eyes. Tragically, her very fears came true.

In a 23-man division, Li fought his way up to the finals with ease. One of his best friends, also a former national champion in the weight division Li had dropped into, worked his way up to the final bracket as well. Li had long idolized him.

>>> timeline

2001 Li's father is mugged and severely injured. Jason joins his first judo club at age 5.

2005 Li loses all his matches at the Palo Alto Invitational. His coach calls him a girl and tells him to stop crying. Jason starts to focus on judo.

2006 Li wins a bronze medal at California State Championships.

2008 Li loses his first national tournament. He trains rigorously and wins the next national tournament in Fresno.

2008-2010 After winning the tournament in Fresno, Li doesn't lose for years. He receives an invitation from the National Developmental team.



Left: Li throws his friend, junior Bryan Chow, in a move called harai-ogoshi. "It felt like a roller coaster," Chow said. Li threw Chow six times slower than he normally would to avoid hurting Chow.
Below: Li throws his friend Chow in the side suplex.
Bottom: From Left to Right: Victor Wong, Li, Aaron Wu, Kelly Ruckstuhl, Jeffery Adachi and Amy Suzuki. Li celebrates his 8th grade graduation with friends from the Cupertino Judo club. "The club was like a family to me," he said. "I could take my unfinished homework to them and there will always be someone to help me. I could talk to my friends there about girls ... We went to Yogurtland every other week after practice."



pears for months and then returns to demolish his enemies," Li said. "I thought I was some sort of Dark Knight."

As Li relearned how to stand, how to sit, how to walk and how to function normally, he still could not allow himself to accept that his competitive Judo career was finished.

"I joked around with my mother saying this injury is just like any other boo-boo I've had," he said. "Grinning ear to ear in my hospital gown, I told my mom that I was going to pop back up in weeks and return to the mat and take back my gold medal."

But as Li spoke with such energy, his mother started crying. His mother, distraught asked him why he was harming himself. She asked, Do you know how much it hurts to see your child fall paralyzed at only 14 years old?

"And with that, I finally realized I was hurting those around me, not just myself," he said. "The only thing I could say to my mom was 'I'm sorry, I'll stop.'"

Li's spine injury had left him paralyzed from the waist down for two weeks. It took another month to learn how to walk and another four months to run. This was no bump on the road to success—it was a dead end.

"I had poured my life into judo," Li said. "And to have it all come crashing down on me hurt more than any broken bone. No one knew the way I coveted being a winner. No one knew how traumatized I was by my father's face after his incident nor understood how I was bullied in elementary and middle school."

"My coaches knew me as the kid who was once 'too nice,' but I had finally found comfort in my judo gi [a traditional judo uniform], stepping on the tatami mat. I was boastful and cocky at tournaments because judo was all I that I was proud of."

Life without sports

Li is forever unable to play contact sports. He can no longer perform strenuous activities, his leg will never fully recover, and his broken jaw from a judo accident will never be fixed.

"Judo is over for me, but its values I will never forget," he said. "The medals, the awards ... I realize that they are worthless in comparison to the intangibles I gained from judo."

So Li put his 85 medals and 32 trophies in boxes and donated them all to his judo club to award future students.

Instead, he kept the intangible lessons the sport taught him—strength, determination and "the true meaning of character."

"Winning is not about the number of medals sitting on your counter, winning is the pure exhaustion at the end of the workout," he said. "Winning is pushing aside pain to fight, and most importantly, winning is realizing what is important in life—and what is not. I wanted to be a World Champion, but now I realize the world is bigger than 100 square meters of tatami mat."

Today, Li's acceptance letter for the national team is long expired. His judo uniform gathers dust in his closet. The last time he touched judo was when he threw his friend junior Bryan Chow for a photoshoot. Li has since found interests elsewhere: he owns two startup companies. One of them, iReTron, has been featured in the San Francisco Chronicle and FOX News and has won Li \$6,000 from various contests and grants.

Li also loves slam poetry and playing the piano, and is the head photographer for Yearbook. He has become a part-time judo coach.

"I may only have had 10 years in the sport, but those years were packed with enough stories and morals to last a lifetime," he said.

Although his judo career and his Olympic dream may be over, Li still maintains his determination and self-confidence.

"I'm only 15 years old. I'm barely 20 percent done with my projected lifespan," he said. "When I received the invitation from the national judo developmental team, I told myself that not even the sky could limit me. I still believe in what I said." ♦

"I looked up to him for all of my judo career, and this was my first chance of rivaling him in the main event," Li said. "I wanted to prove that I was no longer the ragdoll that was tossed around in practice every day."

