



Letter to the Editor: Football captain refutes Falcon article.



Our favorite bumbling giant was likely a Death Eater.



Worst drought in 1,200 years: Why we should care.



THE saratogafalcon

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Saratoga High School Saratoga, CA

Vol. 62, No. 3

BY ApurvaChakravarthy & NilayMishra

This season, the football team had three Thursday games on its schedule, which were played against Willow Glen, Westmont and Los Altos, the last of which took place on Oct. 14.

The reason for Thursday games is a nationwide lack of available referees that has trickled down to impact local Bay Area teams. According to athletic director Rick Ellis, the school uses a sports activities management system called ArbiterSports to find referees for games. After inputting the school's schedule, the system locates available referees — football requires five for each game — but the system has failed to find enough for traditional Friday games this fall.

"It's been affecting every school," Ellis said. "Everybody's been asked to do their part and reschedule their games."

Ellis believes that the lack of referees has to do with the tradeoff of traveling to distant games and spending evenings in a part-time job for a relatively low pay. Referees are paid about \$70-\$90 for Bay Area high school games that last about two hours.

"If you live in San Jose and have to travel to San Mateo for a game, you spend two hours traveling there and back, so you are effectively paid \$45 an hour," Ellis said. "That doesn't look so attractive anymore."

The sports most affected by the lack of properly trained referees are football and volleyball, Ellis said. Head football coach Tim Lugo believes the nationwide shortage of referees stems primarily from the effects of a recovering economy.

Additionally, many referees from previous years have retired, and are being replaced with newer, less-experienced referees who are still learning how to do the job effectively, Lugo said.

Since referees were not available for Friday night games, the football team was given a choice between playing on Saturday nights or Thursday nights. Lugo and the team preferred playing on Thursday nights, despite it being a weekday. This is a sentiment shared by the majority of the rest of the teams in the league as well, and has led to the team playing on Thursday nights instead of Saturday evenings.

"It's a choice between two bad options," Lugo said. "If you play on Saturday night, there's no time to rest your body before practices resume on Monday — we tried this in the spring,

>> REFEREE on pg. 5

THURSDAY NIGHT lights?

NATIONWIDE REFEREE SHORTAGE PUSHED THREE GAMES EARLIER



Ethnic studies forges new path

BY NidhiMathihalli & MinsuiTang

An NPR news broadcast featuring current events played when freshman Aakanksh Gurnani walked into room 703 for 5th-period Ethnic Studies on Sep. 24. When the bell rang for the start of fifth period, social studies teacher Michael Davey enthusiastically greeted the students and then launched into the fast-paced lesson on the recent history of Afghanistan.



Davey

In early 2021, California began working through a highly contentious bill requiring an ethnic studies course for high school gradu-

ation. Newsom signed this bill into law earlier this month, making California the first to mandate an ethnic studies course for a high school diploma.

The bill states that public high schools in California are required to offer an ethnic studies course starting in 2025, although high school students will not be required to take the course to graduate until 2029.

Schools will have the freedom to plan the curriculum under Assembly Bill 101, which allows schools to develop their own format for courses if approved by the local school board subject to public

>> ETHNIC STUDIES on pg. 3

Anti-vaxxers: an inside look

BY SaraBright & CarolynWang

A crowd of anti-vaccination protestors lined the streets near the Saratoga Farmers Market at West Valley College on Sept. 18. They held signs with slogans reading "Prove There Is A Sars2 Covid Virus," "You're Not Your Lab Rats" and "Make Choice Free Again."

"They marched up and down the street next to the farmers market disrupting customers and vendors from shopping," wrote Jill Jackneu, a resident of Los Gatos Woods, on the NextDoor platform. "I have no problem with peaceful protesting, but the folks interrupting the farmers market had bull horns and it was impossible to talk to the vendors."

>> VACCINE on pg. 4

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Junior named chess grandmaster HONG'S GAMBIT

BY ChristinaChang & JonathanSi

Nine years ago, 7-year-old Andrew Hong stumbled upon his older brother's chess homework, a worksheet that asked him to solve six positions. After noticing each piece's unique shape and distinct position, he soon became curious about the board game.

>> HONG on pg. 6

All graphics by SELINA CHEN

My first autumn living in America

Count Tara-cula



Tara Natarajan

Red and golden leaves, crisp air, coziness and an abundance of pumpkin spice aren't the only things that make autumn my favorite season. Fall brings back a unique nostalgia because it is the season that welcomed me to the United States when I moved from India three years ago.

