

New Tesla Car Is 'Do or Die'

By DEE-ANN DURBIN
AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) – It's a make or break moment for electric-car maker Tesla Motors.

Tesla has lost nearly \$1 billion selling high-end electric sports cars to the likes of George Clooney. Now it's going to attempt to sell them to the rest of us – and try to make money doing so.

The company's first mass-market, five-seat sedan will be delivered Friday. The car, called the Model S, will either propel the company to profitability or leave it sputtering on the fumes of a \$465 million government loan.

"The Model S is the going to be the first true mass market product experiment for Tesla, one they cannot afford to fail," says Jesse Toprak, vice president of market intelligence at car buying site TrueCar.com.

Tesla, the brainchild of PayPal billionaire and SpaceX founder Elon Musk, has always been a moon shot. Analysts and auto industry insiders scoffed at the idea that a new car company could be created from scratch and built in a high-cost state like California. Boardroom turmoil and a string of technical problems repeatedly delayed the launch of the company's only car, the \$109,000 two-seat Tesla Roadster.

Tesla survived by creating something so unique that the price tag was almost irrelevant: A beautiful car that could tear up a race track without burning a single drop of gasoline. Celebrities flocked to it, giving Tesla a cache that an established brand like Cadillac could only dream of.

Now Tesla must do something much more difficult. It has to convince more traditional car customers to buy an expensive vehicle with limited range from a small, untested company.

The Model S carries a starting price of \$49,900 after a federal tax credit – about the same as a Lexus RX hybrid crossover. Models top out at \$101,550, or about the same as a hybrid Fisker Karma sports car.

A car that's half the price of the Roadster lets Tesla break into a bigger market, but those customers will take a hard look at the value they are getting. This isn't a trophy car to park on Rodeo Drive. It's a sedan for hauling kids and groceries.

The high price will limit sales, says Rebecca Lindland, an analyst with IHS Automotive. She doubts Tesla will reach its goal of selling 20,000 Model S sedans in 2013. Nissan has sold just under 30,000 all-electric Nissan Leaf sedans since they went on sale at the end of 2010. But the Leaf is little more than half the price of a Model S.

Still, the Model S already has broader appeal than the Roadster. Tesla says more than 10,000 people have put down a refundable deposit for the sedan, and it expects to sell 5,000 this year. The Roadster has sold just 2,150 since 2008.

The first sedans will be delivered to customers Friday at Tesla's factory in Fremont, Calif., a plant the company bought for \$42 million in 2010 from its former operators, General Motors Co. and Toyota Motor Corp. Tesla will host 12 test drives around the country this summer for reservation holders.

Tesla didn't make executives available for interviews ahead of Friday's kickoff event. But at the company's annual meeting this month, Musk said he's "highly confident" that Tesla will meet its goals. That includes making a profit in 2013.

Even if buyers take a chance on Tesla, the risks don't end there. A charging network doesn't exist in the

U.S., and electric-car owners can run out of power between stops. There's no gasoline engine that kicks in as a backup, as there is in the electric Chevrolet Volt.

Tesla is trying to ease worries about range by throwing in three kinds of chargers for home and public use and planning a network of fast chargers at highway exits. Buyers can upgrade to a battery with an industry-best 300 miles of range. The base model can go for 160 miles on one charge.

The company's retail strategy is also untested. Its 14 U.S. stores have a tiny presence compared with Lexus' 230. When Roadsters need repairs, Tesla deploys technicians to the owners' house.

Meanwhile, it will be far more expensive to do that if Tesla sells as many Model S sedans as it hopes. The company's plans for servicing the cars are hazy. Musk said recently that Tesla simply wants to make cars that don't need servicing.

New Study Says Second Bridge Will Provide 8,000 Steady Jobs

ANN ARBOR – The construction of a new bridge connecting Detroit, Michigan, and Windsor, Ontario, will provide an estimated 12,000 jobs per year for each of the four years of the construction phase according to a recently released analysis published by the Center for Automotive Research (CAR).

CAR is an Ann Arbor-based, nonprofit research organization.

Furthermore, the analysis concludes that once the bridge is operational, more than 8,000 permanent jobs will be created in Southeast Michigan.

The new study, "Analysis of the Economic Contribution of Constructing the New International Trade Crossing: a New Bridge Linking Detroit and Windsor," indicates numerous opportunities will be generated from both the construction and operation of the bridge, the New International Trade Crossing (NITC).

"Initially, the construction of the bridge itself will serve as an economic stimulus, providing jobs and state revenues," said Kim Hill, director of Sustainability and Economic Development Strategies at CAR and the study's lead researcher.

"Once construction is completed and bridge operations have begun, the region's additional freight shipping capability could attract private sector investment, augmenting the gross regional product and creating more employment opportunities.

Added Hill, "Additionally, the bridge project will make Michigan eligible to receive Federal matching funds that

can be used on other highway infrastructure projects throughout the state, helping to improve Michigan's highway system and supporting the state's transportation employment.

