

GM to Build AV Cruise at Company's Orion Assembly Site

After more than a year of building test vehicles for development of its self-driving technology, General Motors has taken the next step and will build production versions of its Cruise AV at its Orion Township assembly plant in Michigan.

Roof modules for GM's self-driving vehicles will be assembled at its Brownstown plant. The public first learned of GM's plans on March 15.

The Cruise AV, which the company plans to commercialize in 2019, is the first production-ready vehicle built from the ground up to operate safely on its own with no driver, steering wheel, pedals or manual controls, said GM spokesman Patrick Sullivan.

"We're continuing to make great progress on our plans to

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Senior AGV Technician Tim Solach (center, left) helps Storm cut the ribbon at Eckhart's Advanced Tech Center.

Warren Becomes Home of New Advanced Tech Center

by Jim Stickford

The future is coming, ready or not. And Eckhart Inc., an auto supplier based in Lansing, has decided to be ready. Part of that preparedness involves the creation of a new Advanced Technology Center in Warren.

Eckhart, founded in Michigan in 1958 as a supplier to global manufacturers, opened its new 47,000-square-foot Advanced Technology Center on March 13.

The center will serve as the company's technology showcase, including engineering and assembly of the next-generation Autocraft Autonomous Guided Vehicles, which are transforming manufacturing value streams worldwide, as well as an additive manufacturing (3D printing) laboratory, said Andrew P. Storm, Eckhart president and CEO.

The Advanced Technology Center currently employs 60 and the company's expansion plans call for the employment of more than 100 in the next two years, all to accelerate adoption of Industry 4.0 technologies for the largest industrial companies in the world, Storm said.

"The term '4.0 technology' got its start a few years ago in Germany," Storm said. "It's caught on across the world and 4.0 tech includes 3-D printing, Autonomous Guided Vehicles (AVG) and collaborative robots."

Eckhart's workforce is focused on enhancing the safety, productivity, and reliability of employees who will be part of assembly processes connected to the smart factories of the future, Storm said. While the company

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Ford Unveils Its Corporate Strategy for Next Two Years

by Jim Stickford

Ford unveiled some of its future plans March 15, with an emphasis on new ways of doing business.

CEO James Hackett announced plans to the media while saying that the auto industry is changing more than ever.

"I am humbled to represent a brand that began 115 years ago," Hackett said. "There was a time where a business's tenure was a sign of pure accomplishment because there are such clear Darwinian forces that determine what continues and what doesn't."

"The humbling part is that now the assessment of a business's longevity is its ability to see, define and configure a promising and inspiring future. Being frozen in the past is a death sentence. Today, our world and our industry are evolving at light speed and the implications are transformations in ways we couldn't

have imagined even 10 years ago."

So, Hackett said, Ford has spent the last 10 months imagining the industry's future and developing a plan "to transform Ford to compete and win both today and tomorrow."

Hackett said the company is pleased with its progress and has decided to share some of its plans with the public.

"Winning is never guaranteed, but at Ford all of our people demonstrated in the great recession they had the moxie to survive and get better," Hackett said.

Ford's plans call for the company to do five things really well, Hackett said. The first is to improve the fitness of Ford. He said it isn't about change for change's sake, but rather redesigning the business for "advantage."

Second, Ford must listen and respond to the voice of the customer and "heighten the role of the user in our thinking. Time

has shifted the techniques and methods for this, including the use of big data to have instantaneous feedback."

Then Ford must choose its strategy to win. "This means that we don't have to do things that destroy value or don't delight customers. Instead, we will focus on those areas that delight customer and create value."

Fourth, Ford must leverage its passion for great vehicles while integrating technologies that people love, Hackett said. The fifth thing Ford must do to secure its future, he said, is convert the trust that people historically have had in the company to include the arrival of smart vehicles for a smart world.

Overall, Ford plans call for strengthening its truck and SUV portfolios, improving vehicle performance and quality and getting into off-road markets.

Joe Hinrichs, president of Global Operations, told the group that Ford will improve pro-



Farley speaking to the media about Ford's plans for the future.

duction processes through the use of more collaborative robots and that by 2020 it will have the industry's freshest lineup. Ford plans to introduce four new nameplates in the next two years.

Part of improving production

is reducing the time it takes to develop vehicles, Hinrichs said. Ford global market teams, he said, will now centrally identify and prioritize opportunities for the company earlier in the pro-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

Steel Tariffs Could Hurt Domestic Auto Industry

by LORNE COOK and JOE McDONALD
Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) – The Trump administration's decision to impose tariffs on aluminum and steel imports drew warnings March 9 from businesses and U.S. trading partners that the measure could backfire, provoking a trade war without resolving the problems it's intended to address.

President Donald Trump said the tariffs, due to take effect in 15 days, are needed to protect U.S. workers. Businesses say the 25 percent tariff on imported steel and 10 percent levy on aluminum will jack up costs, raising prices for consumers and potentially putting people out of work.

Trump has long singled out China as being unfair in its trade practices and for dumping cheap

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



Buick owners can get free wi-fi during March NCAA tournament.

Buick Makes It Easy to Enjoy March Madness

March Madness is here, and that's good news for Buick drivers.

