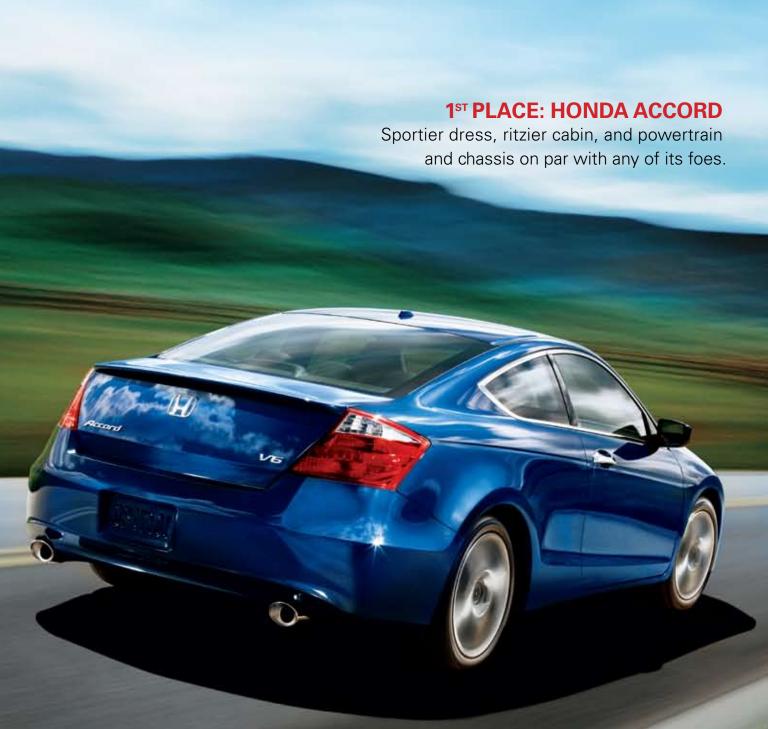
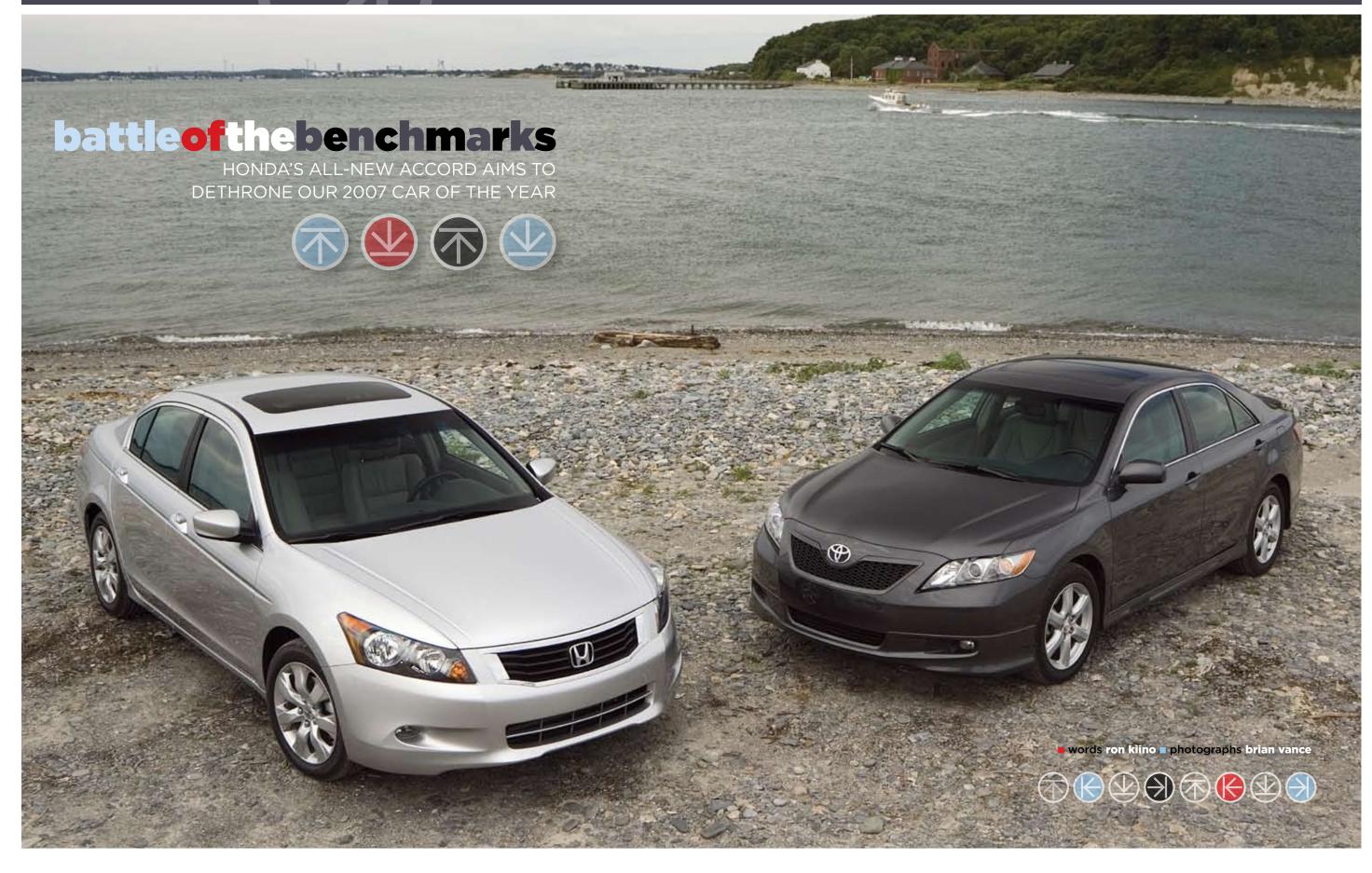