"Clearly," he added, a project of this scale, along with the federal matching funds, will have employment and economic effects that will impact many diverse industries throughout the state."

Meanwhile, has CAR significant experience conducting economic impact analyses and has carried out the majority of national level automotive economic contribution studies completed in the U.S. since 1992.

This particular report is the product of research performed by the Sustainability & Economic Development Strategies and the Transportation Systems Analysis groups at the Center for Automotive Research.

The report was written by Hill; Richard Wallace, director of Transportation Systems Analysis; Deb Menk, senior project manager and Joshua Cregger, industrial analyst.

Financial support for this study was provided by the Michigan Manufacturers Association and the Consulate General of Canada in Detroit.

Additional support was provided by the Detroit Regional Chamber. The complete study is available at www.cargroup.org.

The Center for Automotive Research's mission is to conduct research on significant issues related to the future direction of the global auto industry, as well as to be an industry thought leader.

IndyCar Driver Wilson Still Struggling With Effects of Dyslexia in Reading

By CHRIS JENKINS
AP Sports Writer

WEST ALLIS, Wis. (AP) – Justin Wilson still remembers a time when his classmates considered it laughable that he might one day grow up to become a professional race car driver.

The IndyCar Series driver had a tough time growing up in Sheffield, England, struggling to read lessons or do the writing it took to complete his school work. Only later, around age 14, would he be diagnosed with dyslexia.

"I really struggled at school," Wilson said. "I remember one day, the teacher asking what you want to be when you grow up. And everyone went down and did their thing and it got to me: 'I want to race cars.' And everyone laughed. 'What's wrong with you guys?' And then one joker stood up, 'Oh, you'll never race cars. You're too stupid.'"

Today, Wilson has seven career IndyCar victories, including the June 9 race at Texas Motor Speedway. His success has come despite his continued struggles with dyslexia, a reading disability that occurs when the brain does not properly recognize and process certain symbols.

When Wilson looks at a word on a page, he generally can recognize the letters at the beginning of the word and the letters at the end of it – but not the letters in the middle.

"So I still get sentences wrong. I still spell wrong. I still read things the wrong way," Wilson said.

Once diagnosed, Wilson received specialized instruction at school. But reading remains difficult for him, even today.

Asked to shoot promotional videos at a race this year, Wilson had a hard time reading and reciting a short script.

"They give you these cards, and I read them, and I read it all backwards – 'This doesn't make any sense,'" Wilson

said. "And you've got a camera there, so you feel like, 'I can't read.' It's easy to start panicking and read it too fast and say the wrong words. I just have to calm down and say it slowly and just be very deliberate. Anything more than two sentences, I freak out. Standing in front of people reading just doesn't work. I have to just do a couple of bullet points and wing it from there, because I can't read what I've written."

While Wilson occasionally reads – mostly about racing – it's a constant struggle.

"I don't read books," Wilson said. "People say, 'What's the last book you read?' Why would you do that? It sounds like agony to me."

Wilson hasn't been hiding his condition by any means. In the short biography on his Twitter page, it says, "Dyslexic in control, tweets might not make sense." But now Wilson plans to become more active as a spokesman for awareness of the condition, working with dyslexia advocacy groups around the world.

His message? "The big thing that stands out to me is to let kids know you can follow your dreams," Wilson said. "You can do what

you want to do and it's not going to hold you back. There's going to be extra work and you've got to find ways around it. But it's also better when you find this earlier. More understanding for dyslexia's definitely going to help."

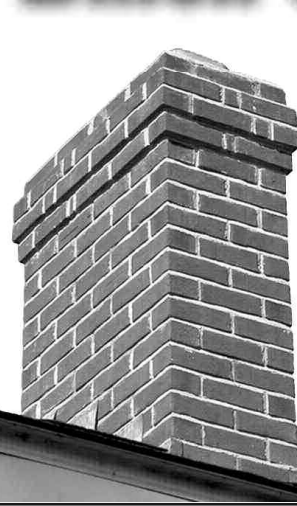
Because school was so difficult for Wilson, he needed an escape. With support from his family, he found it in racing.

"Just to be in control, out on my own, don't have to listen to anyone," Wilson said.

"I had confidence to just be my own person. I knew from an early age this is what I wanted to do. It's the one thing that came easier to me than anything else. Sure, you've still got to work at everything in life. But this thing came easy, whereas everything else, all my schoolwork, even football at school, it just wasn't easy. And racing always was. You just naturally go towards it. I knew from the first day I drove a go-kart that was my calling."

Since then, Wilson has met several other drivers who have dyslexia – including Formula One great Jackie Stewart, a high-profile advocate for awareness. Actor Patrick Dempsey, who races sports cars, is also dyslexic.

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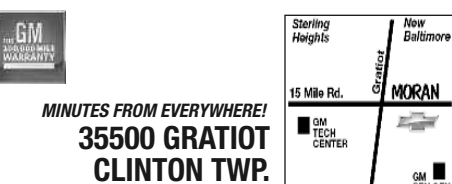


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