With a total of 130 men's and women's college basketball games played in less than a month, it can be difficult for fans to catch every second of the March Madness action, said Buick spokesman Stefan Cross. Starting today, select owners of Buick vehicles can get a free

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Jim Stickford, news

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Look, Ma, no hands – in fact, no steering wheel on Cruise AV



Brownsville will build GM's rooftop LIDAR units for its AVs.

Macomb County Circuit Court Judges Moving

Due to the renovation of the fourth Floor of the County Courthouse, many Circuit Court Judges will be relocating the week of March 19.

The fifth Floor of the County Courthouse is reopening, and Judge Jennifer Faunce will be returning to her permanent Courtroom on the fifth Floor, said county spokesman John Nizol. Judge Joseph Toia will be moving to the 6th floor. Judge James Maceroni, Judge Carl Marlinga, and Judge Rachel Rancilio will be moving to the fifth floor. Judge Michael Servitto will be moving to the third floor.

The County Clerk's office and the Macomb County PPO office will be moving to permanent offices on the first floor of the County Courthouse. The Clerk's office will open in its new location on the first floor on Monday, March 26, Nizol said. The Macomb County Bar Association is also relocating to the third floor of the Courthouse during the construction.

GM is Building Cruise AVs at Orion Assembly Plant

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

commercialize in 2019," said GM President Dan Ammann.

"Our Orion and Brownstown teams have proven experience in building high-quality self-driving test vehicles and battery packs, so they are well-prepared to produce the Cruise AV."

GM will invest more than \$100 million to upgrade both facilities. Roof module production has already begun and production of the fourth-generation Cruise AV is expected to begin in 2019, Sullivan said.

Since January 2017, UAW Local 5960 workers at the Orion plant have assembled three generations of Cruise self-driving test vehicles for use in the most challenging urban environments, including downtown San Francisco, Sullivan said.

More than 200 of the test vehicles have been assembled at Orion.

"The UAW is committed to preparing our members for the future of advanced mobility and this investment recog-

nizes our willingness to work together to build these self-driving vehicles," said Cindy Estrada, vice president and director, UAW General Motors Department.

Workers at GM's Brownstown Battery Assembly Plant will expand their capabilities by adding roof module production for all of

month of 4G LTE Wi-Fi, enabled by AT&T, so they can catch the games almost anywhere they are.

As a longstanding NCAA partner, Buick is offering March Madness fans the ability to watch their teams while on the go, especially since viewers are increasingly turning to online streaming to watch the games, Cross said.

According to CBS, in 2017, March Madness live streaming views increased 33 percent year over year to a total of 22.4 million hours of live online viewing.

Cruise's self-driving vehicles, Sullivan said.

The roof modules integrate special equipment for AV operation such as LIDAR, cameras, sensors and other hardware, and will be assembled on a dedicated line at the facility.

The Orion plant will continue to build the Chevrolet Bolt EV

and Sonic as well as the Cruise AV, Sullivan said.

The Brownstown plant is the first high-volume battery assembly plant in the U.S. operated by a major automaker, and is a new business enterprise for GM.

It opened in the summer of 2009 after a \$43 million investment.

hicles," said Phil Brook, vice president, Buick and GMC Marketing.

"Buick owners live an active lifestyle and value staying connected.

"By offering a free month of unlimited in-vehicle Wi-Fi data to eligible customers during March Madness, we're helping ensure fans don't miss out on any of the excitement."

The free unlimited data offer is available for current owners in the U.S. who have a vehicle equipped with an OnStar 4G LTE Wi-Fi hotspot and do not currently have an active data plan, Cross said.

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Storm shows how AGV system can reshape manufacturing ecosystem.

Eckhart Builds a New Facility in Warren

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

has a 60-year history, leadership realized that it couldn't just remain a toolmaker.

In order to prosper and grow, Eckhart had to change with the times, Storm said.

"Expansion into Southeast Michigan, where there is a concentration of talent in the global epicenter for automotive research and development, is a key component of Eckhart's growth strategy," said Storm.

"While the auto industry is focused on developing autonomous vehicles for use on the streets, Eckhart is accelerating the development of advanced technologies we believe will reshape the manufacturing ecosystem.

"Eckhart is investing to expand our suite of solutions and bring real value to all of our customers who realize, as we do, that the next industrial revolution is upon us."

Having a new Technical Center in Warren allows the company to be in the heart of Southeast Michigan, Storm said.

"This region has the greatest concentration of engineering talent in the world," Storm said. "We are able to develop and demonstrate our technology and be near our customers."

AGVs are important because they allow companies that want to manufacture to be able to do so in a more efficient and safe manner, Storm said. These vehi-

cles are autonomous and follow direct routes and carry supplies as needed up and down production lines.

"This is repetitive and dangerous work," Storm said.

"The Department of Labor has said that more than 95 million workdays are lost every year due to incidents involving fork lifts and similar machines."

The development of autonomous vehicle technology is about more than cars that drive themselves, Storm said. This

technology can be a great boon for manufacturers.

"We are proud to be an American manufacturing company," Storm said.

"A lot of the traditional toolmakers have been bought out by the Chinese. Not to knock them, but we're proud to be an American-owned company that has supplied the global industrial base for 60 years, and now we're heading into the next industrial revolution. It's exciting to be a part of that."

Macomb Event Helps Handicapped

Macomb County Community Mental Health (MCCMH) co-presented the Acquiring Community Employment Services (ACES) Job Fair, a one-of-a-kind community partnership between the Macomb Intermediate School District (MISD) and several Macomb County adult service providers committed to supporting people with disabilities in Macomb.

