

Suzuka Dream Cup 2004



Suzuka, Japan

30th July - 1st August 2004

Report 2 - Wednesday 28th July

We were aiming for a one hour session on the track at 8.00 AM so we had an early start. All aboard the rental van by 7.00 AM and at the track by 7.15AM.

You can imagine what sort of breakfast goes down in these circumstances. Badly balanced. Still there was beef curry and rice to look forward to at lunch time.

Damien McArthur was going in first. At the 2003 race he drove the fastest lap of the race still it was a cautious departure from Pit 1. Damien has prepared thoroughly for this one and has undergone a fitness and weight reduction program to make sure he can achieve the minimum driver weight of 70 kg.



Mr Kitayama, the course operations manager led us around the 5.8 km track, reminding us of the hills, the hairpins and the chicane. After several laps the speeds started to improve and Damien's confidence was returning. Then liftoff.

In this case liftoff meant a big big problem. The driver hatch unlatched and flew back smashing into the solar panel behind the driver. The head bubble smashed to pieces like a 3 dimensional jig saw. The session ended with a convertible solar car. Not the first ever first but a first for Aurora.



This triggered frantic calls to Australia. Did we have a spare? Could we have it in Japan overnight? We couldn't contact Darren Trafford who's workmanship we had destroyed. Then it was Dennis Thoroughgood who stepped in. Got to the workshop, found the spare and summoned FEDEX.

Locally the team was told of a nearby company which made bubbles so Andrew stuck all the pieces together and went visiting. An order quickly followed and a second avenue of repair was underway. Maybe its an all night effort on Friday to make this essential repair.





Strangle this calamity was calming, the tension eased, the curried beef went down well and then it was back to work. This time to try our final possible fix for the electrical problem. In went the ADFA loaned motor controller. It was no fix.



So we were back to living around the issue and sacrificing some race power. We concentrated on finishing the new battery pack, the temperature sensors, the array cleaning and so on. Happy as pigs in.....

They say bad luck runs in threes and sure enough it did. As the solar car was being prepared for the second crucial session when our new driver Derrick Rodgers was to learn the car we couldn't start. The problem ended up being a failed motor controller. Out it came, in went the spare and success was achieved. But we missed the practice.

At 8.30 PM we were on our way to dinner. The motor and controller are running. We have a new battery pack, we have fixed the damaged solar array, we might have a new bubble tomorrow and we can stay in the pits till midnight tomorrow.

Cheering us up was the return of our interpreter Harry Imada, recently returned from paragliding. We have to be optimistic about tomorrow.

