



2005 World Solar Challenge

Darwin > Adelaide 25th September - 2 October 2005

Report 8 Sunday 25th September 2005

Finally, 25 September 2005, race day. The starting procedure for the 2005 Panasonic World Solar Challenge was quite different from previous events. Elegantly held at Parliament House, the cars were sent off at one minute intervals. A big crowd witnessed the start, the band played the Australian national anthem, and we were fourth car away down Darwin's main street and onto the Stuart Highway. The weather was fine.





The first media stop was 316 km away at Katherine. University of Michigan set the pace and by 9:30, just one and a half hours after the start, Nuna had taken second place after their seventh place starting position. Aurora was in third having passed both TIGA and Formosun III. At this stage the surprise was how well the three Taiwanese entries were traveling. All cars negotiated the only significant hill climb at Hayes Creek, although conditions there were cloudy. The frustration was a side detour controlled by traffic lights where the leaders all suffered up to five minute delays. The top three cars were cruising at 105 kph, although Aurora was holding back to keep enough battery level. At the Katherine media stop the University of Michigan arrived at 11:26, Nuna four minutes behind at 11:30, Aurora another four minutes behind at 11:34, TIGA at 11:37, and Formosun III at 11:43.





The concern was where were the other two Taiwanese. Later on we learned that Apollo 5 had an accident in leaving the road before reaching Katherine.



Michigan were first away but in this leg suffered two tyre punctures and at 12:23 Aurora passed them to take second place. At Mataranka Aurora was three minutes ahead of Michigan and TIGA close behind. Nuna were already starting to build a solid lead.



The next stop was Dunmarra, where Nuna arrived at 2:58, 16 minutes ahead of Michigan at 3:14, another seven minutes to Aurora at 3:21 just ahead of TIGA, and finally Formosun III at 3:34. Up to that point Aurora had averaged 96.25 kph between Katherine and Dunmarra.



Our driver Kon was feeling unwell and had been a concern on the entry to Dunmarra. Also, we were having trouble with reading some of the data and promised ourselves a look at the motor controller that evening. The last stretch for the day saw us go beyond Elliot by 20 km for a total distance of 755 km at an average speed of 93.2 kph. We stopped ahead of Nuna's 2003 record breaking pace, but Michigan were seven km ahead and Nuna were 63 km ahead of us. Their average speed for the day exceeded 100 kph. The night activities included tire changes, a motor controller change, and some battery charge from a weak sun and a short sunset. This has been a very fast start to the 2005 Panasonic World Solar Challenge.