Having lived in India for the first dozen years of my life, I had never experienced fall before 2018: Warm summers quickly turned into damp monsoons, leaving no space in between for autumn.

When my family moved to Saratoga in September 2018, we caught the last month of summer before the chill of autumn set in. As the air began to get colder, the leaves started to fall and Bobby Picket's Halloween classic "Monster Mash" began playing on repeat in various places, people began excitedly

talking about things I had never heard of, rituals like pumpkin spice lattes, Thanksgiving traditions and Halloween decorations.

Sure, I had eaten pumpkin before, but never in a dessert or a drink. And while my apartment building in Bangalore had attempted to create a Halloween experience for kids, it mostly consisted of a group of four or five kids dressing in the same stale costumes every year and ringing the doorbells of disgruntled old people. The mood in the air wasn't one of the excitement and thrill of the Halloween spirit, but rather one of reluctance.

Halloween in the U.S. was nothing like what I had known. Never before had I felt so foreign, like an outsider to such irrefutably American traditions like decorating one's house for trick-or-treaters, carving pumpkins, obsessing over candy or creating elaborate costumes. While I found myself enthralled by the fall traditions that surrounded me, the uncomfortable feeling of otherness felt nearly impossible to overcome.

Things didn't feel like they would change until one day, about a month after I moved here, my parents took me and my sister to Queens Pumpkin Patch on Saratoga Avenue.

I must have been the oldest kid there, since most 7th graders had already exhausted their childhood fall fantasies of pumpkin patch-



Sophomore Tara Natarajan enjoys her third Halloween in the United States.

es, cotton candy and petting zoos when they were 4 or 5.

Looking at the diverse array of pumpkins and taking hesitant bites of cotton candy, I felt the excitement of fall envelop me. Sensing warmth despite the cold air was a magical feeling. I realized that this was the first truly "American" experience I had had since moving.

Autumn in the pumpkin patch was the first connection I felt to the strange new world I was now a part of, the first thing I had experienced that made me feel American. I understood that it wasn't as monumental for most people, but it felt like I was living a small part of an American childhood I had never experienced. I was surrounded by such indistinguishable symbols of Americana, enjoying something

most kids my age were well over. That evening, I felt a strange sense of peace as I allowed myself to enjoy all the quintessential elements of fall. Before I knew it, fall quickly became my favorite season. I was excited, and a little more prepared, to settle into my new life.

I am now entering my fourth autumn in America now, and the fondness I have for this wonderful season has not diminished. I look forward to foggy mornings, vanilla candles, warm Thanksgiving meals, beautiful orange leaves and Halloween spirit.

But most of all, fall is truly special to me because it gives me a sense of comfort and belonging born from a time of uncertainty and loneliness when I was new to this country. ♦

Halloween: a never-ending disaster

Catastro-Vita



Kavita Sundaram

When I moved from India to America in second grade, I learned about Halloween: a holiday where kids dressed up as fictional characters and traveled across dark neighborhoods in hordes, receiving free candy from even the most ominous-looking houses. For the Harry Potter and dark chocolate enthusiast that I've always been, this should've been the ultimate paradise.

Unfortunately, it wasn't. As much as I tried to enjoy Halloween, the holiday was plagued by different disasters every year that left me disappointed, embarrassed or both.

My first Halloween started deceptively well: When I was only 6 years old, my mom took me and my friends trick-or-treating around my un-spirited and lonely neighborhood. Since we were virtually the only kids there, every house gave us all of its candy, and we left with Trader Joe's bags filled to the brim with sweets.

However, when we returned



Senior Kavita Sundaram at one of the few Halloweens that wasn't a disaster.

home (at around 5 p.m. when the sun had barely set), my mom realized she didn't have any candy to give to trick-or-treaters herself, so my entire stash was donated to the other greedy neighborhood kids who swarmed our house. By the end of the night, I was left sad and empty-handed.

My second Halloween went no better: That year, my mom decided that she was morally against distributing cavity-inducing candy to unsuspecting children. So when the kids came around begging for candy, I was assigned the gloomy task of rejecting every desperate child. At some point, I began pretending no one was home, in order to avoid

the dejected and hateful stares I received. (Closing the blinds and hiding under the dining table while kids repeatedly rang the doorbell was definitely one of my lowest moments.)