The goal of the March 5-6 event was to bridge the gap between adults with disabilities and employers, said Ambrosia Jackson, an employment specialist at MCCMH and

one of the event coordinators.

"It was a first-of-its-kind job fair in Macomb County where consumers were able to get job skills and be immediately placed in front of potential employers," said Jackson.

The first day, participants attended classes on job searching, interviewing, resumes and cover letters, dressing for success, and job skills. On the second day, participants met employers.

"Employers responded favorably that they met quality candidates and that they would come back next year," said Jackson.

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Steel Tariffs Could Hurt the Auto Industry

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

steel on the global markets, depressing prices. But experts say the new tariffs will in fact not affect China much, but rather hurt key allies like the European Union and South Korea.

The move drew consternation outside the U.S.

The Chinese government said it “firmly opposes” the move but gave no indication whether it might make good on threats to retaliate.

“These measures could make a significant impact on the economic and cooperative relationship between Japan and the U.S., who are allies,” said Japan’s foreign minister, Taro Kono.

The EU said it hoped to be exempt from the tariffs, like Canada and Mexico are, or that the issue might be solved in international arbitration at the World Trade Organization.

If not, the EU vowed to retaliate.

“We will have to protect our industry with rebalancing measures,” said Cecilia Malmstroem, the EU Trade Commissioner, who this week confirmed that EU states are finalizing a list of U.S. goods – from peanut butter to bourbon – to hit with retaliatory tariffs.

The head of Eurofer, Europe’s

main steel federation, said Trump’s reasons for slapping tariffs on steel and aluminum were an absurdity and that the move could cost tens of thousands of jobs across the continent.

The tariffs would cost lost trade worth \$2.6 billion a year for the EU and \$1.1 billion for South Korea, according to Chad Bow, senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics.

While that is not a lot for the economy as a whole, it would be painful for the individual industry.

“Significant damage in South Korea’s steel exports to the United States seems unavoidable,” the country’s trade minister, Paik Un-gyu, said in a statement.

Meanwhile, the tariffs would cost China only \$689 million in trade losses, according to Bow’s estimates, largely because the U.S. has already imposed duties on Chinese products.

Steel-producing countries worry not just about lost sales in the U.S., but also that steel from other exporting nations will flood in.

In Asia, a large share of Japanese and Chinese steel goes to countries in the region’s southeast, where booming construction and light industries are fueling strong demand for steel.

The U.S. tariffs could push pro-

ducers to sell still more to Southeast Asia, depressing steel prices. That would hurt producers but boost profits of construction and other industries in Southeast Asia.

The costs to the world economy could grow further if countries impose their own tariffs on U.S. products, raising prices for goods globally and undermining economic confidence.

Some are also worried that the Trump administration might not be done imposing tariffs.

Indonesia said that while the steel and aluminum tariffs are not a big problem for its industry, the country would be in trouble if the U.S. targeted its palm oil, a key export used in a huge number of consumer products.

“We are ready for a trade war,” said Enggartiaso Lukito, the trade minister. Vice President Jusuf Kalla said the country had the option of retaliating against imports of U.S. soybeans, wheat and aircraft.

In the U.S., Gary Shapiro, president and CEO of the Consumer Technology Association, which represents more than 2,200 companies, said the tariffs could cost far more American jobs than they would create.

U.S. automakers are among the businesses with the most at stake, accounting for 38 percent of the aluminum and 15 percent of the steel consumed in the country, according to *Ward’s Automotive Reports*.

The Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers warned the tariffs will also drive up the price of steel made in the U.S.

If the entire cost were passed to consumers, which may not be possible, it could add about \$300 to the price of the average vehicle, said Kristen Diczek, director of Center for Automotive Research’s Industry, Labor & Economics Group.

The tariffs will affect a wide range of products, including high-tech gadgets, food, furniture and beverages. The Beer Institute, a trade group representing the world’s largest brewers, estimates the 10 percent tariff on the aluminum encasing most beer sold in the U.S. will push costs up by \$348 million annually, threatening more than 20,000 jobs in the industry.

“Imported aluminum used to make beer cans is not a threat to national security,” said Jim McGreevy, the Beer Institute’s CEO.

The head of the National Retail Federation, whose members include department store chains, grocery stores and other merchants around the world, also raised objections to the tariffs March 8, calling them a tax on all Americans.

“A tariff is a tax, plain and simple,” said Matthew Shay, president and CEO of the NRF.

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The FT 400 was developed in collaboration with Ignites Research, a subsidiary of the FT that provides specialized content on asset management. To qualify for the list, advisers had to have 10 years of experience and at least \$300 million in assets under management (AUM) and no more than 60% of the AUM with institutional clients. The FT reaches out to some of the largest brokerages in the U.S. and asks them to provide a list of advisors who meet the minimum criteria outlined above. These advisors are then invited to apply for the ranking. Only advisors who submit an online application can be considered for the ranking. In 2016, roughly 980 applications were received and 400 were selected to the final list. The 400 qualified advisers were then scored on six attributes: AUM, AUM growth rate, compliance record, years of experience, industry certifications, and online accessibility. AUM is the top factor, accounting for roughly 60-70 percent of the applicant's score. Additionally, to provide a diversity of advisors, the FT placed a cap on the number of advisors from any one state that's roughly correlated to the distribution of millionaires across the U.S. The ranking may not be representative of any one client's experience, is not an endorsement, and is not indicative of advisor's future performance. Neither Raymond James nor any of its Financial Advisors pay a fee in exchange for this award/rating. The FT is not affiliated with Raymond James. space Neither Raymond James Financial Services nor any Raymond James Financial Advisor renders advice on tax issues, these matters should be discussed with the appropriate professional.

