

REPORT FOR FRIDAY, 30 November 2009

This was to be the last day no matter what. The South Australian Police were insisting that all solar cars be off the roads by midday, which for most entrants meant that Adelaide would be reached in the back of their support trailers. Already 6 entries had reached the 'finish of timing' line at Angle Vale. These were: Tokai, Nuna and Michigan all from the space cell class, UNSW and MIT the first of the silicon class and OSU the winner of the Adventure Class.

Angle Vale is an outer suburb to the north of Adelaide and is officially where the timing of the race ends. The official finish line is at Victoria Square in Adelaide city but the organisers do not want the solar cars to race in the city area with peak hour traffic.

It was another beautiful sunny morning so both of the Aurora solar cars had plenty of sun energy to make it to Angle Vale.

Aurora 101 was just 102 km out having spent the night near the town of Lochiel. Just 30 km ahead lay Port Wakefield where the dual lane highway to Adelaide began. Port Wakefield was the location of the first Australian Grand Prix to be held on a dedicated track. This was in 1955 and was won by the patron of the Aurora team, Sir Jack Brabham. He averaged 115 km/hr for the 167 km race. Tokai's solar car run to average 100.5 km/hr from Darwin to Adelaide looks pretty respectable!

Once Aurora 101 reached the dual lane highway Peter Pudney called for a speed of 105 km/hr so Angle Vale was reached by 9.10 AM at an average for the morning of 88 km/hr.

The peak hour traffic was indeed on. We crawled into the city with the support cars doing their best to stay in close convoy and protect the solar car from unwary drivers. At the Parade Grounds we parked the support vehicles and trailers and followed the solar car up to Victoria Square to the finish line.

The teams that had already finished gave Aurora 101 a noisy welcome, beating on the banners as loudly as possible. Lot of orange shirts from Nuna were evident, mostly towering above the mere mortals from other countries. After Dr David Rand had checked that the battery seals were still in place the Aurora 101 was parked in the display tent and the congratulations and shirt swapping began. The tossing into the fountain continued and it was evident that this was the most popular of the activities in the square.

Southern Aurora was about 2 hours behind reaching Angle Vale at 11.07 AM. They trailered the solar car into the city and were also given the same noisy welcome upon arrival at Victoria Square.

Just 10 teams completed the distance from Darwin to Adelaide on solar power. The other 21 starters had to trailer their solar cars for part or nearly all the journey. The Belgian Umicore team that had destroyed their car after Katherine bravely displayed their smashed remnants at the square. The unusual car from Twente University which had suffered a roll over on the highway were the 10th in and in spite of lost time for repairs, made the full distance. Just as well as they had a large group of friends and relatives to meet them.

So after both Aurora solar cars suffered time losses of 6.0 and 6.5 hours respectively on the first day and being in 30th and 31st position through Katherine they pulled up to being the 7th and 9th overall finishers.

Aurora 101 was sixth in the overall Challenge class and third in the Challenge Silicon Class. Southern Aurora finished second in the Adventure class.

We dream of the 'trouble free run' and where that would have put Aurora 101. It would have been fourth overall and first in the Silicon class. We were pleased that another Aussie team, UNSW won the silicon class, although Aurora gained 1 hr 17 minutes on UNSW from Katherine to the finish. Similarly Aurora 101 gained 3 hr 51 minutes on MIT.

We were delighted to see Tokai win. They had a well built, high technology car with great reliable solar power. Their leader, Prof Nomura has assisted Aurora on our several visits to Japan and is himself the patron of up to 6 solar car teams in Japan.

On Saturday night the prize-giving party was held in Adelaide's magnificent Convention Centre. What atmosphere. From the opening welcome presented by the aboriginal group to the rousing acceptance of the event film highlights to the great applause to all the winners. More was to come at the 'Woolshed' where the drinks were flowing and the mechanical bull was proving to be harder to beat than the Stuart Highway.

Amazingly the Aurora team members straggled back to Melbourne on Sunday, cleaned and delivered the support cars to Mazda on Monday and had the regular team meeting on Thursday. Now what's next?