



By AZ3 Kapo Leung,  
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**I**t seems easy in a video game, but racing real cars or go-karts can be dangerous—as my sister, her boyfriend, and I learned.

We had planned to see a movie. Unable to find a theater, though, we decided to go to lunch. On our way home, my sister suggested we go to a local recreation center and race go-karts. My first reaction was that of a 7-year-old kid—I clapped my hands, jumped up and down, and said, “Yeah, let’s go!” This would be my first time in a go-kart and in an actual race. I wasn’t prepared for what was going to happen.

We had our choice of four different race-tracks; we selected the one with two sharp turns. The sound of the engines, the smell of the burning fuel, and the screeching of the tires only increased my excitement. I couldn’t wait to race.

I was ready in my No. 32 go-kart when the green light came on. I put pedal to the metal, slid through turn after turn, and ended up winning my first race. As I climbed out of the car, my sister’s boyfriend approached and said he wanted to race against me.

We saw a poster about a larger track—one with a polished driving surface and capable of racing 15 cars. We decided we were ready for this challenge. I started slowly, but as other cars passed me, I accelerated until I barely was in control of the car. As the race progressed, though, I became more comfortable and focused my attention on one objective: catching my sister’s boyfriend.

I was passing cars left and right when, suddenly, two cars in front of me lost control and started sliding to my left. While using all my strength to steer out of their way, I caught a glimpse of another car spinning backward and heading right at me. BAM! The crash happened so quickly it dazed me momentarily. All four go-karts stopped instantly.

The crash was violent enough to knock the sunglasses off my face, and I felt like my seat belt had come off. I still was shaking out of control when I looked around to see how everyone else had fared. They were fine, and we all soon were off racing again.

On the last lap, I realized my left side was hurting badly, and I couldn’t move my left hand. When I got out of my go-kart, my sister ran up and asked if I was OK. A few steps later, I had an answer for her: I felt faint and started throwing up. My wild ride cost me an uncomfortable evening and a trip to medical for an X-ray of my hand. The doctor told me I had broken my wrist.

I never had imagined that go-kart racing could be so much fun—and so dangerous. I realize I could have avoided my problems by reading the safety notices posted at the tracks and following the rules. We were supposed to follow other cars at a safe distance, with absolutely no bumping allowed—both of which I ignored in my quest for one goal: winning. The confidence I gained from my victory in the first race set me up for my failures in the second race. The next time, I’ll pay more attention because I don’t like wearing a cast for six weeks. ■