Utah Moves to Allow Tesla to Sell Its Cars

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) – Tesla is on track to start selling new EVs in Utah under a deal approved by state lawmakers.

Utah lawmakers approved a proposal March 9 allowing the company to sell new cars for the first time at a \$3 million showroom it built before the state denied them a license in 2015.

Utah officials cited a law banning car manufacturers from owning dealerships. Tesla pushed back, saying it had to sell its own cars because its business depends on convincing customers its electric cars are better than traditional gas-engine cars. The Utah Supreme Court sided with the state and car dealers who argued that they were just as capable of selling EVs.

Final Four a Family Tradition for Lansing Buick Dealer

by Jim Stickford

Well, it's March, which means the NCAA Basketball Tournament's road to the Final Four has begun.

And that's good news for Jeff Crippen, owner of Crippen Buick in Lansing. It seems that Crippen has been going to the NCAA's Final Four for the past 11 years with his son Jeffrey. The duo plan on keeping this tradition alive for 2018, when the Final Four hits San Antonio.

"I really enjoy the tournament, and as a Buick dealer in Lansing, Michigan State is always a big part of the event and gets a lot of publicity," Crippen said.

"This all started when my son Jeffrey was studying in Atlanta to be a chiropractor. That was back in the year 2007. He suggested I come down and see the tournament with him, which I did. We had a great time."

When the next year's tournament rolled around, Jeffrey said why not go two years in a row. They did and a tradition was born.

"We've seen a lot of great basketball," Crippen said. "But we've also seen some wonderful cities. We've been to Indianapolis, Houston, Dallas, which is where Jeffery has his practice. These trips make for great father-son weekends."

Crippen said his wife Susie normally doesn't come, but if Michigan State makes it to the Final Four this year, she will make the trip.

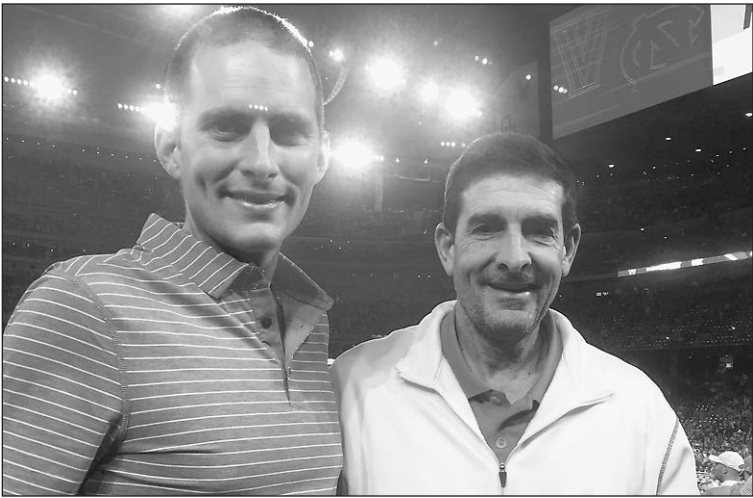
Over the years, Crippen has used his connections with the Buick brand to get tickets. Buick has been a sponsor of the tournament for the past several years, and is set to continue its sponsorship until at least 2020.

"I don't always get my tickets from Buick," Crippen said. "Over the past few years, Jeffrey has used his skills to get the tickets. I think he really enjoys the thrill of the hunt getting those tickets."

And as Buick dealer Crippen said, he enjoys visiting the Fan Final Four Fun Fest display that is set up every year by various sponsors of the NCAA basketball tournament.

"This is a sort of temporary pavillion set up outside the arena where the Final Four tournament plays," Crippen said. "There are tents and the event's official sponsors have their own displays. People who go to Fest also have different interactive activities and basketball-oriented games they can enjoy."

"But as a Buick dealer, what really interests me is hearing what people have to say about Buicks when they visit the Buick display. They don't know I'm a dealer, so I get an honest answer



Jeff Crippen and his son Jeffrey at last year's NCAA Final Four.

when I ask what they think about the vehicles that they have seen at the Buick display."

What Crippen said he's been hearing is that people are so surprised at how today's modern Buicks look.

"So many people have an image of what a Buick is supposed to look like in their heads," Crippen said. "And that image is usually years out of date. People think Buicks are lumbering big cars. But the brand now has SUVs and CUVs that are nimble and attractive. What I hear so often is, 'That's a Buick?' It doesn't look like what I thought it

would. It's sharp looking.' It's amazing to see how the brand's vehicles have evolved just over the past five years."

Crippen said he's looking forward to this year's tournament. He's an MSU fan and Jeffrey is a U-M fan. Bragging rights are on the line. But it's the memories he makes with his son that he cherishes.

