

Suzuka Dream Cup 2003



Aurora Report

Sunday 27th July, 2003

The final day was again clear and promised to be a good final day of racing. We slept in for an extra hour as our major activities were to start at 10.00am. This was the release of the batteries from their overnight secure storage with the officials. This itself took the form of a mad rush to deliver the batteries to the place where the solar cars were waiting to commence a 2 hour charging session in readiness for the second 4 hour heat.

The charging session started under a big cloud with not much wind to move it along. The humidity had climbed compared to yesterday and the temperatures were higher.

The repair to the panhard rod looked good but another area of chassis damage on the left side of the car needed repair as well. Also we had an electrical problem with the starting electronics so that also needed attention. But finally it was time to charge the batteries and to see what power the solar panel could produce. It was outstanding! For short periods of time we saw in excess of 1900 watts. The solar conditions were unusual because when the sun came through it produced more than '1 sun' light conditions. Nevertheless by time the charging session ended the batteries were not quite full.

We lined up on the grid just after 12.30pm ready for the second 4 hour heat of the 2003 Suzuka 'Dream Cup'. A photo shoot with the Osaka based TIGA team confirmed the sister city relationship between the solar cars from the sister cities of Melbourne and Osaka. Kon Kotsonis was in the driver's seat and precisely at 1.00pm the race was underway.



From the start we were determined to stay with the leaders and see if we could win the day. We were launching from position 7, our finishing position from the day before. Kon was reeling off laps of 4 min 40 secs or thereabouts and soon we had moved into 6th place. Fifth place was next. This was the highest place ever achieved by

any overseas entrant in the history of the event.

By time Kon completed his two and a half hour stint we had gained great confidence in the car and actually hoping our drivers could go even faster. When Damien got into the car for the last 90 minutes we fondly hoped to reach fifth place by the end of the day. That meant catching Tamagawa which was nearly two laps ahead. We could not realistically do this. But Damien was on mission and quickly put down a series of excellent lap times. The battery temperatures climbed, the motor controller temperature climbed and he set the race record lap of 4 min 29 secs.

It was an exciting close to the day of racing. In the end the Aurora 101 solar car won this 4 hour heat and recorded 50 laps. This was the first time that a solar car had achieved 50 laps in a 4 hour heat ever.

Our overall 5th place over the two days of racing equalled the best by a foreign entrant in this event. All of our repairs were successful.



Finally TIGA won the event, the beautiful new OSU car was second ahead of Kanazawa, Tamagawa and Aurora 101.

We have had a very successful trip to Japan. Look for a detailed report and analysis shortly.

Damian's Diary

Today started with a real luxury, a sleep in. There was no qualifying, no practice and only a few problems left to fix on the car. Things were looking good. We even had time in the morning to watch the Enjoy class race. My favorite car in this was one with it's own sound system, which could be heard when ever it came into the pits. We were all hoping to improve on yesterdays heat, and with plenty of power in the batteries Kon got off to a great start.

In no time we were in third place on the road, sitting behind the race leaders TIGA and OSU. Today track positions were not necessarily the same as the race positions. For example: when we were third on the track there were cars behind us that had done more overall laps from yesterday and today, so they were still in front of us. Further on into his stint Kon overtook the two lead cars to be first on the track. By the time I got into the car Kon had set the fastest lap time for the day so far, beating Aurora's previous record from last year. He had lapped enough people to move up from seventh place to fifth. I was in to finish the race and luckily I did not crash or spin the car in any way at all. But not everything was perfect.

Towards the end of the race the batteries started to overheat, so I had to slow down on the final laps. I crossed the checkered flag, without passing the team ahead of us, Tamagawa. It was later on when I got out that I was told that we had completed more laps than any other team for today, set a record for the number of laps in one day, 50 and that I had set a new lap record.

The team in the pit next to us that we had made great friends with came out winners for the race. It had been an unforgettable race and now it was time to pack up and leave. Into a shipping container went one solar car, three bench tables, all our tools, stands spare tires and batteries. And early tomorrow morning I will be shipping off home to Australia. The whole team did a sensational job, the car ran well and we all had a fantastic time.

Look out next year Japan.