By the third year, I didn't expect much from Halloween. But, while I was wallowing in the misery that would be another tragic Halloween, everything changed for the better. A friend decided to celebrate her birthday on Halloween, and we were all going to spend the day together trick-or-treating and then sleeping over. As an added bonus, the celebration was going to be held at The American Girl store, a version of heaven that my 9-year-

old self had never had a chance to go to myself. I was ecstatic, but I should've known it was too good to be true.

Disaster struck once more the evening before Halloween, this time in the form of pink eye.

I couldn't go to the party, so I was left, once more, friend-less, lonely and disappointed on Halloween.

Luckily, my mother crafted what she believed to be an ingenious solution: neon orange swim goggles.

Decked out in my armor of orange goggles and a hand-me-down witch costume, I paraded around the neighborhood in embarrassment and received pity-candy from every person that was unlucky enough to witness the scene.

Looking back, I'm impressed by my Halloween bravery.

After three consecutive years of disappointment, I learned to give up on Halloween.

Through most of middle and high school, nothing has really changed, so here's to hoping that this year's Halloween might be marginally better than the past ones have been.

I don't think it could get any worse. ♦

A haunted night at Great America

Shaan-tered house



Shaan Sridhar

The devil almost got me during Halloween in 2019.

Seven of my friends and I decided to test our fears and go to Great America's Halloween Haunt in early October. But what we ended up experiencing was far more than what we had signed up for, permanently changing my outlook on the holiday.

My friends and I had been looking forward to the event, taunting each other about how scared we'd get and arguing over who would be the most terrified. Admittedly, parts of the theme park's Halloween makeover were quite frightening.

I particularly remember a jump scare from a zombie in one of the haunted houses that provoked my friend to turn around, trip and fall down, taking me down with him in the process. I also remember eating funnel cakes and waiting in long lines for roller coasters — which we considered our "breaks" between haunted mansions — as we saw others jump Great America's fences to get in without paying.

But most frightening of all was the false alarm of a shooter.

My group was walking toward a candy shop when a voice near-

by shouted, "Everybody get down! SHOOTER!"

I had never been in a situation like this. That night was the closest I've ever gotten to a traumatizing experience.

In the blurry moments after the stranger shouted "SHOOTER," my flight senses sent me running toward a nearby shop and into the employees' storage room, where I found two of my friends — the others got stuck outside in the mayhem.

Two employees inside told us they heard rumors that a gang was planning attacks on the theme park that night, and that they had been worried about coming to work. One employee grabbed a metal bar from the rack, preparing to use it as a weapon. We all called our parents and family, as if it could be our last chance to talk to our loved ones.

But after nearly 30 minutes passed, the supposed danger seemingly posed no more risks to our safety. We exited the closet and were greeted by a swarm of Santa Clara police officers who questioned where we had come from and led us to a huddle of others, including our other friends. The threat turned out to be a false alarm — there was no shooter and nobody had been shot.

After a long wait, we eventually got out of the theme park. As we left, we saw the desperate measures others had taken to find safety: jumping into water features, hiding in bushes and overrunning the park's barricades. Floods of others, with genuine fear and grief in their faces, rushed to get as far away from the park as possible.

Afterward, one of my friends' dads drove us to In-N-Out, where we got some much-needed fried food and decompressed while we discussed what had just happened.

Rumors swirled that there was a gang member who shouted about a shooter, creating a mayhem in which his fellow members

tased some people and stole their wallets. I'm sure the police report would prove that theory false too — though, in all honesty, I couldn't care less about what actually happened.

The fact is that there could have easily been a shooter in Great America that day. People could easily have died and gotten hurt the way they had at the Gilroy Garlic Festival in July of that year, where four people were killed and 17 were injured.

When I heard the first shout of a shooter, I didn't even think to question whether there was a shooter

or not. I knew that shootings at events like these had happened before and the frequency of shootings in America led me to believe that there in fact had been a shooting.

I was almost trained for the moment when I ran into the storage room. Due to the frequency of shootings in America, I knew exactly what I had to do if there was a shooter nearby; I knew that I would need to get away as soon as possible and find as many barriers to bullets as I could — multiple walls and metal racks make great protection against a potential bullet.

My friends and I had attended an event known for bloody zombies laden with bullet holes, but that doesn't mean we were asking for the event to come to real life. We went to Halloween Haunt to have fun. We wanted to get scared of zombies. We didn't want to worry for our lives.

I'm planning on going back to Halloween Haunt this year. At first, I was hesitant because of my past experience. But I want redemption. I want to be able to go to Halloween Haunt and have fun with my friends as I was originally supposed to.

