

Suzuka Dream Cup 2003



Aurora Report

Wednesday 23rd July, 2003

Q. How do you get 8 guys up at 6.00 AM?

A. Promise a first test run on the Suzuka Formula 1 race track starting at 7.30 AM!

We arrived at the track before 7.00 AM, without breakfast, but determined to make the most of the allocated 90 minute session. Kon Kotsonis was the first driver. It started to rain. The track marshall's car was ready. Our rental van loaded with the keen ones was ready and Kon was moving down pit lane.

The rain got heavier. The track was getting very wet but the solar car was showing that it could pass for a solar boat if required. Would the sealing job done on the solar array be OK? Kon mentioned a drip on his arm and a wet leg. Didn't seem too bad. Finally it was to be the turn of Damien McArthur so the solar car was wheeled into the pits for a water check and a driver change.



Just in time. The inside of the car was soaked. The electrical system was being lapped by 4 centimetres of water. The telemetry tray was also soaked. The track staff rushed 10 new towels to us and the mop-up commenced. The electrical trays came out of the car and the 'where's the leak' theories abounded. The underside of the array was dry so the sealing work between the solar panels was successful. The water came from under the car from the wheel-houses and along the side of the car where we had not fully taped the join. Talk about a close call. Thankfully the batteries were not affected.

After cleaning up we all went to breakfast and an hour of shopping. Much relieved and facing a certainly wet day so it was good to be a all day work session on the car.

So it was fitting tyres, drying out the communications, cleaning the solar array and examining motors. Plenty of jobs for every-one. But we did have some big setbacks. Newly completed Motor 1 had failed without any

running at all. In the equatorial crossing the temperatures inside the shipping container had reached a sufficiently high level to destroy a magnet ring. Motor 1 remains unused.

The drenching had caused an electronic communications problem between the motor controller and the telemetry unit. Agonising analysis finally had this problem solved by 6.00 PM. Brad Trewin was the trouble shooter. Our interpreter Harry Imada helped with the laborious job of cleaning the solar array.



Brad uses a hairdryer to dry part of the electronics from the car



The team work hard cleaning the electrical array

Michiko Sato, our minder from the Yomiuri shimbun Sports Promotion Department, kept us fed with information about the American Solar Challenge which is in its final day. We are watching carefully our potential competitors for the World Solar Challenge.

So we feel lucky despite the setbacks and plan to have a good dinner. Tomorrow will be our last chance to finish the small jobs and practice driver changes and pit stops. Then Friday when the track will be filled with 75 solar car teams eagerly waiting to contest the Suzuka 'Dream Cup', as we are.

Damian's Diary

Got up far too early but excited that today would be the first real drive. Then it rained which it's still doing at 6.00 PM. Not exactly ideal solar car weather. Hope it improves for my drive tomorrow.

Pulling the motor apart was interesting but pretty disappointing when we found the broken magnets.

During our shopping run I bought milk, Coco Pops, a bowl, bread, peanut butter, and strawberry jam. I love this Japanese food. Last night at the Japanese steakhouse I had meat. Can't say exactly if it was chicken or pork but who was arguing. I have been on my first diet to make sure that I can weigh in at less than 70 kg for the race. We have worked so hard to take weight out of the car that the team will not put up with the drivers being at anything but the minimum.
