



AURORA 101 in Greece

Phaethon 2004, 22-28 May 2004

Report 8 - Monday 24th May

After yesterday's racetrack event we expected something very different in the five-day Rally event scheduled to leave Athens at 11am. We thought we had fixed the motor cutout problem but we were not sure.



The eight ELPA crash trucks moved the felt solar cars right across to the other side of Athens. Thankfully the truck drivers knew their way. Aurora was scheduled to be the 4th starter for the rally, and we arrived at the congested starting point only 4 minutes before time. The pressure to keep on schedule was strong, as many media groups had come to record this historic Phaethon 2004 event. So we had a panic start, and it commenced in Athens traffic before getting out onto a new super highway.



Our motorcycle leader Gianni did a great job threading out of Athens and soon we were back to the traveling

mode we are used to, 90 to 100km/h at traffic speed. The several tollbooths were interesting; our leader would stop to pay for himself, the solar car and the first support vehicle, but had to wait for a receipt. This meant the solar car had to forge on by itself. The second support vehicle had to pay their own toll.



The solar cars created enormous curiosity amongst other road users. Some of the solar cars were quite slow but the leading Japanese kept up at the same speeds that Aurora did. The first diversion was to reach the starting point of the first Special Stage. This was a short 3.45km stretch of closed road near Corinth. The blistering time of 1:42 was set by TIGA, which in fact was the fastest for that stage. The great performance came from Southern Taiwan University in the Apollo IV solar car, which had rolled in an accident the day before. Kon started the stage with full power but about 1km along the way suffered loss of motor power and coasted to the finish. Still this was good enough for 9th place in the Stage. It proved we still had a major problem.



Back on the highway we continued at top speeds but now the road had become a two-lane highway with a broad shoulder. This shoulder nearly became a second lane. Passing traffic generally ignores the double white line and we had instances where the solar car was being passed by traffic on both sides, all on a one and a half lane piece of road.

At the second Special Stage, the field regrouped to tackle this 7.63km test. TIGA again set the pace followed by OSU and the Dutch team Nuna II who had joined the Rally, although deciding not to compete in the track race. This was a different Nuna II to what we had seen in Darwin in October, as it had to be modified to improve its road ability for a tour to Portugal after Phaethon 2004 in conjunction with Euro 2004.



Unfortunately the gremlins were still with Aurora 101, slowing us to 7th position in this Stage.

The day finished at Patras University where there was a really big crowd. The Aurora team went back to work to solve its electronics problem, the food team got some people fuel, the Ford support cars were refueled and all the scrounged for the last of the sunlight before handing in their battery packs to the officials at 9pm.



Patras City hosted all the solar car teams to a short but excellent recital from the city's string orchestra before supper. It was turning cold. The winds were rising and the clouds were scudding off the water towards the mountains behind Patras.

We were hoping for more success on the following day and less broken weather.