



2005 World Solar Challenge

Darwin > Adelaide 25th September - 2 October 2005

Report 10 Tuesday 27th September 2005

After some late night work on the motor controller, we were ready to face another day.



Day three of the 2005 Panasonic World Solar Challenge was starting to get serious. We all hoped for a good morning charge session but this did not happen. In fact we had scattered cloud for the first two hours of running on the road, so speeds were a bit slower than expected.



The Nuna team was already well ahead, so the real battle in this event is for second place. University of Michigan started the day seven km ahead of Aurora who in turn was 12 km ahead of TIGA. The first stretch was over 500 km long and we had Andris Samsons in the cockpit as the driver, facing more than five hours before having a rest.



Our strategist Peter Pudney set the speed between 95 and 100 kph, hoping to maintain it all day. Our destination was Cadney Park.



We learnt that Nuna had a lead at the beginning of the third day of 136 km over Michigan. Progressively the conditions brightened and after nearly two hours we finally had clear skies and the first sighting of the Michigan team. That meant we had caught up nearly 5 minutes after two hours. We were also averaging 98 kph. At 11:20 Andris Samsons, himself an ex-University of Michigan World Solar Challenger, both in 1993 and 2001, passed the team from his old college. We had traveled already 317 km. The good sun and a developing tail wind helped maintain our average speed and we arrived in Cadney Park at 1:22 pm and had a seven minute margin over Michigan and a 26 minute margin over TIGA.

A nice surprise at Cadney Park was the presence of Viv Baddeley, former team manager of the 1993 Aurora Q1 solar car which finished fifth in that World Solar Challenge, his wife Jan and their three children.



Now the job was to see how far we could get by the end of the day, as there were no more scheduled media stops before 5 pm. Kon was in the drivers seat, and had to put up with freshening but variable side and tail winds. Along the way we would pass Coober Pedy, with its odd collection of white mining mounds and stern warnings about taking care because of the many deep shafts left open.



The two Davids had to do some repairs on the towing pick up truck, which was acting like it was fuel starved. Georg Brasseur, the FIA representative from Austria, also stopped to help, as did a mechanic from Perth.



Aurora 101 slipped past the camp site we used in 2003 finished up covering 838 km for the day. This is by far the longest day distance we have done in a World Solar Challenge event, for an average speed of 98.6 kph. We were also ahead of the Nuna record pace of 2003. At day's end Aurora held on to second place, some 16 km ahead of Michigan and 53 km ahead of TIGA.



Tomorrow is deadly serious. The weather forecast is for bad weather: lots of clouds and some hail. Our aim is to reach Adelaide in four days, if we had good weather we would hope to beat Nuna's record from 2003, although Nuna looks certain to achieve a new race record of over 100 kph and finish in Adelaide around midday. The battle for second place will be intriguing.