Our experience is not something one should have to worry about when going to an amusement park.

Nobody should have to be afraid of getting shot while having fun. Hopefully this next time, I won't have to run for my life. ♦

SPOOKY SEASON AT 545

Ranking candies that I can't eat

Jas-olantem



Jason Cheng

It's that time of year again. The season of trick-or-treating into the depths of the night, searching for boatloads of candy dressed in outlandish costumes sounds like a whole lot of fun — for everyone except me, at least.

I hope someone out there can relate to my plight — I'm severely limited by my gluten-dairy allergy combo in addition to my extremely health-conscious diet.

So how exactly am I able to rank candy?

Let's start by taking a look at Thrillist's top 30 candy choices ever. Say goodbye to milk chocolate (thanks, allergies): no Reese's, no Snickers, no KitKats, no Butterfingers, no Hershey's bars, no Skittles,

no M&Ms — you get the point.

Luckily, our list is significantly more manageable now. Off the top, Laffy Taffy is out of the running: It takes longer for the sticky debris to detach from your teeth than it takes for your body to digest a five-course meal.

Furthermore, Twizzlers apparently contain gluten — something I had to learn the hard way — so I'm tossing them out too.

Hint: Read the ingredient labels, kids with food allergies.

On a similar note, Tootsie Pops are another security threat for my body.

It's an appealing lollipop on the outside, but the unnecessary addition of a chocolate core makes for a risky ride only to be attempted when I'm feeling adventurous, which is never.

So what's left?

We still haven't mentioned Starbursts, Nerds, Sour Patch Kids, Jolly Ranchers or Airheads: This lineup isn't too alluring, and it doesn't help that we've already sunk to the very bottom of the list without really judging the taste of any candy.

To begin with, Airheads are budget ripoffs of Laffy Taffy, and I really can't seem to enjoy Sour Patch Kids. Candy is meant to be sweet — not sour — and I'll stand by this unpopular opinion for anyone who wants to argue.

I don't mind Nerds, to be honest, although I'm still not fond of shoving flavored pebbles into my mouth for pleasure.

That brings us to our final two contenders: Starbursts and Jolly Ranchers, which are essentially my entire Halloween diet. The fact that yellow and orange Starbursts exist

is a crime, but we'll let it go for now. On the other hand, Jolly Ranchers have so many unnecessarily average flavors (why grape?), and they're another example of teeth-sticking candies.

The final verdict? By the finest of margins, I'm going with — drumroll please ... Starbursts as my candy winner.

While I usually end up wasting half of the Starbursts I receive (we can't be friends if you like orange or lemon), cherry and strawberry are so good that I hoard hundreds of these little squares every Halloween.

I understand that almost no one else thinks of Starbursts as the go-to Halloween candy, but hear me out: Actually try a gluten and dairy-free Halloween once, and you'll see where I'm coming from — it's rough out here in the restricted zone where food allergy-inflicted people like me live. ♦

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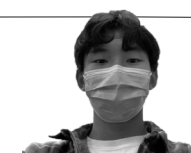
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Student weightlifting: confidence, exercise and gains

Bench Press Pro

Benjamin Li



Walking through the gym doors for the first time at 49ers Fitness Club in Westgate early last summer, I looked around at the collection of machines, each with dozens of different settings seemingly designed to confuse me.

Looking back now, I realize that my discomfort was natural; however, most people at the gym are encouraging and love seeing new faces. Even now, I still receive advice from more experienced gym-goers.