Arizona Reaches Agreement Over GM Troubles

PHOENIX (AP) – About 33,000 Arizona residents who own General Motors vehicles will share up to \$6.3 million as part of an ignition switch-related settlement with the automobile company.

Arizona Attorney General Mark Brnovich announced the settlement March 8. It still requires court approval before it's final.

In 2014, GM announced recalls of some vehicle models for faulty ignition switches that could switch to "off" or "accessory" while being driven.

If the court approves the consent decree, GM will select a claims administrator to oversee the refund process.

In order to receive a payment of at least \$200, consumers must sign a release form that'll be mailed by a claims administrator. The payment amount would depend on the number of claimants and the alleged defects at issue for each consumer's vehicle.

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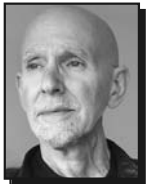
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Chevrolet Has Road Trip Down to a Science

The family road trip is the stuff of legends. Hollywood makes movies about them and families talk about them for generations.

Understanding these trips and how the right vehicle can make them better is important, which is why Chevrolet enlisted the expertise of prominent data scientist Randy Olson to help families make the most of their spring road trip plans, said GM spokeswoman Katie Amann. Olson created a map using a custom algorithm to plan an efficient route through all 48 contiguous states, with stops at 48 of some of the best-known and most beloved family vacation spots across the United States.

According to a recent national survey commissioned by Chevrolet, spending time with family and exploring new and interesting locations were U.S. parents' top two favorite aspects of family road trips.

From national landmarks to theme parks and everything in

between, this data-driven map provides an efficient route between destinations with the least amount of backtracking and stress – an important consideration for traveling families, Amann said.

"This map is designed so road trippers can start anywhere and drive as much or as little as they like," said Olson. "Across the U.S., people can create their perfect route, whether staying close to home or embarking on a once-in-a-lifetime 48-state journey."

To traverse the entire 48-state route, travelers would spend more than 214.56 hours (approximately 9 days) on the road and log 13,389 miles on the odometer – not including time or mileage for overnight breaks and detours, Olson said.

"Road trips are about creating shared memories and quality time with family and friends," said Steve Majoros, director of marketing, Chevrolet Cars and Crossovers.

"And when on the road, travelers can trust Chevrolet vehicles to help get them where they're going reliably. Chevy is now the only brand to earn J.D. Power Dependability Awards for cars, trucks and SUVs three years in a row."

Chevrolet earned J.D. Power

Dependability Awards for Most Dependable Compact SUV, Midsize SUV, Large Light Duty Pickup and Midsize Car, Amann said.

The national survey commissioned by Chevrolet also found that parents typically bring an average of 6.6 mobile devices in the vehicle on family road trips. Technology offered in vehicles such as the new Chevrolet Traverse, Equinox and Trax can help keep travelers entertained and connected with available 4G LTE Wi-Fi, built-in navigation and Apple CarPlay and Android Auto compatibility.

Other available Chevrolet technology and safety features that can help enhance a family road trip include Surround Vision, Lane Change Alert with Side Blind Zone Alert, Lane Keep Assist with Lane Departure Warning, Rear Cross Traffic Alert, Rear Park Assist and Rear Seat Reminder.

Chevrolet also worked with Olson to create shorter road trips for families looking to explore different parts of the country in-depth, including the Midwest, the Northeast, the West Coast, Texas and Florida.

"In the spirit of Find New Roads, Chevrolet wishes everyone a safe and happy road trip season," Majoros said.

Models Fading from Shows?

GENEVA (AP) – At the recent Geneva motor show, some automakers want visitors to focus their minds more on the models – the cars, that is, not the women.

In the wake of the (#)MeToo movement's explosion and growing awareness about sexual harassment, some auto executives have been taking a new look at the traditional use of often scantily-clad women on display stands at auto shows.

Some companies say a cultural shift is in the air. Though a walk through this year's Geneva auto show suggests the industry still actively associates its products with female sensuality and uses models to leverage that.

"I don't think we will be able to change the situation from one day to the next," said Susie Wolff, former development driver for the Williams racing team in Formula One, which has recently decided to stop using models at the start of competitions.

Wolff doesn't like the idea of women standing by merely to be objectified. "But I think we are making change in a positive way," said Wolff, who was at the show to promote an initiative to get more women involved in motorsports. Leggy and heavily made-up models still adorn the stands at the Geneva show, though there seems to be less skin on show than past years.

"We never looked into optics, or whatever, when it comes to our presenters," said Rolls-Royce CEO Torsten Mueller-Oetvoes.

"Our customers coming here expect from us that we can properly explain what our product is all about. And that is for me the more important thing."

Johan van Zyl, the head of Toyota Motor Europe, said his company isn't using women models to shape the image of the vehicles.

"It is all about explaining the product," van Zyl said. "Of course, models can also be utilized, but we don't want to make a derogatory type of display of females. It is not our company value and it is not what we want to be: Totally against it."

Neither Toyota nor Rolls-Royce had models standing by the cars, though they did have assistants – both women and men – dressed in business-wear to provide information to visitors.

Silvia Blattner, a spokeswoman for the Palexpo convention center that hosts the auto show, declined to wade in on the issue, saying in an e-mail that the motor show is a "neutral" platform for carmakers, which are free to decide how to present themselves.