# THE ALL-NEW ACCORD | BEYOND THE ROAD



(head to head) HONDA ACCORD EX-L V-6 VS. TOYOTA CAMRY SE V-6



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# 25 or 6 to 4



IF YOUR budget tops out at \$25,000 and a V-6 doesn't make sense when a four-cylinder will suffice, then an Accord sedan with a 16-valve engine presents a compelling case. Offered in LX, LX-P, EX, and EX-L trims, and with pricing estimated at around 2007 levels (\$21,000 to \$24,000), the Accord sedan gets two new 2.4-liter four-bangers, one producing 177 horsepower at 6500 rpm and 161 pound-feet at 4300 (LX trims) and the other, thanks to a tweaked Powertrain Control Module and a high-flow muffler, 190 horsepower at 7000 and 162 pound-feet at 4400 (EX versions). A five-speed manual or automatic can be paired with either engine, both of which run on regular gas and meet ULEV-2 or PZEV emission standards.

With the previous-generation's Value Package trim gone, the LX

takes the entry-level title, but there's nothing "entry level" about it. Standard features include 16-inch wheels with 215/60R16 Dunlop rubber, four-wheel disc brakes with ABS and EBD, stability and traction control, active front head restraints, power mirrors, and steering-wheelmounted audio and cruise-control buttons. The LX-P (pictured) adds alloy wheels, a power driver's seat, an alarm, and a chrome exhaust tip.

The spicier EX has 17-inch alloys, power moonroof, six-CD changer, heated mirrors, driver-seat power lumbar support, and a front tower brace with sportier suspension tuning. The EX-L incorporates leather-covered seats (heated front), a 270-watt audio system, dual-zone auto climate control, and an available nav system with Bluetooth—anyone looking for an Acura TSX with more room and a few grand on the hood?

## IN THE AUTOMOTIVE

world, there's no shortage of archrivals—two major players that battle for supremacy, day in and day out. Whether it's for sales titles, track times, or magazine comparison-test victories, being number one is an automaker's ultimate goal. From Camaro versus Mustang and Evo versus Sti to S-Class versus 7 Series and Supra versus Z, these combats of style, power, and agility have defined competitors throughout history. Today, no clash is more significant than...Accord versus Camry? You bet.