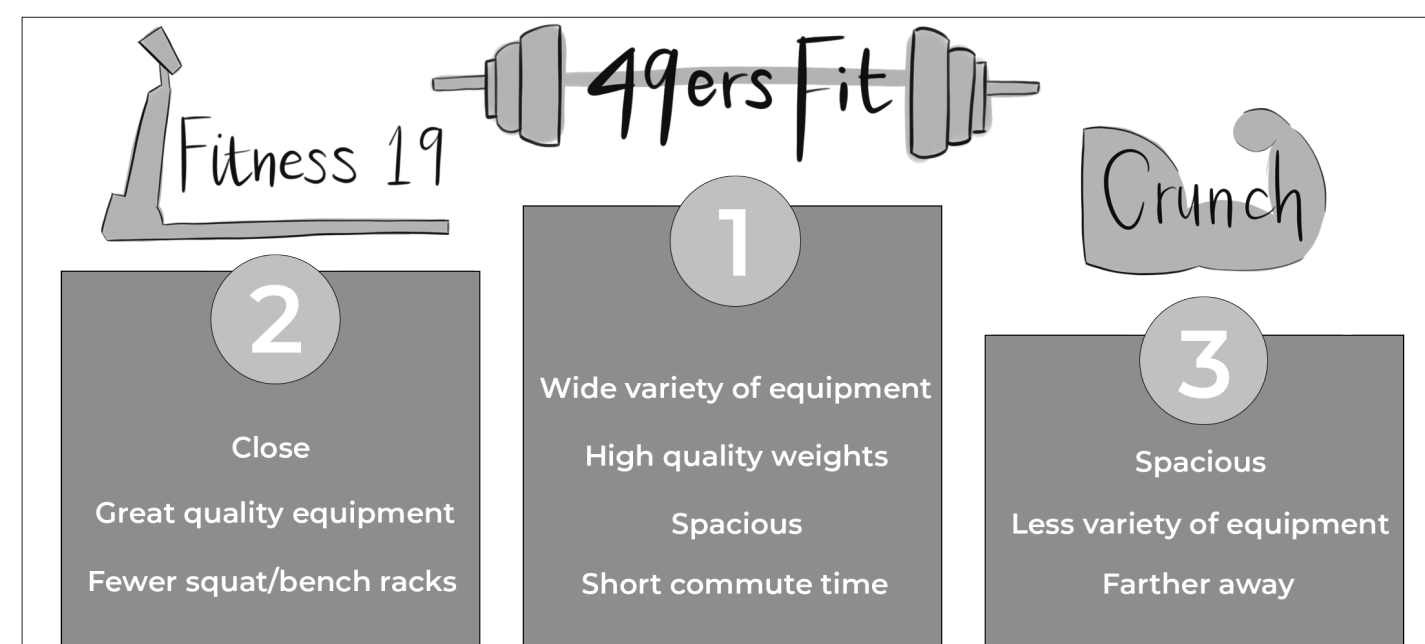
Despite weightlifting being extremely rewarding and easy to start, it is a beauty not understood by many.

While I began weightlifting to develop strength and increase muscle mass, there are many other reasons people start lifting. Whether it is for losing weight, powerlifting for strength gains or training for a sport, each person will have a unique training experience.

I'm often asked what motivated my sudden urge to hit the gym, and what pushes me to continue. The answer is simple: I wasn't satisfied with the way my body looked. Compared to my friends, seniors Christopher Liu and Ishaan Bhandari, who had started working out six months to a year before me, my body felt massively underdeveloped. To change this, I took advantage of the 50 percent discount for a 49ers Fit gym membership my basketball coach gave and began my fitness journey.

At first glance, my reasons for working out seem to stem from my insecurity; however, this is not the case. While I was dissatisfied with my body's appearance, this didn't mean I was ashamed of myself. Instead, I saw the potential for improvement and urged myself to grasp it. When I saw how quickly my friends were improving their strength and physiques, I felt the urge to follow suit. Since then, building my body has become something much more than a desire for aesthetics; I must continuously break through my limits in order to continue growing.

One of the best ways to learn and have fun in the gym is to make it a social occasion with a friend. One of the biggest benefits to working out with friends is the ability to go



Graphic by PRESTON FU

for riskier sets with the assistance of a spotter (someone who helps if you fail a rep).

My friend group often makes plans to work out together multiple times a week at the gym.

Not only does this push us to compete more fiercely, but it also gives a sense of pride that our friends are getting stronger. While all of us still enjoy working out alone, having friends who share the same passion makes it much easier and fun.

This motivation from my friends has pushed me to improve my lifts for months; when I started weightlifting, my max weight for the three main lifts were as follows (in pounds): 135 bench, 225 squat and 205 deadlift. After constant, arduous work, they have improved to 180, 335 and 300, respectively.

When I saw how quickly my friends were improving their strength and physiques, I felt the urge to follow suit.

Over time, I built a routine based on research and experience. I borrowed exercises from my coaches, online experts and trainers at the gym to ensure I was working as efficiently as possible. I decided on the push-pull-legs split routine, in which the full body

workout is split into three days, with each day corresponding to all the muscles that contribute to the motion in its name.

On push day, I work my chest, triceps and shoulders, and on pull days, my back and biceps. While leg days are the hardest, their difficulty makes them the most rewarding. Usually I'll use heavy weights for low reps, which causes more tears in my muscle tissue, leading to more regrowth and the most muscle buildup. These workouts take 90, 60, and 75 minutes for push, pull and leg days respectively.

