



2005 World Solar Challenge

Darwin > Adelaide 25th September - 2 October 2005

FINAL REPORT Thursday 29th September 2005

The weather forecasts were all bad. In fact, we had very little charge on the evening of the third day and only a small amount on the following morning. We had an 82 km dash to Glendambo where the fast traveling Nuna car departed at 4:30 the previous day.





It was cold. We had a 30 mph westerly wind, fast moving cloud and some rain. This was going to be a very hard day for solar cars. Aurora arrived at Glendambo at 9:05 am, eight minutes ahead of Michigan and a considerable 38 minutes ahead of TIGA. Although we could see blue sky to the west and the winds seemed to be blowing the clouds to the east, we were hampered by the last line of cloud sitting on the Stuart Highway for two hours. In this time Michigan caught up to Aurora 101 and passed us at 11:25 am. We had still 167 km to go to the next media stop at Port Augusta.



Finally the cloud did move to the east of the Stuart Highway, and apart from the wind, we did enjoy some good sun all the way to Port Augusta. This was the final media stop for the race. We were nose to tail behind Michigan entering the Port Augusta stop, some nine seconds only. Michigan had picked up a piece of debris thrown up by a truck and had to

remove it before being officially considered arriving at Port Augusta. This cost them 30 seconds and meant that Aurora would leave the checkpoint first.



Then we were both shocked when TIGA arrived just 10 minutes later. They had experienced the sun all the way from Glendambo and were able to make up 28 minutes in that stretch. The pressure was building with only 279 km to run to the end of timing on the outskirts of Adelaide. The weather forecast was still bad. Aurora left the checkpoint just in front of Michigan and the real final battle for second place was about to start. Before long Michigan asked for a pass and overtook Aurora as the clouds closed in. Definitely no sun. Both team strategists called for just 70 kph, hoping their batteries would survive until Adelaide. Over the satellite phone we got the message that Nuna hit the end of timing at 1:41 pm at a mighty 102.75 kph for the entire trip. Not only was their car powerful and fast, but somehow they had missed almost all of the bad weather.

At 3:20 pm it was dark because of the solid cloud banks and it commenced raining. We were directly behind Michigan, slowing from 70 kph to 60kph, then 50 kph, then 40 kph. On this stretch of two lane highway we were holding up a great deal of traffic. To pass a solar car is to pass 5 or 6 support vehicles as well, and not many drivers wanted that challenge.



This was a real guessing game. Nobody knew how much battery was left in any of the solar cars. Would TIGA still make its rapid progress toward second place? Would there be any more sun before reaching Adelaide? Could we reach that distance today, or would it be tomorrow?

The tension increased when Michigan had to pull over for a flat tire. Aurora powered by at a mere 60 kph. We were desperately recalculating how far we had to go versus how much battery power we had left to see if we could at least beat our 2003 time for the event. About 70 km from the end of timing we reached the four-lane highway and Peter Pudney called for 80 kph. Then surprise, surprise, and after another recalculation, he asked for 105 kph. The low sun peeked through the heavy cloud, we were on 450 watts on the solar panel, and flying the last 50 km. We made it on day four at 5:05 pm, just four minutes faster than our time in 2003. This was good for 92.03 kph average speed since Darwin.

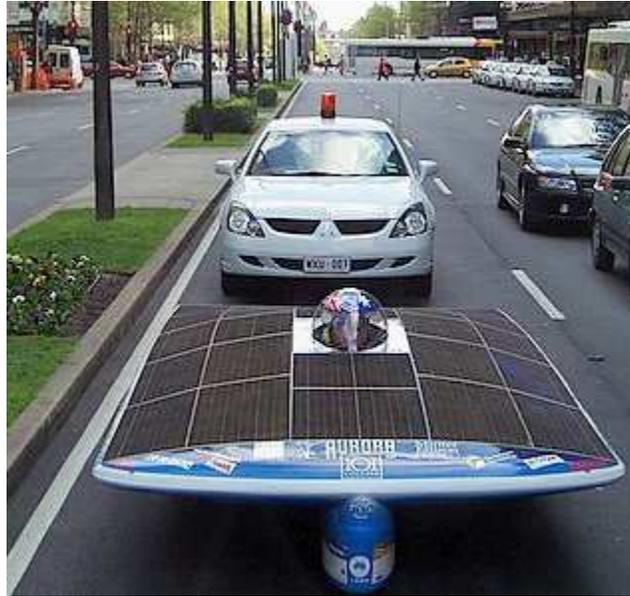


Michigan finished the day some 70 km back and TIGA a further 25 km behind Michigan with flat batteries at 4:30 pm.

It was cabins, showers, a good meal and celebration stories for the Aurora team. This had been the most fascinating day of the 2005 Panasonic World Solar Challenge.



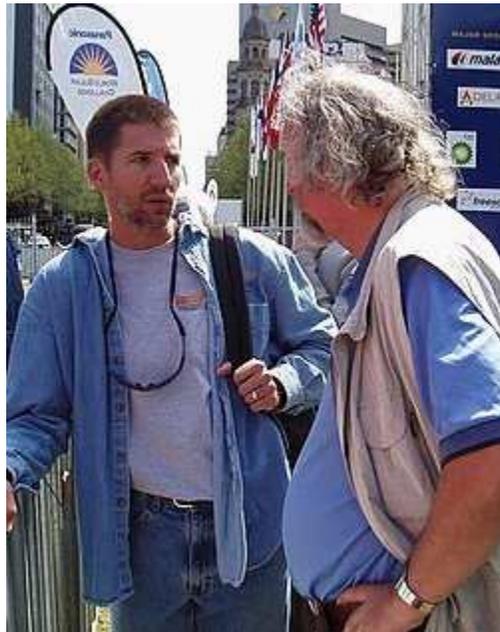
The following morning we charged the battery and rolled into the official ceremonial finishing line at 9:15 am to the applause of a large crowd and many of our friends from Nuna. We did the same when Michigan arrived and not long after the TIGA team. And before long, the Taiwan team Formosun III. We expect that MIT, Apollo 5 and Hans Go will cross the timing point before the end of day five. The Lord Mayor of Adelaide was there to greet Michigan, having himself been part of their 1993 World Solar Challenge team. It's been a great event and faster than ever. Cars will reach Adelaide for the next three days.











We'll be back in 2007!