Li and his friend's match for the State Gold continued until double overtime.

"They say that when a strong judoka fights a weak one, the match ends quickly," Li said. "But when two strong judokas fight, one is meant to die."

With only 6 seconds to go, Li attempted a final throw. It was countered, and he was sent flying. While in mid-air, Li managed to turn his back so he wouldn't land on it. Instead, however, Li hit the mat head-first and hurt his neck. Before the buzzer sounded to end the match, Li was rushed to the hospital.

With a forfeited match, Li's two-year streak of gold medals was over. In the long recuperation process, Li's doctor banned both physical and mental exercise—even difficult math problems were not allowed.

However, Li ignored all restrictions and continued to his sport. Nationals were coming up soon.

"People told me that injuries, if not completely healed, lead to more injuries," he said. "I got to experience it first hand."

At nationals in his freshman year, Li tore his knee ligament. However, he continued to fight through excruciating pain. Li lost his title and had to settle for bronze. It turned out to be his last competition.

"One night, I wet myself"

After an MRI scan and several trips to multiple doctors, doctors told Li he needed back surgery. His spine had become distorted from years of judo, wrestling and weightlifting. Problems with his nerves, including a herniated disk, caused him to have trouble walking. Still, Li refused surgery, thinking he didn't need it.

Then, one night in his freshman year, he wet himself.

"I woke up embarrassed, but quickly realized I was in trouble," Li said. "I felt excruciating pain in my back and my legs couldn't move."

Li dialed 911 on his phone and nonchalantly said, "Yeah, I'm kind of paralyzed and my legs stopped working. Can I get an ambulance,

please?"

Despite the pain, Li managed to laugh.

"I remember telling my [7-year-old] sister who had woken up, 'Jennifer, if you want to hit me, hit my legs now. Because I can't feel a thing!'" Li joked.

After fighting and winning matches with broken fingers, broken toes and even a torn ligament, Li did not fear physical pain.

At the hospital, Li learned that con-

"The [greatest] tragedy was when Jason broke his back. I am okay but he is young and can not play any sports. But now he can spend more time practicing SAT."

>> Weidong Li (Jason's father)

nection with the nerves of his lower body had been cut off by his spine's mutation, a result of his injury in the state tournament. He had lost all sensation below his waist, causing him to lose control of his bladder. Within 30 minutes, he was pushed into the emergency operating room. With a broken back, Li's career was over.

Still, Li met the diagnosis with skepticism.

"I tried to convince myself that I would become the superhero who disap-

Summer of 2010

Li is injured and forfeits the championship match in Nationals. It's his last competition.

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GYMNAST >> Junior jumps to higher heights

continued from pg. 1

-vasan.

"I went to four different specialists and they all said something different," Srinivasan said. "We had no idea what to do."

After visiting a doctor at Stanford, Srinivasan finally received an explanation that didn't require an invasive procedure. The doctor told her that it was a "nonunion," meaning that her ankle would never heal and that there would always be "a piece of bone that's not connected."

To this day, Srinivasan said this injury can still be painful.

"It hurts sometimes, [like] when I run for a long time [or] sometimes in the cold," Srinivasan said.

Even with this setback, Srinivasan continued gymnastics.

"I went back to gymnastics because [the doctors] said I could continue if my ankle didn't bother me too much," Srinivasan said. "It didn't hurt that bad, even though it was still broken."

Despite literally having a piece of bone separated from her foot, Srinivasan returned, and for three months she trained rigorously. "I almost had my skills back," she said.

Srinivasan said that she tried to be optimistic about returning to gymnastics, maintaining "a positive attitude."

"I guess I didn't have a choice but to just forget that it was broken. If I kept thinking about it, then it would have just been worse," Srinivasan said. "I would tape my ankle to make sure that it didn't roll in or anything and then I would just go."

But then, Srinivasan fell again, this time on floor exercise, only months after her last injury.

"It wasn't even on that difficult of a skill; it was just because I was getting back, so I wasn't as strong as before," she said.