I've also learned that my diet is just as important for building muscle as my workouts itself.

In order to build muscle, I eat around 5,000 calories a day. Generally I try to eat healthy foods high in protein while fulfilling my vegetable servings and fulfilling my other nutrient goals. However, every night I also eat two double quarter pounders from McDonalds, which add around 650 calories each. While this isn't the healthiest of all options I take out the cheese, the biggest source of empty calories, and focus on eating the meat.

Another helpful routine I've integrated into my daily life is the use of protein powder and creatine. Both come in powdered forms, making it easy to add and mix in my water bottle.

Creatine, the substance that is said to be the most effective at increasing muscle mass, has worked extremely well for me. Be-

fore I began using creatine, however, protein powder alone was also very useful in bulking up. In the future, I might look deeper into the world of supplements to see if there is anything else that can benefit my muscle growth.

With these lengthy workouts, some may find it surprising that I have time for these workouts and commute times during my day. With college application deadlines nearing, I was hard pressed to find a schedule that worked, so I developed a consistent and efficient routine.

Ultimately, I decided on a plan where I went to the gym before school started. I wake up at 6 a.m. and work out until 8 a.m. to get ahead of the heavy traffic on Saratoga Ave on my way to school. On push days, which are my longest workouts, I sometimes might even head to the gym quickly after school to finish my workout, which generally ends around 8 p.m.

As a basketball player, I've definitely seen improvements in my performance. Not only am I jumping higher, but I feel stronger and sturdier in all aspects of the game, such as rebounding and defense.

Among my friends I no longer feel like a weakling — my muscle gain has given my newfound confidence.

My verdict on weightlifting so far: I would have started much earlier if I had known the benefits it would bring. Working out is an activity I would recommend to almost anyone at almost any age. ♦

Mirroring a pro athlete's personal workout routine

Cheng-ing my workout

Jason Cheng



After Manchester United's last-minute triumph against Villarreal in the UEFA Champions League on Sept. 29, superstar Cristiano Ronaldo tore off his jersey in celebration to reveal a stunning, muscular body. Most of us lesser mortals could only envy him.

At age 36, Ronaldo is only getting fitter — not an ounce of fat can be seen on his shredded figure, and his body almost looks like those sculptured diagrams in biology class. That got me thinking: How has Ronaldo maintained his stellar physique for so long?

Although I had previous fitness experience, I wanted to take it to the next level.

With some simple research, I learned that Ronaldo's strict training regiment follows a precise combination of training, diet

and rest.

In an interview with Goal, Ronaldo said, "A good workout must be combined with a good diet. I eat a high protein diet with lots of whole-grain carbs, fruit and vegetables, and avoid sugary foods."

His workouts consist of soccer drills, cardiovascular exercises and weightlifting. Hydration is key, too — in a recent press conference, Ronaldo removed sponsored Coca Cola from his table, urging viewers to "drink water."

In an attempt to adopt this impressive lifestyle, I planned a "high school" version of Ronaldo's schedule: daily gym sessions after school, frequent jogs around the neighborhood, intense pre-workout stretches and a strict, healthy diet. Although I was somewhat well-versed in the world of fitness, I wanted to take it to the next level.

The first day came and went as planned. I pushed myself through an afternoon of upper and lower body training, drinking only water and consuming meals of almond yogurt, fruit, chicken, vegetables and rice.

Unfortunately, I woke up the next morning unable to move: My legs wouldn't budge from the previous day's 5-kilometer run, and my chest and shoulders were numb from lifting dumbbells way out of my comfort zone. My entire body ached, and with an entire day of school and training looming ahead, I'd already hit a dead end.

Moreover, taking on one of Ronaldo's fa-



FALCON // JASON CHENG

Junior Jason Cheng attempts a variation of soccer star Cristiano Ronaldo's workout routine. The next few days followed a similar pattern of burning soreness, struggling through exercises and eating a minuscule variety of food.

Yet, by the time the final day rolled around, I'd gained a sort of immunity to pain. My body developed a tolerance for post-training soreness, and by day seven of the cold showers, my senses were at an all-time high — the results were clearly there.