Over the past decade, the Honda Accord and the Toyota Camry have waged war over "bestseller" bragging rights, with each moving around 400,000 per year. Camry has taken the title nine of the last 10 years, but Accord has always been right on its tail, even grabbing the title in 2001. For greater perspective, since Toyota introduced the Camry to the U.S. in 1983, it has sold nearly seven million copies; the Accord, which bowed in 1976, has found almost 10 million buyers.

Last year when Toyota introduced its seventh-generation Camry, the SE V-6 version—mightiest of the lineup—promptly laid claim as the most powerful (268 horses) and quickest (0 to 60 mph in 6.1 seconds and the quarter mile in 14.6 at 97.0 mph) Camry ever sold in America. Not only did it possess more horsepower than a Porsche Cayman, but it was also just as hasty to 60 and through the quarter mile as a 300-horse 2007 Jaguar XK. The new benchmark? Absolutely.

Honda's Accord, then in the final year of its seventh generation, was a stellar sedan in its own right. But in light of the new Camry, its







age was beginning to show. As a company that prides itself on innovation, Honda is never happy when its most important model can be described as aged. For 2008, the tide has changed, as the only thing old about the Accord is its name.

Introduced to the media in Boston, the all-new Accord is fresher than an heirloom

tomato at Whole Foods. Every aspect of the eighth-generation car, from styling and interior to engine and chassis, has been reworked. The hybrid has been dropped, as have LX trims for V-6-powered cars; the coupe gets sexy styling and an available six-speed manual (see sidebar), and there are two morepowerful four-cylinder options for the sedan

(see sidebar). Rather than simply report our general impressions of the new Honda, we thought it wiser to commandeer a topline EX-L V-6 and pit it against the aforementioned king of the class, the Camry SE V-6. With a bit of finagling, some secrecy, and a 4 a.m. wakeup call, we managed to squeeze in a full day of comparative driving around Beantown.

Accord versus Camry. And may the best benchmark win.



#### THE CHALLENGER

"This looks like a BMW," says the valet at the Four Seasons as I exit the silver Accord. He should know, as he parks plenty of Bavaria's finest at the swanky hotel near Copley Square. Photog Vance agrees and, as he points out the character line that spans the length of the body as well as the Hofmeister kink in the C-pillar, I, too, begin seeing hints of the 3 and the 5 Series. There are traces of the Acura RL also, but overall the theme is quite Teutonic.

Armed with the more grownup façade—the pushed out, raised nose; the six-point grille with chrome surround; the large, rakish







headlamps; and prominent fender flares result in a more refined look—the new Accord has, no surprise, grown up in size. With a passenger volume of 106.0 cubic feet (in the base car) and a trunk that swallows 14.0 cubic feet, the Accord is now classified as a large sedan, placing it in the same class as the Ford Taurus and the Toyota Avalon. Compared with the 2007 model, the 2008 is 3.2 inches longer, 1.1 inches wider, and 0.9 inch taller. Further, the wheelbase, at 110.2 inches, is 2.3 inches greater than its predecessor's and 0.9 inch longer than the Camry's.

The benefits of the larger body manifest in increases of nearly every interior dimension, notably 0.7 extra inch of front headroom, 0.4 inch more rear legroom, and 1.3 inches of additional front shoulder room. With the more capacious cockpit comes more freedom to enjoy the richer interior, which, in our EX-L tester, was fitted with leather upholstery, heated and power front seats, dual-zone automatic climate control, and a 270-watt audio system with XM Satellite Radio. Our tester also had the available nav system—now controlled solely by a dash-

mounted rotary knob a la the RL—which brings Bluetooth capability to boot. Per Honda standards, interior quality is a step above the previous iteration's, and fit and finish are top notch.