Still, change comes hard – and not all companies are on board. The Skoda display for its Vision X featured a visit from the 2011 Miss Czech, Jitka Novackova, posing for cameras in a short dress and black leather boots rising over the knee. Automakers like Alfa Romeo and Ssangyong, among others, trotted out models, too.

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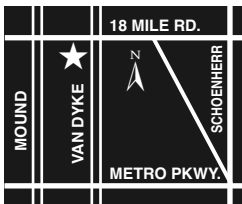


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Cadillac Racing Teams Get Great Top Reviews in 2018

Cadillac V-Performance Racing teams Mustang Sampling Cadillac, Whelen Engineering Cadillac and Konica Minolta Cadillac headed to the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship Mobil 1 Twelve Hours of Sebring race with momentum from January's Rolex 24 win.

With the Rolex 24 celebration complete, the positive feelings of winning North America's biggest sports car race, the Mustang Sampling Cadillac team is poised to keep that winning feeling by going for the top step of the podium at Sebring this week and win the 36 hours of Florida.

Joao Barbosa, Filipe Albuquerque and Christian Fittipaldi had a successful test behind the wheel of the No. 5 Mustang Sampling Cadillac DPi-V.R and like their chances heading into the late-March race.

"The test went really well and we checked a lot of the boxes off on things we planned to do at the test," Barbosa said. "Racing-wise, we are ready. The test gave us all a lot of laps and so we were comfortable with how we were with the car. It is a tough race and the track is very challenging.

"For the drivers, it is very physical, and for the car, it goes through a lot every lap with the bumps and so mechanically it is hard on them. The track is unlike any other, with the bumps in Turn 1 and 17, especially 17. I like that challenge a lot and hopefully they will never repave that track! It is a cool characteristic and it has a lot of personality, it challenges the drives every time."

"It will be a great race, we know we have the tools to win, but the respect for the others because they are very strong too," Albuquerque said. "We just need to focus on doing our best with what we have, and if we can get the maximum out of that, we should be very competitive.

"The last two years, we finished third and then second, so it makes total sense to make the last step this year. The test went pretty good. We were happy about the set-up changes and all the drivers of Mustang Sampling car wanted the same. Everyone was very close, a little bit of what we saw in qualifying at Daytona. For sure, it will be another hard race."

The Whelen Engineering Cadillac team with Eric Curran, Felipe Nasr and Mike Conway are hungry to win one of the series' long-distance races. Coming to the finish line at the Rolex 24 in second, made the driving trio hungry for a win in one of the coveted IMSA's distance races.

"The Sebring test went pretty well," said Nasr. "Sebring is always a fun and challenging track to drive, but most importantly

during the test we worked to understand how the car reacts to changes because a well set-up car here can make a big difference, especially over the bumps. From what I saw from the test, it's seems like the field is pretty close once more. Sebring is a tough track, but I feel confident in our package as a team to fight them, as long as we can keep running our cars trouble free."

"It is pretty exciting for Action Express as a team to be 1-2 in the Endurance Cup as well as in the (IMSA WeatherTech) standings," said Curran. "Obviously, we'd like the Whelen machine to be on top of the standings and the goal is for this team to be 1-2 the whole year. I feel like this is a really strong program with our guys, the car prep has been awesome and this is a great driver lineup to be a part of. The very first race that I drove for Sonny (Whelen) was Sebring, and in the first race of the weekend we had an oil filter fail and it caught fire, nearly burned to the ground. But the team worked all night long and we came back and won the race the next day. It was just incredible and that was an amazing way to start with Whelen."

The 3.2-mile, 17-turn Sebring International Raceway was the site of an all-Cadillac podium sweep with the Konica Minolta Cadillac team taking the win in 2017. The Wayne Taylor-led team will be looking to get back to victory lane this weekend after withdrawing early from the Rolex 24-hour race with tire concerns. The test, held three weeks ago, at Sebring helped to put those worries out of their minds and they had the opportunity to focus on race weekend set-up. Drivers Jordan Taylor, Renger Van Der Zande and Ryan Hunter-Reay are looking to repeat their win from 2017 at Sebring.

"Daytona left a bad taste in our mouths," Taylor said. "We had the car to beat that weekend. To have our chances taken away to battle for the victory by something out of our control was extremely frustrating. But I think it motivates us all that much more. Nothing in this sport is given to you, so we can't live in the past, there's no point to keep talking about it.

"We just move forward and focus on the next race. With that in mind, I thought we had a great test at Sebring. Usually, when you go to a test day, you have a lot of items to evaluate on the car. Sometimes they work, sometimes they don't. This was the first test where I felt like we made progress with every change we made. I was really excited by the end of the test with the Cadillac we were leaving with."

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FCA, GM, VW, Mercedes Sued Over Airbags

DETROIT (AP) – General Motors, Fiat Chrysler, Volkswagen and Mercedes all knew of problems with dangerous exploding Takata air bag inflators years before issuing recalls, according to three class actions filed last week with the federal court in Miami.

The lawsuits cite company documents obtained through previous legal actions against other automakers over faulty Takata inflators. The plaintiffs allege that automakers were informed of inflator defects during tests but delayed taking action. Allegations against GM are among the most serious. Takata documents showed that GM employees expressed concerns about inflators rupturing as early as 2003.

Messages were left March 14 seeking comment from GM, VW and Mercedes. Fiat Chrysler declined comment, saying it had not been served with the lawsuit.