As such, I've decided to carry on with

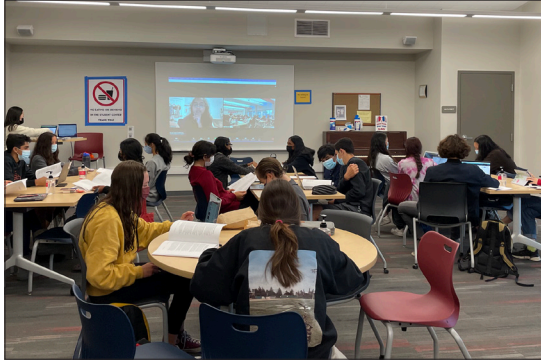
my routine, albeit with a more toned down one (I've confirmed my speculation that I'm no Cristiano Ronaldo), but in this short yet meaningful journey, I've learned so much about fitness and commitment.

Ultimately, what it takes to be a "Cristiano Ronaldo" is an unmatched level of determination and dedication to fight the mental battle against doubts or failures. Of course, not everyone is capable of becoming Cristiano Ronaldo himself, but we can all learn a thing or two from his undeniably elite lifestyle. ♦

snapshots



FALCON // SELINA CHEN



FALCON // SANJOLI GUPTA



FALCON // SANJOLI GUPTA



FALCON // SELINA CHEN

Senior Arnav Shah and junior Cameron Sy sit and share a laugh in between a percussion performance on Oct. 14.

Students in Mock Trial Club read over their case packets during a meeting at lunch in the student center on Oct. 11.

Color guard undergoes a nighttime practice on Oct. 19.

Freshman Emerson Pak and juniors Noor Khan and Lisa Fung prepare to return a volley against Fremont on Oct. 14.

My name is Shaan. Stop misspelling my name.

Kim Kardashaan

Shaan Sridhar

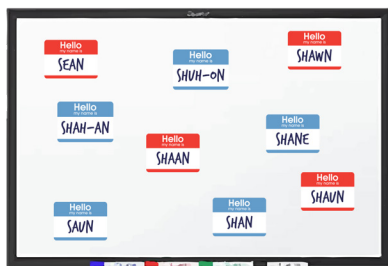


Hello. My name is Shaan. It's pronounced the same way as its alternate spellings — Shawn, Sean and Shaun. It's a fairly simple name in my opinion, but for some reason it's prone to a lot of confusion and mispronunciation. You've likely met someone like me; there are quite a few Shawns and Seans in the Bay Area, though I haven't met many Shauns. You could say I'm exotic with two A's to my name — my parents wanted an Indian name but also an easy American name, so they gave me the Indian spelling of a common American name. The whole goal of this was to prevent situations where people thought my name was too hard to pronounce (my parents did

not want to make my life harder by giving me a traditionally religious, seven-syllable name). Anyhow, this supposedly American name keeps getting messed up. The common mistake: calling me Shane. I honestly don't know what leads to this misunderstanding. Two As (aa) does not lead to a stressed a (ā). What part of Shaan remotely looks like Shane? If anything, the next common mispronunciations — Shuh-on and Shan — make much more sense. Whether it be in the Middle East or Asia, the use of "aa" to create an o-like sound is common. The average American should know enough about these cultures in order to ascertain the simple pronunciation trick — especially if they're of Asian or Middle Eastern descent. When I was in 8th grade, my teacher was

Indian. I remember sitting next to one of my best friends — also Indian — and waiting with him to hear my teacher pronounce my name with ease after my previous teachers had butchered it. To my grave disappointment, my Indian teacher messed up my Indian name worse than all my previous teachers. Somehow, Shaan turned into Shah-an on the class roster. There's also the occasional person who seemingly doesn't know how to pronounce any variation of the name Shaan. While ordering a boba drink near Main Street Cupertino, I was asked my name. I pronounced my name as asked and expected to see one of the three expected spellings written on the cup. Instead, I got a "Wait what?" I then proceeded to spend more than a minute clarifying my name and how to say it.

Pronunciation issues aside, I'm OK with people writing different spellings of my name when I say it. All those spellings — Shawn, Sean and Shaun — are more common than mine, so it makes perfect sense that they would be used if I had not directly clarified the spelling of my name. What's inexcusable, however, is seeing "Saun" on your fast food receipt. In what world does that spelling have the same pronunciation as Shawn? While getting pizza after Homecoming at MOD, they asked for my name so they could alert me when my order was ready, just like every other fast food joint. They wrote Saun when I gave them my name. It didn't affect me emotionally in any real way, but it led to an awkward laugh from me and my friends. I get it. It can be hard to pronounce cultural names. But my name is literally a different spelling of a mainstream name, using a common vowel sound that most Americans are likely aware of. There's really no excuse for getting my name wrong — do me a favor, and just get it right. ♦



