

Suzuka Dream Cup 2004



Suzuka, Japan

30th July - 1st August 2004

Report 1 - Tuesday 27th July

Jack, now the ex-farmer, rolled in from Osaka where he had arrived the previous day to start soldering the new battery pack together. He had another opportunity to catch up with the famous TIGA solar car team who were also preparing their car for the 2004 Suzuka 'Dream Cup'. What Jack brought was the Aurora 101 solar car, freshly offloaded from its ocean trip from Greece.

Dr David Peterson reached Nagoya from far north Queensland and spent the waiting night at the squeezey Nagoya airport hotel. No yellow ribbon though; this was the first meeting with the Aurora team. But he did wear an unmistakable Aussie hat.



Escaping a bleak Melbourne day, the other six Aurora team members traveled via Singapore to reach Nagoya on time; 8.30 AM on Tuesday 27 July. Heading to Suzuka for the fourth occasion since the first appearance in 1992.

Nagoya turned in a humid morning at 28 degrees. The big taxi was on hand and in we crammed. Two more hours before we were to see the hotel in Suzuka.

This first day in Japan promised to be long and hopeful. The solar car was last seen on 29 May when the team at Phaethon 2004 packed in its container for the voyage to Kobe. It shared the space in the container with the TIGA solar car but all of us were getting anxious as the delay of arrival slipped and slipped to 19 July.

We arrived at the Sunroute hotel, now renamed the Serente. The room size was the same, small. Next it was a visit to the supermarket to stock up on drinks, quick eats, fruit and lunch. This we had done before. So we weren't at all embarrassed and could run a good story on the delicacies we marched out with. Dr Peterson scored the best bargain with a fine package of smoked salmon, 305 yen. If you want to do the arithmetic the \$A buys about 78 yen.

Michiko Sato, our friendly organizer from the event sponsor Yomiuri Shimbun, greeted us at the hotel and then at the track. Her job in the sports promotion department is just too interesting. Last month it was rugby, next month something else again.



Also, Mr Yoshioka from Nippon Express, came to see our new traveling rig. The solar car mounted on the small trailer. Nippon Express will be responsible for getting the solar car to Shanghai and then back to Melbourne before Christmas.



Now to work. The electric problem which dogged our performance in Greece was to be subjected for a new series of attempted fixes.

First we tried a new driver control board. No solution.

Then an additional set of chokes connected in parallel to the existing set. No solution.

Then a new throttle potentiometer. No solution.



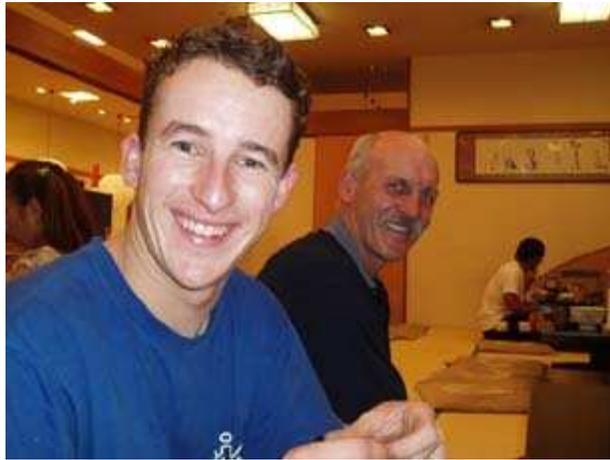
In the meantime we found a damaged rear hub mounting requiring repair. Done and fixed.



We load checked every solar panel in the solar array. These Gochermann produced panels are holding up very well. No repairs needed but three of the team commenced the ten hour job of cleaning the surface with a special 3M tape.

A new Eibach front spring was installed to improve our chance of optimizing the suspension settings.
“Otherwise the car is running perfectly”

By 7.30 PM it was time to find some dinner and then head for bed. The eight man team of slightly sweaty and certainly tired Aurora team members descended on a traditional Japanese restaurant (complete with sitting on the floor) and devoured the miso soup, the savoury custard, the rice pickles and the soba noodles to the amusement of the other restaurant customers. Thankfully the menus still have pictures.



Tomorrow we try the last of our fixes for the electrical problem. It will be time to give the drivers a chance to try the famous Suzuka track.
