



AURORA 101 in Greece

Phaethon 2004, 22-28 May 2004

Report 12 - Friday 28th and Saturday 29th May

Today was our final chance to make ground on improving our position. Only two more Special Stages left, the first another twisting, climbing route beyond Itea and the second a flat, straight speed run.

Brad was still refining the new program for our motor controller so that we avoided shutting off the motor. However this was going to be at the expense of achieving a high speed.



This was going to be a very full day, which needed to include finishing line ceremonies as well as the Gala Dinner and prize giving at the Glyfada Golf Club at 9.30pm. All of this meant an earlier start than previous days, and we were all at the port marshalling area of Itea, ready to go at 8pm.



Itea is one of those small Greek towns right on the water with a lovely relaxed atmosphere, especially in the evening as people came to stroll the promenade. Also it's the entry point for visitors to Delphi and we were surprised to see the size of two cruise ships coming to unload their tourist passengers.

The open road section to the start of Special Stage 1 was straightforward. The cars we needed to beat were Principia, Taiwan and even Tokai Falcon from Japan. Oh, and of course our rivals the Dutch team Nuna II, who were presently behind us in the overall results. In spite of the hills and tight corners, driver Kon achieved 4th place on this stage, only 4 seconds behind Nuna and only 1 second ahead of Principia.



The next transport stage was easy enough, and the field assembled for the flat out stage 10 near the town of Kastro.



First placed TIGA scorched a time of 3:12 to average 131km/h, and reaching a top speed of nearly 150km/h. The rest of the competitors were astonished. Aurora achieved third place in this stage with an average speed of 110km/h and a top speed of 125km/h. Our revised motor controller setting probably stopped us reaching 135km/h.



This was our last shot, but we didn't have enough margin to improve our overall position. After five days of competition, Aurora 101 finished sixth, just 0.77 seconds behind Nuna II. Taiwan surprised everybody and took out 4th place. This was the team that rolled their solar car in their first track-racing event. Principia finished third and first and second were the hot shots from Japan, TIGA and OSU.



All that was left was the 106km drive to the Athens finishing line, and this was done by Seona who had to battle with the Athens traffic. In fact, the worst road surfaces were on this final run. All the teams were assembled near the finishing line after negotiating a U-turn in front of 4 lanes of traffic (at a "No U-turn" signed intersection).



Then began the official finishing ceremonies, presentations of plaques from the Mayor, congratulations between

the teams and big smiles from the organisers. Mostly we were all delighted to have finished this surprisingly hard race and rally without major incident or personal injury.

The teams then made preparations to return their cars to the Hellenikon airport base for packing up. This took a long time because the ELPA truck drivers were on strike. For Aurora it was the chance to use our small trailer as designed. On went the solar car and the trip through the other side of Athens started. We made it.



Just to face the difficulty of fitting in everything into the limited space of the 6x4 trailer and clean up the solar car for a magazine shoot the following morning.

The Gala Dinner was magnificent. TIGA took most of the prizes, all individual participants received a medal, the officials received plaques and these ceremonies were only overshadowed by the rush for the food. Solar car teams are a hungry lot.

Although this was a first time event, and inevitably showed a level of inexperience by both competitors and officials, the scale of organisation was impressive. The solar car community around the world will be influenced by this event. The general public will be influenced by the sheer speed demonstrated by these solar cars.



On Saturday morning, the 29th May, our first activity was a photo shoot for 4-Wheels Magazine, which is one of the major sponsors of Phaethon 2004. The team was dressed in stylish casual clothing, make-up was applied and a number of different scenes photographed, all with a very attractive model. There were big smiles from the team and the onlookers from other Japanese teams who were at the airport loading their cars into containers. Aurora 101 was cleverly manoeuvred into a 40-foot container to be shared with the winning TIGA team. The trip will be to Japan where both of these cars will compete in the 2004 Suzuka Dream Cup planned to start on the 30th July.

Bram and Seona left for Holland, Jack left for Dusseldorf, David left for Frankfurt, Kon left for Pireais, Katie had

left for Croatia and Brad had planned two more relaxed days in the luxurious Hotel Fenix.

This has been a great experience. We wish Athens well during the forthcoming Olympic Games.
