

Basketball

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the team and most athletic at 6'0". Hot from CIF-SS volleyball playoffs, Gagnier moves incredibly well and is able to get inside to block shots.

Rounding out the starters will be Junior Mika Hongo, as point guard and Sophomore Lauren Villanueva as guard. Hongo will facilitate the offense and run the floor. She is able to find the open player and hit outside shots with her quick release. Hongo also has an incredible knack to get to the hole and draw fouls. Villanueva is one of the fastest girls on the team. She has quick hands and quick feet that also helped her move into the CIF-SS doubles tennis playoffs this past fall. Villanueva will cause trouble for opponent guards since she is incredibly active and aggressive on defense. As is the case with the rest of the team, she is able knock down

the outside shot.

Talented freshman, Stephanie Gee, will play the role of sixth man. She can play any of the guard positions and has a strong outside shot.

The Lady Eagles are a young team, with two freshmen, three sophomores, two juniors, and four seniors. But with that youth comes impressive energy and enthusiasm for the game.

Pre-season play starts with the Whittier Christian Tournament on November 30. The team's first Pioneer League game is January 13 against North Torrance. Complete schedules, player information, statistics and news are available on the team's MaxPreps site: <http://www.maxpreps.com/high-schools/wav6CXwOZOyySgDVSc6RUw/el-segundo-eagles/girls-basketball/home.htm> •

Curbside

2010 TOYOTA 4RUNNER: FIRST TASTE
By Anthony B. Barthel

Recently I was introduced to the 2010 4Runner family by Toyota to check out the new design and features. Rather than being a complete re-think of the 4Runner, the new one is a refinement and recognition of who buys these vehicles. This model is the fifth generation of the 4Runner since the introduction in the U.S. of the two-door model in 1984 as and85 model.

Three variants are available of the 2010 4Runner; an SR5 featuring the range's only four-cylinder engine, the Luxurious Limited and a Trail model which is equipped for serious off-roading. Toyota also has re-thought passenger configurations and now offers a genuine third-row seat as well, although I didn't see that configuration.

What I did see was an available sliding table type arrangement similar to Jeep's Load 'N Go which would be great for tailgating or just loading and unloading cargo in the back of the vehicle. As if the slide-out load floor weren't enough, there is a "Party Mode" button on the instrument panel that readjusts the audio system so that it's optimized for tailgate listening.

The acronym department (AD) at Toyota has been very busy with this model and has a number of new letter configurations to its credit. One of the most significant of these is the optional Kinetic Dynamic Suspension System (KDSS, thank you AD) on the Trail model. For those who will use the 4Runner Trail off road, they will appreciate that this system uses diagonal sway bars that attach the front left wheel to the rear right wheel, an interesting concept.

This system can actually detach the sway bars without any interaction by the driver if it senses that the vehicle is being used in serious off-road mode. The official name for this is Multi-Terrain Select (yep, MTS!). There is also a Mogul setting to this system for places where there are V-ditches, slopes and ridges.

To enhance grip, the A-TRAC system is now standard equipment on all 4x4 models.

Toyota thought ahead and significantly minimized the rocker panels on Trail models so that they are better able to clear the stuff you're trying to drive over, like rocks. A lot of thought went into the Trail model, as well as the other 4Runner iterations.

There is also a Crawl Control (no, this doesn't refer to a night at Mardi Gras). Crawl Control is sort of an off-road cruise control. You set the speed up to five miles per hour and Crawl Control maintains that uphill or down, applying the gas or brakes as needed. The acronym department has bestowed CRAWL on this system. Clever, guys.

All 4Runner 4x4 models are equipped with Downhill Assist Control (DAC), which is designed to augment the low-speed ascending ability of low-range by holding the vehicle to a target speed with no driver intervention. All V6 4Runner models come standard with Hill-start Assist Control (HAC), which provides additional control for off-road driving by helping to keep the vehicle stationary while starting on a steep incline or slippery surface.

