

Samvit Das

Grade: Junior

Hobbies:

Cello, Reading, Pokémon Showdown

Clubs:

Science Olympiad, Orchestra

Contest/Competition Experience or Honors:

U.S. IOAA Main Team 2022, Science Olympiad National Tournament 2021 Team + Circuit Lab Champion, USAPhO+ 2021.

Autobiography:

Maybe I'll be an outcast for confessing that my sparkling encounters with physics had nothing to do with math.

The Scholastic Book Fair, where I picked up a copy of *Angry Birds: Furious Forces!*, was my first of many passing glimpses into the physical world. Of course, it would be dishonest to say that *Furious Forces* functioned anything like a textbook for my eight-year-old self. As I flip through the copy I've just dug up out of my room, I can remember *all* of the awesome renderings of black holes and magnetic fields, and exactly none of the physics.

The next encounter wouldn't be for another few years. I'd just designed a revolutionary vehicle for the Destination Imagination Engineering Challenge: a cart with a magnetic surface stuck onto it, and (the really genius part) *another* magnet suspended from a fishing rod that would effortlessly pull forth the chassis at the discretion of the operator. Just like how you'd steer a pig in Minecraft, for lack of a more professional analogy. Physics came to admonish me for letting the mysterious nature of magnets overshadow Newton's Third Law, leaving me a little frustrated.

But even as I blew away all of its advances, physics proved to be my destiny.

Even as the false sirens of chemistry beckoned me in middle school Science Olympiad; like fate, physics came to swoop me up. Quizzes about simple machines led me to Wikipedia articles, whose references led me to research papers, whose jargon led me to stack-exchanges, whose tired complaints led me to the textbook that *Furious Forces* could never be. When I opened *Halliday & Resnick*, there was no going back...

But even if they aren't what armed me with the equations to tackle contests, I like to think those sparkling encounters were the most formative of all. Maybe seeing *Angry Birds* in projectile motion all those years ago is why my brain makes me see harmonic oscillators in everything today. Perhaps the scarring defeat of my magical magnet-mobile is what pushes me to give the 'dummy-check', as I call it, to all of my boxed answers. I'm probably being a little too romantic. But I've already called physics "my destiny", so I might as well double down.

I can't wait to charge forth on that destiny together with my fellow campers.