While being bigger, the body is stronger and sleeker. By utilizing more high-strength steel (48 percent versus 39 for the 2007), a

unit-body frame rail system that positions the rails above and inside the floor, and Honda's Advanced Compatibility Engineering body structure, which helps disperse energy and protect passengers in a frontal collision, the Accord boasts a 20-percent jump in torsional rigidity. Naturally, front, side, and curtain airbags are standard, as are active



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front head restraints. So when it comes to the all-important crash-test scores from NHTSA and IIHS, Honda projects the Accord will receive the highest. No projections are needed in the wind tunnel, though, as the Accord has already bettered its performance due to a drop in the coefficient of drag from 0.34 to 0.31.

The control-arm front suspension—an Accord hallmark—carries over, albeit with revised geometry, anti-roll bars, and spring and damper rates as well as the addition of a tower brace for added stiffness. The big news lies within the rear suspension, where a multilink design supersedes the previous control-arm setup. Composed of an upper A-arm, two tubular lower links, and a single toe-control link, the rear suspension, according to Honda, provides 40-percentgreater lateral rigidity and improved ride, handling, and braking. Aiding in handling

are a 10mm-lower center of gravity, a new Variable Gear Ratio steering system, and slightly wider 225/50R17 Michelin tires, which get stopping orders from four-wheel disc brakes with electronic force distribution and brake assist.

Those chassis enhancements will come in handy when prodding the 268 horsepower from the new 3.5-liter V-6. Up 24 horses and 37 pound-feet of torque (now at 248) over the previous 3.0-liter, the 3.5 features i-VTEC variable valve timing and, similar to the Odyssey minivan, Variable Cylinder Management. Unlike VCM in the Odyssey, though, which can switch only from six- to three-cylinder power, the Accord's system operates in six-, four-, or three-cylinder mode, the middle by deactivating one cylinder per bank and for, say, driving on the freeway at high speeds. With threemode VCM, the Accord V-6, mated to a five-

speed automatic, will achieve estimated fuel economy of 19/29 mpg—markedly superior to the 3.0 liter's 18/26 (2008 methods)—while running on regular gas and meeting ULEV-2 and, in CARB states, PZEV standards.

#### THE INCUMBENT

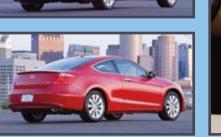
As with all incumbents, there's not much new to report on the Camry. If you're a reader of this magazine, you know its résumé. Not only did the redesigned seventh-gen model win our coveted 2007 Car of the Year award, but in an April 2006 comparison test, the hybrid version spanked its greenie foe, the Accord Hybrid, and in a November 2006 comparo, an SE V-6 handed walking papers to three sporty rivals-Chevy Malibu SS, Mitsubishi Galant Ralliart, and Nissan Altima SE-R. Toyota's top dog was also America's bestselling car in 2006, and, through the first half of 2007, it's once again leading the pack, on pace to sell over 480,000 units. Not bad for a year's work.

For this guerilla get-together, we rang the friendly folks at Toyota P.R. and were delighted to learn that a well-equipped SE V-6 resided on the East Coast. The most performance-oriented Camry available, it was the perfect choice for a rendezvous with its counterpart from Honda. The Camry's 3.5-liter delivers 19/28 mpg and ULEV-2 emissions. Though not as green as Honda's PZEV V-6, Toyota's 24-valve mill provides virtually identical fuel economy, thanks in large part to the extra cog in its six-speed automatic, which, unlike the Accord's fivespeed, offers a sport-oriented manual mode. The sport theme carries over to the chassis, too, with stiffer springs and dampers, larger anti-roll bars, a 10mm-lower ride height, 17-inch wheels, and body reinforcements, relative to lesser Camrys.

