

Suzuka Dream Cup 2005



Suzuka, Japan
5th - 7th August 2005

Report 7 - Sunday 7th August

The walking wounded assembled in the hotel lobby at 8.15 AM. Jack McArthur was much worse and was heading for the circuit doctor. Derrick Rodgers was improving so would be able to drive in today's 4 hour heat. David Fewchuk was running a head cold and a cough, whilst Tom Baker was little improved from yesterday. Darren Trafford remained Mr Indestructible and by far our best practitioner of guttural Japanese.



Amazingly there was little to do on the car itself. New Dunlop tyres were fitted and pressure checked. Tom worked on our two heavily damaged solar panels to see if they would deliver some power in the charging session commencing at 10.00 AM and a broken seat fixed.



Jack went immediately to the medical center and spent the next 5 hours heavily medicated asleep in the hospital bed. His racking cough had kept him up all night.

A strange 'race' took place at 10.00 AM when all teams received their battery packs from the officials and frantically ran to their solar cars to start charging from the sun. It was hot but fortunately the 3 hours before the race start completely filled the batteries for most of the entrants. Our highest charge rate was 1600 watts so it was promising to be a fast race.



Derrick was pushed to grid position #3 and was the last entrant to form up. At 1.00 PM it was on.

Like yesterday the fast trio of TIGA, OSU and Aurora 101 steaked away. Our plan was to regulate our own race and try to hold lap times at 4'35. We did not expect to match TIGA who already held a one lap advantage from yesterday's race. We had come to achieve a top 3 finish and become the most successful overseas team ever to compete in the Dream Cup.

We completed the first 8 laps in third place and third in the combined aggregate of heat 1 and 2. To reach second on aggregate we needed to overcome the 1.30 deficit to OSU from yesterday. On lap 9 Derrick pounced with a 4'13 lap, the fastest in the race and passed OSU. A sustained burst saw Aurora 101 pass TIGA and go into the lead in Heat 2. On lap 19 we had eliminated the deficit to OSU to move into second place overall. This was getting interesting. But clouds were forming and a thunderstorm looked likely. Solar energy had disappeared and the field slowed. Lap times stretched to 5'30 as the team managers looked at the ominous skies hoping to estimate when the sun would return.

We had a surprise visit from Miyu one of the Miss Suzuka girls who had been friendly to us last year. She brought her mother, a former Miss Japan, and her elegant grandmother. She has promised to be our mascot next year if we return.



Although most teams were making their mandatory driver changes at 2 hours we wanted to keep Derrick in the car for as long as possible, It was also becoming evident that exceeding 100 laps would be a new record for this event. We kept Derrick out on the track for 3 hours and 40 minutes. He volunteered. Then he reported a wheelmotor vibration which required a change and coincided with the need to make our mandatory driver change. Dan strapped himself in for the last six laps, including a stunning one at 4'04. This was one tenth of a second slower than this year's race record lap. In the end we were unable to make up the deficit to OSU and we finished third recording 101 laps. Now that has a ring to it - "Aurora 101 finishes 101 laps at the Susuka Dream Cup"! TIGA won with 103 laps and OSU were second with 101. Fourth place was 7 laps further behind.

So we made the podium, received two cups, enjoyed the genuine goodwill of the officials and other competitors. In spite of the problems of the week and the various sicknesses that racked most of the team we had achieved our objectives.



After the prize-giving ceremonies we faced up to packing the car and our equipment in the shipping container organized by Mr Yoshioka of Nippon Express. He has booked it on a vessel from Nagoya departing 12 August and arriving in Melbourne 30 August. That will give us a mere 2 weeks before we are off to Darwin for the most exciting World Solar Challenge, commencing 25 September.

Its the Aichi World Expo in Nagoya tomorrow with a hotel departure at 6.00 AM. Restful isn't it?