

Suzuka Dream Cup 2003



Aurora Report

Thursday 24th July, 2003

As we awoke at 6.00 AM the sky was clearing, had patches of blue and the grey look of the day before had gone. We had one practice session only and it was important for Damien's sake that we made the 8.00 AM time-slot.

The Suzuka race-track is used heavily for all kinds of automotive activities ranging from advanced driving courses to serious motor cycle racing practice. Solar cars are in contrast quiet. The low aerodynamic cars whisper around the track barely disturbing the air with their electric wheel motors hardly heard. This sport is definitely technically advanced and very much in harmony with the surroundings.

By 8.10 AM Damien was on his way on the East course. This was not the complete racetrack but included the main downhill straight, the fast sweeping right hand corner at the end of the straight and the steepest climb on the course. The track was still wet in spite of its coarse gravel structure but not the running rivulets of the day before.



Damien commenced his second ever drive of the solar car circulating at 2 min 20 secs. By the end of his 40 minute session this had dropped to 2 minutes. Not quite practice makes perfect but there is a lot of improvement still available.

That was to be the last drive session until untimed practice on Saturday.

Tomorrow, Friday, will be a fantastic day. It is when all the teams arrive for official scrutineering, driver weight checks, vehicle safety checks and last minute improvements. Already the mood in the afternoon was buzzing as

the first Japanese teams arrived. Tamagawa University, veterans of Japanese solar car racing, looked impressive. Their crew members are sworn to secrecy about their battery technology although this team were Aurora's neighbours at the Akita event last year. We are looking forward to meeting our friends TIGA who will occupy the pit station beside us. Professor Kimura from Tokai University will be involved in scrutineering. He is another of our Japanese friends. 'Ronnie' Okuda who provided great help to Aurora last year will arrive on Sunday.



So the day was spent going through many last minute changes needed to make sure the car will run as well as possible. In the few occasions of weak sun we saw good power from our solar array, especially the 10 new triple junction gallium arsenide solar cells. These were still delivering power in conditions of cloud. We were encouraged by this. At last we seem to understand the telemetry and the complex capabilities of the new Tritium motor controller. Things are certainly looking up.

During the day Michiko found the results of the American Solar Challenge, which the great team from Missouri - Rolla won. There were many good cars and teams in that big event and we will see some excellent entries in the forthcoming World Solar Challenge.

The day ended with pit stop practice, driver change practice and tyre changing practice. We are not too slick at any of these but will have more practice tomorrow. Also tomorrow evening we have the event party where we have our first chance to proudly wear our new Aurora team uniforms. Our Aurora101 solar car is now backed by the two most prestigious office centres in Australia, Aurora Place in Sydney and 101 Collins Street in Melbourne.

Damian's Diary

Today I woke up excited to a brilliant dry Japanese morning. We were at the track by 7:30 and soon after I was in the solar car and out on the track. This was the first time that I had driven on the Suzuka circuit. It felt amazing to be driving on the same track as people like Michael Schumaker. During the practice session I was driving on the Eastern half of the track which did not include the two hardest corners on the track. I will have to wait until tomorrow or the next day to do the rest of the track. We spent most of the afternoon practicing pit stops and completing the setup of the car.