## one two-door punch







WHETHER YOUR nest is empty or you simply value style over utility, the Accord coupe is the next best Honda to a Civic Si. Sharing only sideview mirrors and door handles with the sedan, the coupe's sassy sheetmetal drapes over a 107.9-inch wheelbase, 2.3 inches shorter than the sedan's but 2.8 inches longer than the 2007 coupe's. A near mirror image to the Accord Coupe Concept that wowed the press and public at January's Detroit auto show, the new coupe is 3.1 inches longer, 1.4 inches wider, and 0.7 inch taller than its forebear, resulting in over an inch of extra rear legroom and over two inches of additional front shoulder



Honda offers the coupe in LX-S, EX, EX-L, EX-L V-6, and EX-L V-6 six-speed variations, the last (pictured) fitted with a six-speed manual trans, 18-inch wheels, and a unique 3.5-liter VTEC V-6 that comes without VCM for better low- and midrange performance. Output is identical to that of the i-VTEC VCM engine, but fuel economy drops to 17/25 mpg, and the emissions rating is solely ULEV-2. All four-cylinder trims are powered by the 190-horse engine and, because of their sportier intent, receive 17-inch alloys and a front tower brace with a tauter suspension. The last time a Honda coupe offered these levels of style and performance it wore the Prelude nameplate.

## THE BENCHMARK

Park these two sales giants next to each other and the overall appearances are similar. Both feature snubbed noses, more a byproduct of today's requisite pedestrian crash standards than a concession to boldness. In profile, the Accord's character line gives it more of an aggressive, fast-forward look, while from the rear each seems relatively drab, although the Camry's body kit and spoiler add some pizzazz. Nevertheless, the Accord's "sharp and strong" styling theme is just that in light of the Camry, giving it a richer, more distinguished body. Advantage: Accord.

Inside, the slightly larger Honda (101.0 cubic feet in our sunroof-equipped EX versus 100.0 cubic feet for the Camry) feels airier than the Toyota. Each offers plenty of

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room for four and decent space for five, but it's the Accord you'll want for impressing the in-laws. Sure, it's the added area, but more so it's the Honda's upscale level of luxury—the soft, gathered leather, the silver-rimmed gauges, and the driver-seat power lumbar support—that places it a smidge above the Toyota. Advantage: Accord.

With power and torque ratings effectively a wash, not to mention practically identical fuel economy, the two 3.5-liter engines are about as equal as they come. The Accord's PZEV rating in CARB states obviously trumps the lack of same in the Camry, but the Toyota's six-speed automatic, replete with the seamless and swift manual mode, outclasses the Accord's five-speed. which seems as refined but misses the connectedness of full manual control. It's a close call here, but powertrains cross the finish line in a tie. Advantage: Push

The roads around Boston aren't known for buttery surfaces, as harsh winters, humid summers, and heavy traffic render them cracked, rippled, and potholed. While not ideal for residents, these conditions are idyllic for testing ride compliance. The Toyota, the enthusiast's example of the Camry lineup, feels noticeably stiffer than the Accord, transmitting more road irregularities and feeling a bit less forgiving. Nonetheless, the SE's all-strut suspension is still well damped and not rough by any means.

The Honda, on the other hand, strikes a better balance between providing tactile road feel and eliminating harshness, a compromise that, as with the BMW 3 Series, the Accord seems to have mastered. Presented with bends in the road, the Camry quickly makes it known it's the hungrier of the two, devouring turn after turn with minimal fuss and surprisingly brisk speed. If Toyota claimed its TRD racing arm had created the family man's dream driver, you'd believe it. The Accord, while not as lively through the turns as the SE, still feels buttoned down and competent in the curves, offering crisp, communicative steering, and the flattest handling traits of any Accord sedan to date. Advantage: Push.

Donning sportier duds, a ritzier cabin, and a powertrain and chassis on par with those of the Camry, the all-new Accord edges ahead to take Round One of this epic battle. Still the number-one contender, the Camry will no doubt be back for Round Two, perhaps in hybrid form, when the rumored Accord diesel makes its debut. For now, though, the Accord reigns as the best of the best—the benchmark.

