

Aurora in the Global Green Challenge 2009
Report Seven
24 October 2009

Aurora 101 claims pole position during Qualifying for the Global Green Challenge 2009

Today we saw all the entries. They were at the track from 7.30 PM with their cars supposedly ready to perform in their qualifying lap. This turned out to not always be the case.

Both Aurora cars were ready to go. We decided to set our times early before the wind picked up but were beaten to position by the race favorite Nuna.

Nuna got around the track in a very quick 2 mins 2 secs. A fair bit faster than their time in 2007 and similar to the time a group of fast cars had done last event.

Southern Aurora was next. It achieved 2 mins 8 secs, the best that that generation of solar car had ever done.

We were looking for who else was going to be fast. OSU the Japanese car was one of the suspects and it turned out to be true. The beautiful silver car achieved a lap of 1 min 58 seconds, breaking through the two minute barrier. They were followed by a number of slower cars before Aurora101 was called up to the starting line. Just ahead was the red team from Twente University in the Netherlands. The two cars were released with about a 400 meter separation.

It was quickly apparent that Aurora 101 would need to overtake Twente and it had to do so during Aurora's hot lap. Derrick Rodgers resorted to passing in the dirt by the side of the track. We also saw unexpected wheel lift on the tight corners. This was something new for Derrick and caught him by surprise. He raced on nevertheless, slipping quickly through the downhill section and on to the main straight. The instruments showed 147 km/hr and the lap time was 1 min 53.6 seconds. This looked good for pole position. None of the other quick contenders came close. But where was the Belgium team?

Finally the Umicore team car appeared. Consider this is a contender for first position. Out they went on to the track. By time their hot lap came around a slower car stopped their progress. Back they came to be awarded another attempt. On their second attempt all looked good until the last corners before the main straight. Off road they went with a buckled front suspension. A ball joint had pulled out from their front suspension. Now the time battle began. A repair had them out again in 90 minutes in order to at least pass the swerving and braking test. Again the suspension failed and it was back to the pits. Now there was real trouble. A failure as before but now on the other side. Body damage on both sides of the lower carbon shell was also evident. Finally, after another repair, they gingerly tried the official tests which were passed. Then without a solar array a whole lap was completed at a time of 2 mins 27 secs. They will be on the starting line tomorrow.

All up there will be 32 starters tomorrow. Aurora 101 will be the first to leave at 8.30 AM from Parliament House.

The other Global Green Challenge event officially started today. Sixteen cars and one motorcycle set off at 12.30 AM for their own trip to Adelaide. Their aim is to see which vehicle can improve most on its official emissions data. This is going to be interesting!

The remainder of the day gave us several electrical surprises. We were unable to start the Aurora 101 and we had a battery mishap in the Southern Aurora. Fortunately our new electrical team solved both.

We are packed and just about ready to go.