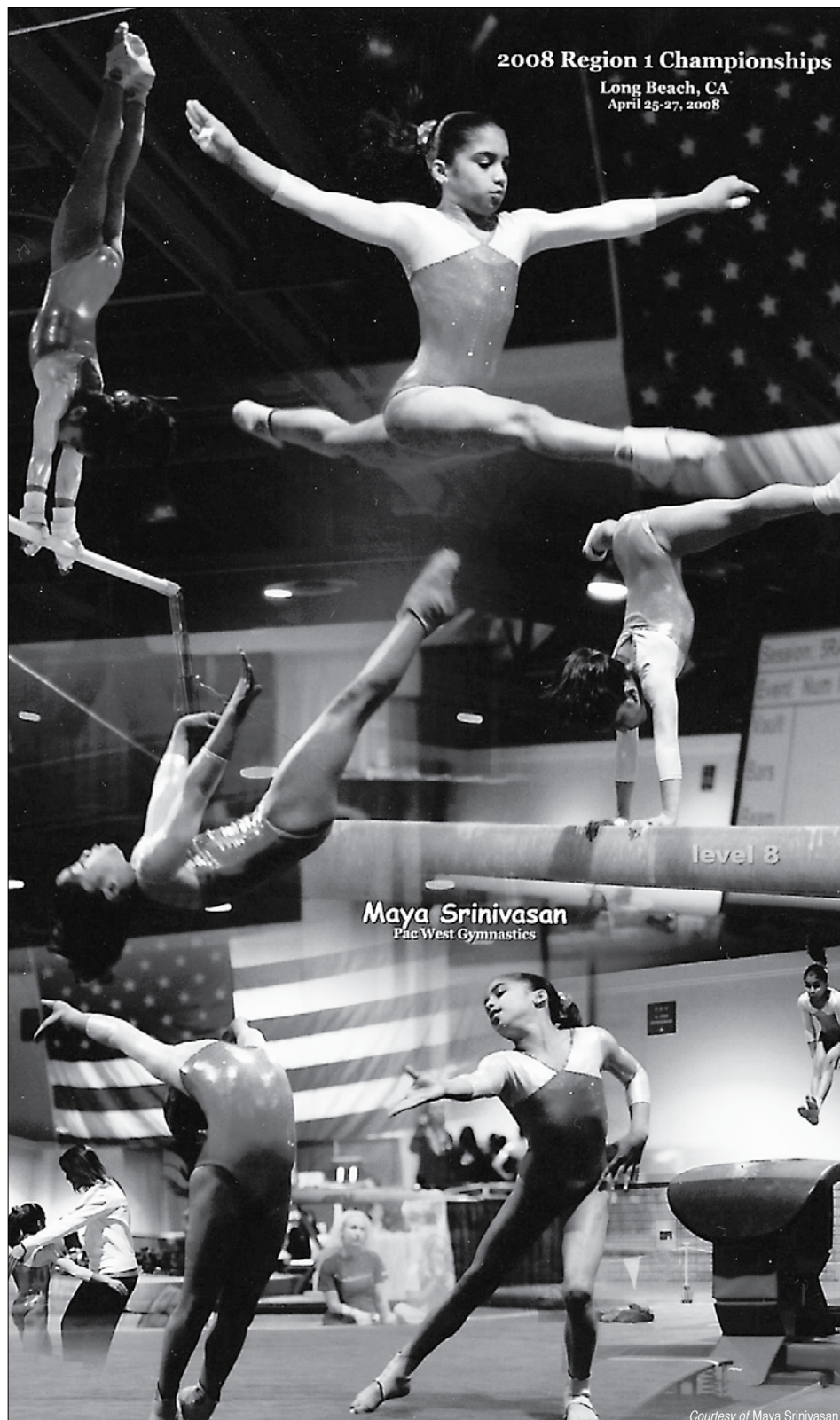
In the middle of executing a series of flips, she rolled her ankle but had to follow through with the skill. After jumping off her ankle, she landed on it and crashed to the floor.

On her way to the emergency room, she suspected that gymnastics was over for her.

"I was thinking, 'OK this is probably the end,' and I was crying because I had spent literally my whole life doing gymnastics and I didn't want to stop," Srinivasan said.

The doctors told her she had broken the fifth metatarsal in her foot, and at that point, gymnastics was no longer a realistic option.

"I didn't want to stop, but it just wasn't worth it," she said. "It was almost like a shock. I didn't realize how



much I had to give up for it until it was time to stop."

Life without gymnastics

Srinivasan said the loss of gymnastics really made her realize how much of her life it occupied.

