

Portland Observer Auto Review

News and reviews on new motor vehicles

2006 Subaru
Impreza WRX

BY KATHLEEN CARR

The 2006 WRX's powerful delivery is soft at low rpm but the new 2.5-liter turbo provides more bottom-end pull and an even deeper midrange. Handling is superb thanks to a well-tuned suspension and standard all-wheel drive.

The WRX's potential is pretty down-to-earth. Smooth steering, brake, and accelerator inputs promote quick man-machine bonding, and this editor enjoyed slamming the new "short-throw" shifter (still seems tall) through its gates. Subaru didn't spoil the stick shift experience with a recalcitrant clutch; the WRX's left pedal is gradual and forgiving.

Cockpit controls are your typical 90s-style Japan layout - intuitive, high quality, shallow



cupholders. Cruddy gray dashboard plastic abounds, though the WRX Limited shifts your at-

tention to one of the nicer leather interiors at this price. Another such item is the stereo. Too many systems try to show off with

wattage, speaker count, or over-emphasized bass; the 140-watt WRX comes out ahead by balancing crisp lows, mids, and highs

into a very fulfilling soundstage.

If you judge the size of the vehicle before you have a chance to sit, you'll never discover the high,

firm seat cushion lending superb support, all that stomping room under the front seats, a comfortable armrest right in the middle, and a floor hump no bigger than a front-wheel-drive car's. As long as no one's stuck being the middleman and everyone's under six feet, the Impreza is actually quite the fine four-seater. There goes the Impreza again, surpassing expectations set up by appearances and practical data.

All-wheel-drive isn't for everyone, but it's hard to argue with a performance car that doesn't short-change passengers, is great for inclement weather, and an get descent gas mileage. Impreza is a practical, fun-to-drive alternative to the typically dull cars that populate its segment of the market.

Tested Vehicle Information:
Price: \$25,620 (base \$24,995); Engine: 2.5 liter 4cylinders; Transmission: 5-speed manual.

SPORTS

World Cup Fever
Italy wins!

Downtown's Pioneer Square was the Portland center for World Cup frenzy on Sunday, during the heated final between Italy and France. A crowd of 8,000 spilled out onto sidewalks and streets, lending a European air to the city center, as a giant 17 by 26 foot screen transfixed onlookers.

The live broadcast from Germany boomed throughout the square, as passionate fans for both countries watched the match grow ugly, and at some times brutal, before France went down 5-3 in a shootout after a 1-1 draw.

The Oregon Sports Authority and TAOW Productions co-

hosted free screenings of the semi-finals and championship, which also got support by local and international businesses.

Oregon Sports Authority's CEO Drew Mahalic said this was the first time in Oregon's history that the public was offered a large screen sports broadcast of an event taking place elsewhere.

Given the extremist nature of soccer fans, Mahalic was pleased with how well behaved the surprisingly large crowd was, and said they're looking for future opportunities.

"It went smooth as silk," he said. "The World Cup in 2010 will take place in South Africa, and it's almost a given that we'll do this again."



8,000 soccer fans packed into downtown's Pioneer Square on Sunday, to catch Italy and France vie for the World Cup Championship. The Italians suffered through off-field match fixing scandal, then extra-time during the final match, to prevail 5-3 over France.



Rose Garden to Host NCAA

The Rose Garden was selected to host the 2009 NCAA Men's Basketball first and second round games today by the NCAA Division I Men's Basketball Committee today. Twenty-four cities will serve as hosts for the first and second round and regional games in 2009 and 2010. Games will be played at the Rose Garden on Thursday, March 19 and Saturday, March 21, 2009 with the University of Oregon being the host school.

"We are thrilled to be the host venue for the 2009 Men's NCAA first and second round games," stated Mike Scanlon, General Manager of the Global Spectrum-managed Rose Quarter. "It took a lot of hard work by a number of individuals in order to bring this tournament back to Oregon, including the Oregon Sports Authority, the City of Portland, the University of Oregon, Portland Arena Management and the Portland Oregon Visitors Association."

Two other Global Spectrum-managed facilities will host the 2009 Men's NCAA tournament; Wachovia Center in Philadelphia and Arizona Cardinals Stadium in Glendale.

As selected by the committee in 2003, Detroit is the host of the 2009 Final Four and Indianapolis is the site of the 2010 Final Four.



Portland Teens Qualify

Hundreds of young track and field athletes competed at the USA Track and Field Region 13 Junior Olympic Championships, held last week at Willamette University in Salem. Schaveyantay Hill of Portland (center), shown running in the intermediate girls age group, qualified in the 100 meter, 200 meter and 400 meter sprints, securing her spot to compete at Nationals, July 25 through 30 in Baltimore, Md.

Trail Blazers Street Jam

The Portland Trail Blazers and Special Olympics Oregon team up to present the Trail Blazers Street Jam, the most electrifying outdoor 3 on 3 basketball experience in Oregon, Saturday and Sunday, July 29-30 beginning at 8 a.m. at the Rose Quarter Commons.

From recreational players to elite

competitors, the Trail Blazers Street Jam has games for all ages and abilities. Teams are guaranteed a minimum of three games. All net proceeds benefit Special Olympics.

Admission for spectators is free, and 3-5 person team prices are \$125. Visit www.BlazersStreetJam.com or call 1-877-266-5808.

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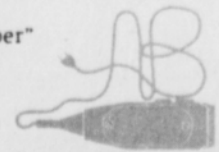
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