Takata uses the chemical ammonium nitrate to create small explosions to inflate air bags. But the chemical can deteriorate when exposed to high temperatures and airborne moisture. That causes it to explode with too much force, blowing apart a metal canister and hurling shrapnel. At least 22 people have died worldwide and more than 180 have been hurt.

The problem touched off the largest series of automotive recalls in U.S. history, with 19 automakers having to recall up to 69 million inflators in 42 million vehicles. The problem brought a criminal conviction and fine against Takata and forced the Japanese company into bankruptcy protection.

The lawsuits, which consolidate individual claims that were filed previously, allege that owners paid higher prices for their vehicles than they would have if the defect had been disclosed.

They allege that manufacturers picked Takata to supply inflators because the cost was less than other air bag makers who used different, less volatile chemicals as propellants. According to the lawsuits, manufacturers had employees who questioned the quality and performance of Takata's inflators well before any vehicles were recalled.

"These auto manufacturers were well aware of the public safety risks posed by Takata's airbags long ago, and still waited years to disclose them to the public and take action," Peter Prieto, lead counsel for the plaintiffs, said in a statement. The lawsuits "are an important step forward in holding them accountable."

In an April 2003 communication with Takata, GM was concerned about "ballistic variability," which is a tendency for the air bags to either underinflate or explode when deployed, the lawsuit against GM said. A GM engineer raised concerns about inadequate testing, moisture control and the inability of Takata to meet GM specifications after a 2003 visit to Takata's factory in Moses Lake, Wash., according to the lawsuit.

In 2004, Takata employees met with GM officials about a tendency for the inflators to shoot flames when they ruptured, and in March of 2006, Takata reported that inflators tested for GM vehicles continued to show "aggressive behavior," including the escape of "molten propellant" when they ruptured.

A Takata employee admitted "we cannot get good results" with the inflator design, the lawsuit stated.

Yet GM didn't issue any recalls until June of 2014 when it recalled 29,000 Chevrolet Cruze compact cars from the 2013 and

2014 model years, according to the lawsuit. That recall came after Takata reported three exploding inflators in 2010. "Defendants did nothing to meaningfully investigate the problem, notify the appropriate regulators or notify the class (car owners)," the lawsuit stated.

GM also received reports of real-world problems in 2011 and 2014, including one case in which a Cruze driver was blinded in one eye by an exploding inflator, according to the lawsuit. GM and Takata blamed the trouble on a manufacturing problem instead of the deteriorating ammonium nitrate. "Rather than publicize the truth, both Takata and New GM blamed the ruptures on a manufacturing problem," the lawsuit alleged.

Old GM, the company that existed before seeking bankruptcy protection in 2009, knew of the problems, and New GM, the company that emerged from bankruptcy, kept employees who knew and had the same knowledge, according to the lawsuit.

Volkswagen, the lawsuit alleged, had repeated quality issues with Takata dating to 2003, even rejecting products after an audit. Yet no recalls were issued until 2016, the plaintiffs claimed. Daimler AG, maker of Mercedes-Benz vehicles, had concerns about the integrity of Takata inflators in 2003, according to company emails. In 2004, Mercedes engineers agreed to "forego key performance variables" and allow use of Takata inflators, the lawsuit stated. The company didn't do any recalls until 2016.

Fiat Chrysler didn't issue its first recall until 2014, even though its engineers expressed concerns about Takata inflators during the early 2000s, the lawsuit stated.



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Ford Executives Share Ford's Future Plans

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

duction development process. Part of this strategy means shifting from platforms to using flexible architectures. There will now be five architectures – front-wheel drive unibody, rear-wheel drive unibody, commercial van unibody, body-on-frame and battery electric vehicles.

This shift reduces cost, improves vehicle quality and increases the efficiencies of development and manufacturing.

Hinrichs said Ford will be connecting all its vehicles with standard 4G LTE cellular modems. This will allow vehicles to receive over-the-air updates to software.

And Ford will be reducing the orderable combinations of vehicle features. This reduces cost, improves efficiency, simplifies ordering a vehicle and improves quality while reducing vehicle complexity.

Jim Farley, Ford's president of Global Operations, said Ford is betting big on F-Series trucks. Last year, F-Series trucks alone accounted for \$41 billion in Ford revenue. That's more than either Nike or Coca-Cola did during the same time.

"SUVs have a big role in Ford's future," Farley said. "In 2008, we bet big on the new Escape and the global Explorer. Now we get to refurbish our entire SUV lineup. The Ecosport has been a huge success and the Expedition's sales are up 50 percent."

And Ford will now be building SUVs for the off-road market, Farley said. He said the Raptor started off as an underfunded project, but has turned out to be a great success.

Ford is also aiming to be the top seller of hybrid vehicles by 2020, Farley said. All the new



Joe Hinrichs

utilities that will be introduced in the North American market in the next two years will also have hybrid versions.

Ford has also invested big in commercial trucks and vans, Farley said, and as a result, it is the only OEM that produces a complete lineup of commercial vehicles.

The company is on top and has worked hard to make sure things stay that way, he said.

Mike Levine, Ford's North American Communications manager, said that while Ford is betting big on trucks and SUVs, the company hasn't forgotten sedans.

The public will get a look at some Lincolns and the upgraded version of the Fusion in the next few months.

