

# Metro Detroit Chevy Dealers Rev Up For 2012 'Malibu Madness' Contest

by Gerald Scott  
News Dept.

The annual NCAA Men's College Basketball Tournament, long dubbed March Madness because the phrase reflects the intensity of team fans, has been around for so long that it sometimes gets taken for granted.

Not so this year with the Metro Detroit Chevy Dealers, which last week launched their local, related "Malibu Madness" promotional campaign.

All 39 Metro Detroit Chevy Dealers are participating, all to take advantage of exceptionally strong public interest and awareness in the NCAA national basketball tournament.

The Chevy dealer group have come up with "Malibu Madness," which ties team performance in the NCAA tournament against prize giveaways led by one grand prizewinner, who will come away with a free 2012 Chevy Malibu at the end of the ongoing contest.

In conjunction with the 2012 NCAA Men's College Basketball Tournament, each entrant will follow a tournament team through the rounds to win great prizes.

At Moran Chevrolet in Clinton Twp., the prizes include 42-inch flat screen TVs. Just on the first day of the contest entry week (March 1-10), Moran had 75 customers signed up to participate.

And of all the hot-selling cars in the Chevrolet lineup, why focus on the Malibu?

Said Paul Zimmerman, Matlack Chevrolet sales executive in Redford, "Because, right now, the Cruze and the Malibu combined account for about 60 percent of our new car sales."

Indeed, all of the Metro Detroit Chevy Dealers participating in Malibu Madness had the 2012 edition of the family car on prominent display, especially including Matthews-Hargreaves in Royal Oak, where a bright orange sign advertised the Malibu starting-lease price at "\$99."

The NCAA tournament

teams were chosen Sunday evening, March 11. Now, all customers who signed up earlier will receive a randomly selected tournament team to follow throughout the rounds.

If their team continues to win and advances in each round, that entrant has the further opportunity to win supplemental prizes.

And if their team actually wins the final NCAA game in April, that entrant will have the chance to win a brand new 2012 Chevy Malibu.

At the Hamilton Chevrolet dealership in Warren, Marty Miller was cooking up hot dogs for Malibu Madness customers and visitors.

Miller earlier worked at Chevrolet Truck in Pontiac for 32 years as a design analyst before retiring in 2002. This year, he is celebrating 10 years with Hamilton, serving as their dealer trade transportation manager.

Thanks to his professional connection to Chevrolet, Miller said he was excited to participate in the Malibu Madness contest along with



PHOTO: GERALD SCOTT

At George Matlack Chevrolet in Redford, sales associate Danielle Fowler is coordinating the dealership's Malibu Madness marketing activities together with Will Chapman.

Hamilton's customer base.

Meanwhile, note that this state has three college teams

competing in the upcoming NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament including the Univer-

sity of Michigan, University of Detroit Mercy and Michigan State University.

## Chrysler's Marchionne Challenges EU To Finally Tackle 'Overcapacity' Issue

By COLLEEN BARRY  
Associated Press

GENEVA (AP) — Fiat and Chrysler CEO Sergio Marchionne said last week that European officials need to provide a "concerted road map" for the auto industry to close idled plants — or risk the failure of one or more European automakers.

Marchionne puts overcapacity of European plants at 20 percent — meaning one-fifth of the installed assembly lines have been idled by the financial crisis that is battering the industry as consumer demand drops. That hits both profits and competitiveness.

Auto companies got a pass on making tough choices during the 2008 financial crisis thanks to incentives that gave car buyers with older polluting cars a bonus to buy new ones. Any hint of factory closures bring protests from national governments, given that the European auto indus-

try is one of the engines of the economy.

Marchionne told reporters at the Geneva Motor Show that either the European Union must discipline countries that distort the free market in its role as guardian of the single, unified market or come up with a plan to evenly distribute the "pain and suffering" that factory closures will bring.

"It can't fix it. It needs to provide a unified, concerted road map to get this done," Marchionne told reporters.

If that doesn't happen, Marchionne warned that there could be "one or multiple failures" in the medium- to long-term.

"Some of us may not be around," he said. "We need to be careful here. We are playing with fire."