Graphic by SHAAN SRIDHAR

How to survive a horror movie 101

Nidhi to survive

Nidhi Mathihalli



Yes, it is true. I am that one crazy person who loves horror movies, and will watch them on any day of the week. Nearly every time I sit down in front of a screen, you will, without fail, catch me watching a horror movie. I'd like to say that all this horror movie watching has made me a fearless person, but let's be honest, I'm scared of cooking oil and stubbing my toe. My horror movie addiction all started when I was 5 years old, when my mother, a veteran horror cinephile, (she literally laughed while watching "The Ring") was watching an episode of one of the greatest TV shows of all time, "Criminal Minds." I, being the smooth person that I am, used my amazing spy moves to sneak up behind and watch that episode along with her. The episode traumatized me for life, but I learned an important lesson: The criminal is never at home, so don't even bother checking there. In the following years, I learned so much more from the main characters in horror movies, and since I'm the nicest person of all time, I've decided to share the knowledge with you. But do be

warned: Horror movies are not necessarily the best source of life lessons.

The creepy kid is harmless
This especially applies to the twins with brown hair and blue dresses. They might seem super ominous, but don't worry, it's usually a misdirect. Instead, just go play with them; you probably won't get possessed.

Don't get your car repaired
It's OK if it stops working, you won't die, provided you are the main character. If you're not the main character, well then, you're dead meat, kid.

Don't own a nail gun
They aren't dangerous ... right? If Tucker & Dale can use it, albeit killing everyone with it, then anyone can. Just make sure the safety is on; there might be an entire movie where people kill other people with nail guns (Nail Gun Massacre), but you should be fine as long as you try not to stumble into one.

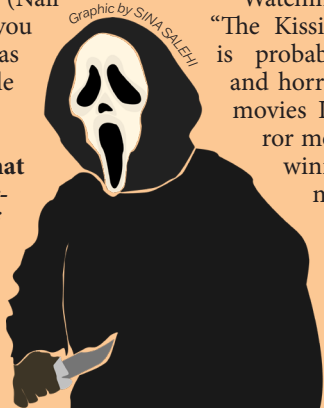
Always buy the dolls that the store owner desperately wants to get rid of
It's SURELY not like they want to get rid of them for a reason. The doll DEFINITELY isn't creepy.

There's a ninety nine point nine percent chance that it won't cause harm, right Chucky?

LEAVE YOUR CHARGERS AT HOME
Don't worry, you don't need a phone. You can clearly make better decisions than cops, FBI or people who are trained in dealing with serial killers. Sure, you might have gotten a C on the recent Physics test, but let's be honest, it's not your fault. It's because someone messed up the damn curve, OK? So, just believe in yourself and hope that you don't die.

Never listen to the scientist
Why would you listen to someone who wrote his PhD thesis on how to not become a zombie, when you could very well listen to the hot, dumb jock instead?

Honestly, just go watch a trashy rom-com instead
Watching Shelly "Elle" Evans from "The Kissing Booth" get into Harvard is probably way more unbelievable and horrifying than half of the horror movies I've watched. Plus, most horror movies end up with the bad guy winning anyway, so that they can milk the franchise. So just save yourself the time and watch teens make dumb decisions while still getting into Ivy Leagues while you sit there and reconsider your life choices. ♦



Graphic by SINA SAJEDI

topten

SONGS FROM "DONDA"

- 10 "No Child Left Behind" While listening to this song, I felt like I was transported to another universe.
- 9 "Lord I Need You" The lyrical flow gets stuck in my head every time I listen to the track.
- 8 "Keep My Spirit Alive" With a similar beat to "Good Morning," any Kanye fan will feel nostalgic listening to this track.
- 7 "Off The Grid" A deep bass combined with Playboi Carti's high pitch opens the song in a hype way. Very intense.
- 6 "New Again" With a fascinating EDM feel, the song's catchy beat creates the atmosphere of a dance club.
- 5 "Jail" The harsh electric guitar gave it a dominating presence on the album.
- 4 "Moon" Don Toliver's resonant melodic tone took me to the Moon.
- 3 "Believe What I Say" I always find myself singing the catchy chorus in my head, and, sometimes out loud.
- 2 "Pure Souls" The song's simplicity made it a satisfying listen thanks to Roddy Ricch's smooth lyrical flow.
- 1 "Donda Chant" "Donda-Donda-Donda-Donda *pause* Dondaaaaaaa."

>> Zachary Zinman