



Alexis Apodaca ‘20 races in the Supernationals race November 18, 2017. The race took place in Las Vegas, Nevada. “Supernationals had a bunch of international drivers and professional indycar and formula 1 drivers there. I got to meet one of my favorite formula 1 drivers which was super cool. I was the only American on my team.” Photo submitted by Alexis Apodaca



Alexis Apodaca practices at Pueblo Motorsports Park Sept. 7, 2018. This was one of Apodaca’s initial practices with the BMW M4. “I was just practicing in general at the Pueblo track, getting used to the car and the track, and trying to get faster.” Photo submitted by Alexis Apodaca.

LIFE ON THE SPEEDWAY

By: Maddy Merritt and Reagan Davis

Alexis Apodaca started racing go karts when she was nine years old. The 16 year-old junior now races both her go kart and her BMW M4.

A DAY IN THE LIFE

As a young girl, Alexis Apodaca would go out to the track with her dad to watch him race his Corvette C6. Watching him inspired her to do the same. She started racing high-speed go karts at Unser Karting and Events Center in Centennial where she now works.

“I’m a Customer Experience Advisor... I schedule [people] into a race and train them before they go out on the track and check in and make sure everything on the track is running smoothly.”

Auto racing takes practice, skill, and dedication. It also requires extreme focus from the driver. Alexis Apodaca is no stranger to the potential dangers of racing over 100 mph.

“It’s hard because it’s physically exhausting and mentally exhausting because you have to focus the whole time or you can crash. It’s dangerous.”

An outdoor sport, the weather controls the races and practices. For Apodaca, the car track is farther away than the kart track that’s fifteen minutes away from her house. She sometimes has to miss school to practice with the M4 because the car track has practices during weekdays unless there’s a race, and she usually goes on Fridays.

“It’s really hard because Fridays are all [class period] days, so that’s when I have my quizzes and tests. It makes it hard to balance racing and school sometimes.”

LEARNING THE LINE

“I like [the BMW M4] because it’s different. It’s an awesome adrenaline rush, and speed is awesome -- I love all of it just together. I like the BMW right now because it’s new and

I’m still learning, and it’s interesting, a whole different experience, way faster,” Apodaca said.

Apodaca’s highest recorded speed was 140 miles per hour in the BMW.

“It feels like your strapped to a rocket ship and you’re the one driving,” Apodaca said. “It gets scary at times when you know you’re on the edge because if you’re on the edge, you can spin out,” she said.

SAFETY FIRST

“We have headsets in our helmets, and it allows us to talk to people on or off the track,” she said. “I have somebody who sits next to me while I’m practicing so that we can figure out the best racing line.”

Apodaca and her partner work to find the limit of the car so she doesn’t exceed that limit and find herself in a dangerous situation.

“If you’re turned and the tires are holding as much as they possibly can, they can’t hold any more, so you’re asking them to do more than they can do, and you can slide out or possibly crash.”

There are a lot of things that can go wrong in a car. When Apodaca is driving, not only is she focusing on the car but also everything outside of the car around her.

“You have to stay focused so you know where to turn because if you don’t take the right line, you will end up in the grass. There’s other people, so when you’re around cars... you have to make sure you’re especially aware so you don’t hit them,” Apodaca said.

TECHNICALITY ON THE TRACK

Apodaca’s dad has rebuilt practically the whole Corvette. He took out the anti-lock breaking system and traction control on the car.

“It has no technology in it. It’s just raw car.”

He works on the C6, and Apodaca works on the M4. Watching her dad has taught her vital facts she needs to drive.

“I’m trying to learn the limit of the car so that I don’t crash. You have to know where you’re going. It’s technical-- there’s a certain way to get around the track as fast as possible, but you have to know that line: it’s called the racing line.” Apodaca said.

She added that in order to drive the car, the racer must figure out the racing line, and once it’s established and the racer is following it, she increases speed at one mile an hour a time.

RACING IN THE RAIN

“We put rain tires on, so normally, we run slicks which are flat [tires], and if you look at tires on a normal car, rain tires are the tires on a normal car. They have grooves on them so they can travel on the water and the water can go through the grooves.”

Apodaca said the racers will wear rain coats if it starts raining, but the only reason a race would be cancelled due to water would be if the water overflowed the track.

SMALLER ISN’T SIMPLER

“Karting keeps my skills up because you can get closer to people, and karting is technical. There’re so many little details as well, and everything’s really precise. Everything is scaled down, but is also a lot closer.”

The size of the race differs. Apodaca said there are typically 10-20 racers in a car race but about 40-50 in a kart race.

“Karting is closer racing and more intense for right now until I get into higher levels of cars. When the professionals need to keep their skills up, they go back down to karting.”

Races last the whole weekend, and placing varies.

“You do qualifying in the morning and once positions are set, wherever you finish is where you start the next [race]. Every new day, you will qualify again in the morning. For big, national ones, you usually won’t start over.”

Racing isn’t just “ready, set go!” The racers start on the track two by two and for a rolling start will round the track slowly until they approach the straight away and the flagger waves the green flag. The racers accelerate and change positions, and the race begins.

OREGON-A GET A WIN

“If things don’t work out [with sponsors] I will still definitely keep racing as a hobby for as long as I can instead of making a career out of it.” Apodaca said. She plans to race for life.

**“IT FEELS LIKE YOU’RE STRAPPED TO A ROCKET SHIP AND YOU’RE THE ONE DRIVING.”
- ALEXIS APODACA**