



2005 World Solar Challenge

Darwin > Adelaide 25th September - 2 October 2005

Report 7 Saturday 24th September 2005

Action day. It was time to determine grid positions through a qualifying process at the Hidden Valley racetrack. All teams arrived by 8:00 am and were individually briefed by the event authorities and told of the plan to send cars out two by two. The qualifying method was to determine how fast each car could go for one single lap.



At the 2003 World Solar Challenge the Aurora 101 car was the fastest qualifier with a time of 2 minutes, 15 seconds. In 2005, this was not going to be enough. The faster contenders were all holding back, not wanting to be the first to post their time. Finally we were tired of waiting and set out on the track matched up with Bochum University in the Hans Go car.



Derrick Rodgers did a tidy 2:03.22 lap, 12 seconds ahead of last event. Next came a surprise time from the Taiwan

entry Formosun III, with a 2:01.57. Michigan was balked on their first attempt and was granted a second try. This resulted in a 2:01.74.



MIT were expected to be fast and appeared to have repaired all their transit damage. Their sleek black car set out at a quick pace but on the back of the circuit got out of control and rolled. The driver was okay. The car terribly bruised. A wheel was collapsed. As the team leader drove the chassis portion of the car back to the pits the solar car teams cheered him in, but each felt thankful it wasn't their car.





Nuna were on the same lap as MIT but were granted a new attempt. They qualified at 2:25.90. The car we were all waiting for was TIGA who managed to delay their attempt until the very last. Sure enough, 1:59.18 was the fastest time representing an average speed of 87.60 kph.





Southern Aurora did a great job at qualifying in ninth position with a time of 2:28.59. They were ahead of rivals from last event like Hans Go and Kelly.



So the field was set. We will start from Parliament House at 8:00am Sunday, 25 September for the 2005 Panasonic World Solar Challenge.



The big surprise was the return of the UNSW Sunswift III car to the track. They were enthusiastically repairing the significant damage caused in yesterday's off-road incident and hoped to be allowed to run on the Stuart Highway even if no longer an official entry. We will see tomorrow.

Much of the afternoon was taken up with video recording for a Discovery Channel program on the science of solar cars. To round out this program we will be carrying one of their photographers on the trip to Adelaide.

Peter Pudney was hard at work planning out his race strategy for the trip. In the Southern Aurora team, Jack's daughter Therese is part of their strategy team and it doesn't rely on calling Peter, much.



The Darwin Bureau photographer for the Fairfax group, Glenn Campbell, arrived at 5:00pm to shoot our “historic picture” and a few sunset shots of the Aurora 101 car. We had dressed eight of our team members in the shirt of every World Solar Challenge since 1987. Aurora and Heliadet (from Germany) are the only two teamed to have entered all eight World Solar Challenges.



Our day of racing starts tomorrow at 4:30 am. Actually, we depart Parliament House Darwin, cruise down Mitchell Street, and turn right onto the Stuart Highway at precisely 8:04 am.