Kumar Galhotra, president of Ford North America, said sedans still are important to the company.

"People have different driving needs," Galhotra said. "If space is at the top of a driver's concerns, then there is the Ford Expedition. If you want a commuter car that is comfortable, then you might look at sedans. We have the Fusion. It all de-



Jim Hackett

pends on the needs of the customer.

"But the shift of market is considerable. In 2016, SUVs accounted for 40 percent of sales. In 2017, that figure went up to 44 percent. Ford will offer our customers a portfolio that meets their needs."

U.S. Autoparts Network Has Money Trouble

CARSON, Calif. (AP) – U.S. Auto Parts Network Inc. (PRTS) on March 15 reported a loss of \$4.1 million in its fourth quarter.

On a per-share basis, the Carson, Calif.-based company said it had a loss of 12 cents. Earnings, adjusted for pretax expenses, came to less than 1 cent on a per-share basis.

The online auto parts retailer posted revenue of \$68.5 million for that same period of time, said a company spokesman.

For the year, the company reported a profit of \$24 million, or 62 cents per share.

Revenue was reported as \$303.4 million.

Ford Looks to California For Mustang Inspiration

California and Mustangs have gone together for 50 years.

"And America's favorite sports car gets even more style and technology for 2019 thanks to the revival of the legendary Mustang GT California Special, new features including rev-matching on 5.0-liter 6-speed manual-equipped models, the first-ever custom-tuned B&O PLAY premium audio system for Mustang, three new vintage-inspired colors and over-the-top stripes, said Corey Holter, Ford car group marketing manager.

"No doubt, 2019 is an exciting year for Mustang enthusiasts, especially fans of our California Special and BULLITT models. "This year further targets hardcore enthusiasts who want even more performance from BULLITT, while new technology – including rev-matching on manual transmission-equipped Mustang GT and active valve performance exhaust on the EcoBoost model – means even more thrills."

When Mustang first hit the streets in 1964, owners' clubs sprang up around the country, with many regional dealers creating their own personalized pony car designs.

One – inspired by the 1967 Shelby GT notchback coupe prototype – came to be called the California Special, Holter said.

That original version featured blacked-out grille, fog lamps and a side racing stripe that ended ahead of a new rear fender scoop.

It wore a Shelby-inspired spoiler, custom taillamps and twist-lock hood fasteners. Impressed, Ford put a limited number of California Special cars into production for 1968. Before long, the California Special had joined the ranks of Shelby, Boss and Mach 1 special-edition Mustangs.

Today, the 2019 California Special for Mustang GT is a visual standout, featuring a trademark fading stripe that traces from the 5.0 side badge to the rear fender scoop.

A signature Ebony Black and Race Red script California Special badge adorns the trunk lid. At the front, the car follows the blacked-out open grille and picks up the Mustang Performance Pack 1 splitter, Cadiz said. The California Special wears unique five-spoke painted machined wheels.

Inside are rich black Miko suede-trimmed seats with embossed GT/CS insignia and contrast red accent stitching, along with custom embroidered GT/CS floor mats. Signature California Special script badging appears on the passenger-side dash panel.

"Few things are more satisfying than dropping the top on a California Special and taking a drive down the majestic Pacific Coast Highway," said Mark Conforzi, Ford designer.

"This signature design takes its cues from the original California Special, while at the same time enhancing the personality of today's Mustang."



California car culture inspired Ford to create this Mustang.

VW Vows Solution to Diesel

FRANKFURT, Germany (AP) – Volkswagen CEO Matthias Mueller says the automaker had "an excellent year" in 2017 and is committed to addressing concerns about diesel pollution.

Mueller cited the company's efforts to reduce diesel emissions and recover from its 2015 diesel emissions scandal.

He said that 160,000 older diesels had already been taken off the road through trade-in incentives, and decided to update software on 4 million cars to reduce emissions.

He said March 13 the company would be "part of the solution" in finding a way to address controversy over the diesel issue.

Environmentalists are pressing for bans on older diesels in German cities with high pollution levels.

Mueller, speaking at the company's annual news conference in Berlin, gave an upbeat view after last year's record sales of 10.7 million vehicles.

"We are on the offensive and we're going to stay that way," he said.

Mueller said conventional internal combustion engines would play a role in the company's push to meet tougher European Union limits on carbon dioxide emissions by 2021.

But he said the company

would be investing 34 billion euros by 2022 on autonomous and electric technology and on developing digital transportation services.

In 2015, Volkswagen was caught rigging cars to cheat on United States diesel emissions tests and paid more than 20 billion euros in fines and legal settlements.

Hyundai Recalls 155,000 Sonatas

DETROIT (AP) – Hyundai is recalling nearly 155,000 Sonata midsize cars in the U.S. because the air bags may not inflate in a crash.

The recall covers cars from the 2011 model year. Hyundai says a short circuit in the air bag control computer can stop the seat belts from tightening before a crash as well as prevent the air bags from deploying.

The company says in government documents that it has four reports of air bags not inflating. It was not clear if anyone was hurt.

The cars were made between Dec. 11, 2009 and Sept. 29, 2010.

Hyundai is still working on a fix for the problem.

The company expects the recall to start on April 20.

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nhuminski@edrinke.com



Greg DeGrandis
gdegrandis@edrinke.com



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jpfleiffe@edrinke.com



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