	2000 HONDA ACCORD EV L V C	2007 TOVOTA CAMPY CE V. C
	2008 HONDA ACCORD EX-L V-6	2007 TOYOTA CAMRY SE V-6
POWERTRAIN/CHASSIS		
DRIVETRAIN LAYOUT	Front engine, FWD	Front engine, FWD
ENGINE TYPE	60-deg V-6 alum block/heads	60-deg V-6 alum block/heads
VALVETRAIN	SOHC 4 valves/cyl	DOHC 4 valves/cyl
DISPLACEMENT	211.8 cu in/3471 cc	210.9 cu in/3456 cc
COMPRESSION RATIO	10.5:1	10.8:1
POWER (SAE NET)	268 hp @ 6200 rpm	268 hp @ 6200 rpm
TORQUE (SAE NET)	248 lb-ft @ 5000 rpm	248 lb-ft @ 4700 rpm
REDLINE	6800 rpm	6400 rpm
WEIGHT TO POWER	13.2 lb/hp	13.1 lb/hp
TRANSMISSION	5-speed automatic	6-speed automatic
AXLE/FINAL-DRIVE RATIOS	4.31/2.64	3.69:1/2.24:1
SUSPENSION, FRONT; REAR	Control arms, coil springs, anti-roll bar; multilink, coil springs, anti-roll bar	
STEERING RATIO	13.1:1	16.0:1
TURNS LOCK-TO-LOCK	2.6	3.2
BRAKES, F/R	11.8-in vented disc; 11.1-in disc, ABS	11.7-in vented disc; 11.1-in disc, ABS
WHEELS	7.5 x 17 in, cast aluminum	7.0 x 17 in, cast aluminum
TIRES	225/50R17 93V	215/55R17 93V
	Michelin Pilot HX MXM4	Toyo Proxes J33
DIMENSIONS		
WHEELBASE, IN	110.2	109.3
TRACK, F/R, IN	62.2/62.2	62.0/61.6
LENGTH x WIDTH x HEIGHT	194.3 x 72.7 x 58.1 in	189.2 x 71.7 x 57.5 in
TURNING CIRCLE	37.7 ft	36.1 ft
CURB WEIGHT	3600 lb (mfr)	3519 lb
WEIGHT DIST, F/R	62/38%	61/39%
SEATING CAPACITY	5	5
HEADROOM, F/R	39.0/37.2 in	38.8/37.8 in
LEGROOM, F/R	42.5/37.2 in	41.7/38.3 in
SHOULDER ROOM, F/R	58.2/56.4 in	57.8/56.9 in
CARGO VOLUME	14.0 cu ft	14.5 cu ft
TEST DATA		
ACCELERATION TO MPH		
0-60	6.5 sec (est)	6.1 sec
QUARTER MILE	14.8 sec @ 95.0 mph (est)	14.6 sec @ 97.0 mph
CONSUMER INFO		
BASE PRICE	\$28,000 (est)	\$25,435
PRICE AS TESTED	\$30,000 (est)	\$30,378
STABILITY/TRACTION CONTROL	Yes/yes	Yes/yes
AIRBAGS	Dual front, front side, f/r curtain	Dual front, front side, f/r curtain, driver knee
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles	3 yrs/36,000 miles
POWERTRAIN WARRANTY	5 yrs/60,000 miles	5 yrs/60,000 miles
ROADSIDE ASSISTANCE	N/A	N/A
FUEL CAPACITY	18.5 gal	18.5 gal
EPA CITY/HWY ECON	19/29 mpg	19/28 mpg (2008 figures)
CO <sub>2</sub> EMISSIONS	0.86 lb/mile	0.87 lb/mile
RECOMMENDED FUEL	Unleaded	Unleaded  Official Fuel of MOTOR TREND.  TECHRON

## ■ 1ST PLACE **HONDA ACCORD EX-L V-6**

Sportier dress, ritzier cabin, and powertrain and chassis on par with any of its foes.

## 2ND PLACE **TOYOTA CAMRY SE V-6**

Best of the rest, this player will certainly return to fight another day. Perhaps in a hybrid persona?

38970