Most 4Runners are going to be equipped with the V6 which is the same 4.0 Liter V6 found in the Tundra and sports 270 horsepower while pumping out 278 ft-lbs of torque. If you want the four-banger, you'll get a 2.7 liter four with 157 horsepower and 178 ft-lbs of torque.

All engine configurations use Toyota's VVT-i system which sports variable valve timing for both the intake and exhaust valve systems. The four-cylinder engine gets an EPA fuel mileage rating of 18 cities, 23 highways, the six gets 17 cities, 23 highways. In addition to engine design improvements, Toyota also credits aerodynamic efficiencies as well in helping get better mileage.

If you're more into the luxury side of things, the Limited grade comes standard with an X-REAS suspension system that further improves performance, comfort and control. X-REAS automatically adjusts the damping force of shocks when driving over bumpy surfaces, or when cornering. The system uses a center control absorber to cross-link shocks on opposite corners of the vehicle, substantially reducing pitch and yaw by offsetting opposing inputs. With X-REAS the new 4Runner corners flatter, smoother, and handles choppy pavement more easily.

A suite of high-performance, state-of-the-art safety systems all with ultra cool acronyms further enhances on-road vehicle dynamics, too! Standard on 4Runner is Toyota's Star Safety System™, which includes Vehicle Stability Control (VSC) with traction control (TRAC), an Anti-Lock Brake System with Electronic Brake-force Distribution (EBD) and Brake Assist. Vehicle Stability Control (VSC) helps to ensure stability by compensating for oversteer or understeer. The system uses selective braking and modulated engine output to keep the vehicle in line with the driver's intended course. On 4x2 vehicles, the Auto LSD (Limited Slip Differential) system allows for better traction on slippery sections of roadway.

The four-wheel ABS with EBD provides the 4Runner anti-lock stopping control with optimal brake proportioning, whether the vehicle is loaded or unloaded. Hill-start Assist Control (HAC), standard on all 4x4 models and the 4x2 V6, suppresses backward roll when switching from brake to accelerator.

A system of eight standard airbags includes front, side-mounted and knee airbags for the driver and front passenger, and side curtain airbags for the second and third row.

The 2010 4Runner now offers the new Safety Connect™ telematics system (similar to OnStar). Available by subscription, with or without the optional navigation system, Safety Connect offers four safety and security features: Automatic Collision Notification, Stolen Vehicle Location, Emergency Assistance Button (SOS), and Roadside Assistance.

In case of either airbag deployment or severe rear-end collision Automatic Collision Notification is designed to automatically call a response center. If a response agent cannot communicate with the occupants, the agent can contact the nearest emergency-services provider to dispatch assistance.

Pushing the in-vehicle "SOS" button allows drivers to reach the response center to request help in an emergency as well as for a wide range of roadside assistance needs. If a 4Runner equipped with Safety Connect is stolen, after a police report is filed and the driver contacts the response center, agents can work with local authorities to help locate and recover the vehicle.

Safety Connect is standard, factory-installed hardware on the 4Runner Limited and available via an active subscription. An included one-year trial subscription will be offered on equipped new vehicle purchases.

A rear-view monitor system is standard on Limited and Trail grades and optional on the SR5. The system displays in the rear-view mirror, helping to keep track of hard-to-see objects to the rear of the vehicle. A rear clearance sonar system is standard on SR5 models.

Sales of the 4Runner peaked in model year 2001 after which the Camry-based Highlander appeared on the scene gobbling up a lot of the 4Runner's sales. Toyota only expects to sell 35,000 of these vehicles in 2010, which makes the 4Runner a niche vehicle. As long as Toyota continues to improve its vehicles, we're going to tolerate the presence of the Acronym Department but don't let them get too big or we'll CUL8R.

This article was provided by Toyota with some commentary by Anthony B. Barthel, Curbside's publisher. •

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