



AURORA 101 in Greece

Phaethon 2004, 22-28 May 2004

Report 11 - Thursday 27th May

Wow, wow, wow. This was a great day. For the Aurora 101 team, we were heading into unknown territory having not previewed this section of the rally.

Those that had told us of the enormous climbs that lay ahead, especially in the area of Delphi.

The day started with the solar cars assembling at Patras University and forming an exotic convoy down to the port are adjacent to the new bridge under construction.



At the port, many independent roll-on, roll-off ferries ply the Corinthiakos Gulf. The race organisers had rented one such ferry with the ability to roll-on and roll-off at opposite ends. The weather was clear but very windy. The prospect of this water crossing had all the teams excited, especially the novelty of all the race fleet with the support vehicles fitting on one ferry.



The Aurora team cautiously advanced to their turn for loading, and as a precaution even strapped the car down in case the wind pushed it around. The 30-minute crossing was over too soon. To assist the solar cars to drive off the boat, a special carper covered the gangplank and soon all the cars assembled at the site of the dock in Antirio.



Aurora electrical team leader Brad Trewin was set to continue work on solving the Big One. This morning's attempt was to reprogram the power controller and to use the revised software program to bypass the problems of motor cutout that we had been suffering.

This task had Brad really worried. First the computer wouldn't talk to the motor controller, and then it intermittently took up the signals Brad was trying to put in. As time passed the race convoy was asked to assemble at the start line, but Aurora 101 remained unmoved. There we were in the middle of this large parking area. Finally the reprogramming stuck and we hastily moved to join the starting grid in the assigned position. As we started Kon instantly noticed an improvement in starting acceleration so we all were relieved to have fixed this problem. Actually it turned out that another reprogramming step was needed, but that happened further down the road.



The scenery along the road to Delphi was just breathtaking. It was tempting to stop for pictures, but we had more onroad testing to finish to be confident of our new settings.

As we reached the hills, there was a short 2.64km Special Stage. As in previous days TIGA and OSU fought out the lead positions, with Nuna II third. Aurora's reduction in power kept it down to seventh place but at least we were running without the motor cutting out.

The road then led through plantations of olive trees and onto the severe climb to Delphi. Once we started climbing it was just continuous uphill work. Without the reprogramming we did in the morning we might not have made the top of this extremely steep section. Finally we reached the start of Special Stage 2 for the day, another steep uphill run of 3.4km. In this stage, the roads were of a poor surface quality, there were rocks threatening the roadside and sharp corners to negotiate. Furthermore we had never seen this section before and were still worried about the motor controller. It was going to be an interesting run.



Kon had the car chugging uphill pretty well and managed a reasonable time on the stage, 3:54. We were in seventh position for the stage but had moved to fifth place in the overall classification. The really steep section lay ahead.

Nuna II followed us on this stage and managed to puncture two tyres and get off the road before the end of the timed section. Futura, the entry from Italy also suffered damage on its right front section.

The climb continued until we reached the sports ground of Delphi to await the Delphi Mayor before proceeding. Samples of local olives and juices were served out and the Mayor presented each team with a commemoration certificate. Then all teams were transferred to the Delphi archaeological site for a tour of these famous ruins.



After all this the solar cars made their way down the hairpin bends to reach the seaside town of Itea. There, crowds greeted the solar cars and the teams, and no team appeared to have a lot of work to do for the last day of the rally.

Up-to-date results can be found on www.Phaethon2004.org.

Aurora is 1:03 behind the fourth placed entry from the University of Taiwan. Although hampered by the electrical problem in the controller, Aurora has moved from 8th to fifth since the first day and may be able to improve this on the last day for a fourth placed finish. We have our fingers crossed.
