

Portland Observer Auto Review

News and reviews on new motor vehicles

2007 Nissan Versa S- Hatchback

Little car with a big heart

BY KATHLEEN CARR

Nissan truly understands the wealth of riches to be found in diversity. As the first offspring of Nissan's marriage with Renault to arrive on U.S. shores, the Versa is an amalgam of Japanese technology, French design and Mexican manufacturing, trimmed and tuned to an American audience. The 2007 Nissan Versa is a testament to the auto industry's appreciation for diversity. Nissan selected the name Versa to reflect the 'versatile space' interior and cargo designs of this "world car." It also seems to reflect Nissan's versatile thinking.

"The Versa doesn't compromise on styling, performance or versatility," states Nissan Senior Marketing Manager Joe Samfilippo "this is the first no-compromise entry-level

vehicle to hit the market. The Versa fits Nissan's new across-the-board sedan strategy, which promises no weak spots, offering class-leading interior space and comfort, with upscale quality and amenities for buyers seeking a smart car".

Climbing prices at the gas pumps combined with environmental-awareness has persuaded car buying 'echo boomers' to sacrifice the gas-sucking SUVs; some might say a decision to make do with less. Making do with less is something we've all learned about at some point in life. Making do with less invariably involves a degree of sacrifice. The 2007 Nissan Versa rallies to fulfill those concerns without the need for sacrifice.

Under the hood is a 1.8-liter inline-four-cylinder generating an estimated 120 horsepower and 125 pounds-feet of torque, receiving an ULEV (Ultra Low Emission Vehicle) rating. The Versa is peppy enough to



Specifications: 1.8-Liter 4-Cylinder, 122-hp @ 127 lb-ft torque engine; transmission: 4-speed automatic transmission; 28-City 35-Highway MPG; \$14,500 MSRP.

get you into traffic easily. Pound through the gears of the quick-shifting six-speed and the Versa hits 60 mph in a leisurely 9.5 seconds. It's not a pocket rocket, but it's easy to drive with a light clutch and short-

throw shifter. The Versa respectfully provides 28-mpg on city streets and 35-mpg on the open road, making the Versa a strong competitor for the attention of possible hybrid buyers.

Nissan calls the new subcom-

pact 2007 Versa the cure to 'autoclaustrophobia'. The Versa design and engineering teams found a way to put a big interior in a small car. The interior length, front to back, is over six feet long-equal

to that of a full size SUV. The Versa features a large cargo area, ideal for owners with highly active lives, with abundant head and legroom for a growing family.

Included on all Versa models are front seat-mounted side air bags, along with overhead side-curtain air bags for front and rear passengers, tire-pressure monitoring system, active head restraints and vehicle-speed-sensitive power steering all of which earned the Versa a 5 star safety rating. Other standard features include remote keyless entry system, intermittent windshield wipers, tilt steering, a satellite-ready-radio four-speaker audio system with CD player; power heated outside rearview mirrors and rear privacy cover. The Versa is a little car with big heart!

If you haven't driven a small car lately, I believe the Nissan Versa will be a very pleasant surprise. The 2007 Versa is big on the inside, small on the outside and gentle on the budget.

SPORTS

Oregon Falls Short of Final Four

Florida beats Ducks in Midwest Championship

(AP)—Go ahead, hate Florida all you want. But you can't beat these Gators. Not in the NCAA tournament.

Not yet, anyway.

Inside, outside, early, late—the Gators find a way to get it done when there's a title at stake.

Joakim Noah and his buddies are heading back to the Final Four, looking for a second straight national championship after Florida's 85-77 victory over third-seeded Oregon in the Midwest Regional final on Sunday.

Lee Humphrey made seven 3-pointers and finished with 23 points, and Taurean Green added 21. Noah had 14 points and 14 rebounds. It was Florida's 16th straight postseason victory, a stretch that includes one national championship and two Southeastern Conference titles.

Next stop for the top-seeded Gators: Atlanta, where they'll play UCLA in the national semifinals in a rematch of last



Florida's Al Horford watches as Oregon's Bryce Taylor dunks the ball during the first half of Sunday's NCAA Midwest Regional final basketball game in St. Louis. (AP photo)

year's championship Game.

Oregon was trying to get to the Final Four for the first time since winning it all in 1939, the first year of the NCAA tournament. But the Ducks (29-8) were done in by foul trouble the entire game and by freshman Tajuan Porter going cold.

Porter, the 5-foot-6 guard who went off for eight 3s and 33 points in Friday night's regional semifinal, didn't make his first field goal until there were 40 seconds left in the game. He finished with 10 points, but was just 2-of-12 from the field.

Aaron Brooks led Oregon with 27 points, and Malik Hairston added 18 and five rebounds before fouling out with 3:54 to play. Maarty Leunen and Joevan Catron also fouled out, and Brooks and Adam Zahn finished with four fouls each.

Ultimately, though, the Gators were too much for the Ducks. Just as they've been for everybody the last two years.

"To get into the Final Four like this, it's an unbelievable feeling," Noah said. "We're happy but we're not satisfied."

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"Happy Birthday Miracle!"

Rasheed Wallace Banks in 60-footer

(AP)—Rasheed Wallace made the miracle shot of the night — maybe of the year — banking home a 60-footer as time expired to send the game to overtime, and the Detroit Pistons went on to beat the Denver Nuggets 113-109 on Monday night.

Wallace tried to claim that he called the bank shot, but was drowned out by the jeers of his teammates.

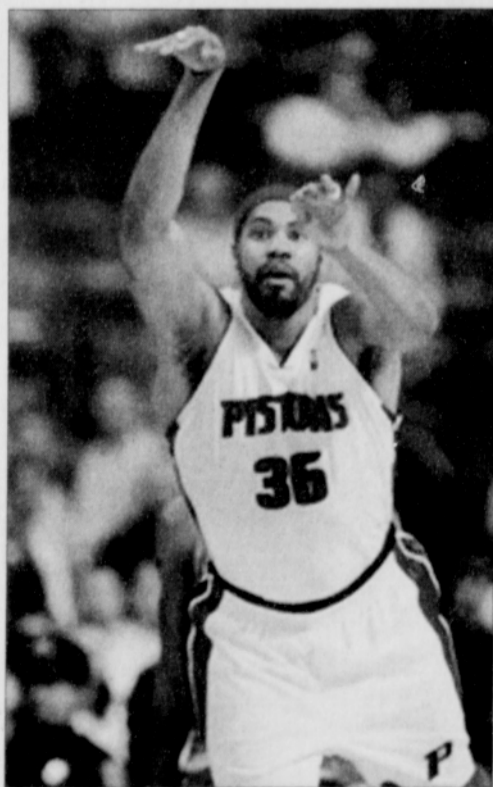
"OK, I'm lying about that," he said with a laugh. "But I'll take it either way."

The Nuggets appeared to have the game won as they prepared to inbound the ball at midcourt with a 98-95 lead and 1.5 seconds to play.

Marcus Camby's short pass, though, was tipped by Tayshaun Prince, and Wallace scooped it up and let fly with a two-handed set shot that banked in as the buzzer sounded.

"We shoot those all the time before the game," Wallace said. "This one went in, but it isn't like it won a championship or anything."

Nuggets coach George Karl knew his team had been beaten by a fluke.



Detroit Pistons forward Rasheed Wallace watches his 60-foot shot tie the Denver Nuggets at the end of regulation in a basketball game Monday in Auburn Hills, Mich. The Pistons went on to beat the Nuggets 113-109 in overtime. (AP photo)

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