Marchionne said Fiat can survive thanks to its partnership with Chrysler. His aim is to produce cars for the recovering U.S. market at Italian

plants, which analysts say are running at 60 percent capacity.

Marchionne, who said he has been to Brussels twice in the last two weeks and is the current head of the European Automotive Manufacturers Association, chided EU policymakers for setting standards like quantifying how much emissions cars can emit, while not dealing with industrial imbalances that threaten automakers' survival.

"In the absence of a free, functioning single market, the European Union is not worth much," Marchionne said. "It as designed to provide free access to goods and services across a much larger market place. And if you can't preserve that, you are not doing much."

Fiat launched the new 500L at the Geneva auto show, a car that will be produced in Serbia, a decision that was made for economic reasons.

## Volt Production on Hold for 5 Weeks

By DAVID KOENIG  
AP Business Writer

DALLAS (AP) — It seems that the Chevrolet Volt is on hold for awhile.

That's because General Motors Co. is suspending production of its Chevrolet Volt electric car for five weeks amid disappointing sales.

A GM spokesman said last week that the company will shut down production of the Volt from March 19 until April 23, idling 1,300 workers at the Detroit-Hamtramck assembly plant.

The Volt was rolled out with great fanfare in late 2010 but has since hit bumps in the road. Sales have fallen short of expectations, and its reputation was bruised by an investigation into a possible fire risk.

It carries a high price tag — around \$41,000 before a U.S. tax credit of up to \$7,500. Rising gasoline prices should boost the Volt's appeal, but there are plenty of other less-expensive cars that also get good mileage.

GM sold 7,671 Volts last year, below its original goal of 10,000 cars. The company stopped publicly announcing sales targets last year. It sold 1,023 Volts in February and 603 in January.

"The fact that GM is now facing an oversupply of Volts suggests that consumer demand is just not that strong for these vehicles," said Lacey Plache, chief economist for auto information site Edmunds.com.

GM spokesman Chris Lee said the company was "taking

a temporary shutdown" of the assembly line.

"We're doing it to maintain our proper inventory levels as we align production with demand," he said.

Lee said a decision to allow Volt drivers to use carpool lanes in California should help demand. "We're just looking to increase sales, and we see a positive trend going forward," he said.

Although the Volt has not been a big seller, the low-emission vehicle has improved GM's reputation for innovation. Like its closest competitor, the Nissan Leaf, the Volt is rated at more than 90 miles per gallon by the EPA. The Volt is powered by a 400-pound battery pack on which the car can travel about 35 miles before it needs recharging. After that, a gasoline-powered generator drives the electric motor.

Battery fires broke out in three Volts after safety crash-testing last year, but federal regulators determined that the car was no more risky than vehicles with conventional gasoline engines. GM and federal officials believe that the fires were caused by coolant leaking from damaged plastic casing around the batteries after side-impact test crashes. They say that they don't know of any such fires in regular use of the cars.

Alan L. Baum, an auto-industry researcher in West Bloomfield, Mich., agreed but said the perception of a safety risk has hurt sales.

"It is taking GM more time than they thought to reverse that sentiment," Baum said.

The good news, he said, is that buyers of electric and hybrid cars are probably willing to listen to GM's side in the fire story.

Last year, GM offered to buy back Volts from any customers worried about safety. In January the automaker advised Volt owners to take the cars to a dealer for free repairs. Steel was added to plates that protect the batteries.

The investigation into the fires made the Volt a political lightning rod. Republicans accused federal safety regulators of going easy on the Volt because the government owns a stake in GM after giving it a \$50 billion bailout.

The director of the highway safety agency denied giving GM favorable treatment.

## GM Experts to Give Volt Talk At SAE in Flint

The Mid-Michigan Section of SAE will hold their dinner and program on March 19 at Baker College's Technology Center Building, Room S128, 1050 W. Bristol Road at Fenton Road in Flint.

The speakers for the evening will be GM Volt experts Danielle Cory and Eugene Abboud. Their program topic will be "A Comprehensive Overview of the Human Interface for GM's Extended Range Electric Vehicle."

Social hour is 6 p.m., dinner is 7 p.m. and the program starts at 7:45 p.m. For more info, call (810) 635-7948.

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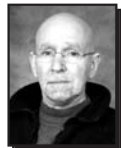
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