"I never really got the whole elementary school feeling of free time after school. I have spent literally my entire life doing this," Srinivasan said. "I didn't want it to go to waste and I loved doing it."

Srinivasan's mother, Saradha Srinivasan, echoed her daughter's sentiments.

"She worked [so] hard and sacrificed a lot of her childhood fun and happiness for gymnastics. Having constant injuries was very discouraging, but she never gave up until the end, and we were encouraged by her perseverance," her mother said.

Mrs. Srinivasan said that finding out that her daughter would have to quit gymnastics was difficult for the entire family.

"Our family was very upset. We had high hopes for her," Saradha said. "We were afraid of her reactions more than ours because we wanted her to be happy

most of all and we knew that gymnastics was what she wanted most."

Srinivasan said it was hard to overcome the loss of something she loved.

"It took about a month to stop crying every day about it," she said.

However, Srinivasan said these were not the only medical problems she endured while participating in gymnastics.

She also broke fingers, tore a muscle in her foot and bruised her back. According to Srinivasan, this was an unusually high number of injuries, even for a high-risk sport like gymnastics.

"It's kind of normal in the sense in that people do get injured, but you're not supposed to get injured every season," Srinivasan said. "I was getting injured over and over."

Undoubtedly, Srinivasan feels it was a tough decision to make.

"I do [miss gymnastics] a lot. Just because it was such a big part of my life since I was 4, stopping it all of a sudden [was] not easy," Srinivasan said.

"I know a lot of my friends who stopped it because they didn't like it any

more, but that wasn't my case. I loved it, but I couldn't continue because of injuries."

New beginnings

"Every day I would come out of the gym with six ice packs on me: two on my back, two on my knees, and two on my ankles. Every step I took after gymnastics would be in pain," Srinivasan said.

Srinivasan did not give up hope on continuing athletics, but deciding to pursue a sport that would not cause so many injuries.

"I knew a lot of older gymnastics who stopped for whatever reason and started diving so I thought that I could probably do that as well," Srinivasan said.

Four months after ending gymnastics, Srinivasan began diving.

"I thought that the skills would be really easy and it would just come to me easier, which is true," Srinivasan said.

In terms of long term injuries, Srinivasan said that diving is also much safer.

"I almost developed arthritis in my hands because of gymnastics," Srinivasan said. "With diving, there really isn't anything that you can develop like that."

She said her parents didn't like that she was constantly getting injured in gymnastics, so they were glad when she was able to find a sport that was easier on her body.

In addition, Srinivasan believes that this easier time commitment also makes her academic life much easier.

"It would have been really hard to manage school and gymnastics. I probably wouldn't have taken the courses that I'm taking," Srinivasan said.

Still, Srinivasan said she missed the sport that had been a part of her life for so long.

"[Diving] was kind of a fallback sport compared to gymnastics," Srinivasan said. "I do love [diving] because I love doing those kinds of sports, but I miss gymnastics for sure."

Without gymnastics, Srinivasan returned to public school for eighth grade, another challenging transition, but Srinivasan said she was glad to have a chance to focus more on school.

"I always knew that I wasn't going to be a gymnast or a diver for the rest of my life. I had to focus on education too," Srinivasan said.

"[Leaving gymnastics] gave me the opportunity to do that."

In retrospect, Srinivasan believes she gained a lot from participating in gymnastics.

"[Gymnastics] helped me deal with criticism because our coaches were really mean," she said.

"You have to be able to take it in a positive way rather than get crushed every single time they tell you, 'You're bad, you're not good, you'll never be good.'"

"You have to learn to take that in a way where you can grow from it rather than be upset and never do well," she said.

In an even broader sense, Srinivasan is grateful for the opportunities both gymnastics and diving have given her.

"People have always told me that things happen, and you can't control things like this," she said. "I've learned to move on and make the best out of the bad things that happen." ♦

I've learned to move on and make the best out of the bad things that happen.

>> Junior Maya Srinivasan

>> THE bigidea

Srinivasan's Story

The Road to the Olympics
Srinivasan participated in a highly competitive camp called "Hopes" at age 12.

The Training
Srinivasan practiced for nine hours a day and was home-schooled.

The Injury
Srinivasan suffered two major injuries and was unable to continue gymnastics.

>> falconfigures

9

The number of hours Srinivasan practiced each day as a level 7 gymnast

∞

The number of flips that Srinivasan could do in a row

12

The age at which Srinivasan obtained her career ending injury

5'0"

Srinivasan's height since seventh grade