



2005 World Solar Challenge

Darwin > Adelaide 25th September - 2 October 2005

Report 5 Thursday 22nd September 2005

Today saw the commencement of the first official activities of the 2005 Panasonic World Solar Challenge. SCRUTINEERING.

All the entrants are scheduled for a six stage review of their cars plus a check of their lead and trailing support vehicles and safety plan. This takes about three hours and is done in front of very experienced scrutineers to ensure that the solar challenge is as safe as possible.



Normally Aurora would be wanting to finish this as soon as possible, but we had a day of final adjustments to our electrical and solar panel systems to do. Tom Baker was the key man on this, having arrived after midnight last night. The batteries were charged to a nearly full condition, the solar power trackers were adjusted to extract the best solar energy, and Tom's telemetry modem was checked and finally installed. The telemetry system allows us to check on how the solar car is going from a distance away in the lead support vehicle. Peter Pudney, our strategist, calls the shots on the road and is constantly comparing his computer plan for the day with the data coming from the car itself. This year the strategy for running the solar challenge is more important than ever as there will be less sunlight and shorter charging periods at the beginning and end of days on the road.



One breakthrough today has been the securing of a Satellite IP Modem from Regional Bgan Inmarsat which will allow us to access weather information via the internet directly from a satellite feed. Also we hope to deliver our daily reports with pictures via this satellite modem. Now that really puts the pressure on our team strategist Peter Pudney.

The morning was quiet at the Hidden Valley racetrack as half of the teams were involved or preparing for scrutineering but by the afternoon the track was alive with solar cars being tested and visitors looking out for how their competitors were going.

Japan's fastest solar car driver, Kei Nomura, from the best Japanese team TIGA (Ashiya University in Osaka) finally arrived in Darwin and had the red streamliner tracking laps times below two minutes. That's setting the pace.

Tomorrow Aurora's fastest driver Derrick Rodgers will be in our solar car with the purpose of challenging Kei Nomura and several other teams for the honor of setting fastest qualifying lap.

Team leader of MIT, Peter Augenburgs, has also arrived and fortunately repairs on the damaged MIT car have progressed quite well. However, they await delivery of their batteries from New York by tomorrow.



The leading German team, Hans Go, from Bochum University had their car on the track running on motorcycle tires,

but was concerned over the energy usage the car needed to sustain speed. Hans Go is a very friendly team and we were pleased to see them again after competing with them in the Phaethon 2004 event held last May in Greece.



Australia has 2 two-seat entries in the 2005 event: The Kelly team from Adelaide and the new six-meter long car from the University of New South Wales. These two cars are allowed a substantially larger solar panel because of the fact they are carrying two people. From what we could see, we would prefer to be the passenger in Kelly, which has a side-by-side seating position versus the UNSW back-to-back position.



Finally we had a visit from members of the 2003 Nuna team from Holland who will be supporting the 2005 group in the solar challenge. Their leader, Diedrick, had grown even taller than last year and gave Aurora lots of encouragement. The 2005 Nuna team will have nearly 50 people on the road, including a large media group who will report directly back to Dutch television on a daily basis.



Tomorrow is a big day for the Aurora 101 team. Scrutineering will start at 8:30 am, after which we plan to have Derrick familiarize himself with the Hidden Valley racetrack for qualifying on the following day. The Aurora 101 solar car is well prepared and we have a competent team to manage it on the road. Still, we will be closely watching this terrific international field of the world's best solar cars.

