2007 Panasonic World Solar Challenge

Day 5 – 18 Oct 2007

Today we planned to finalise our battery balancing as well as getting the wheels aligned and repaired. By the end of the day we needed to have the car presentable for scrutineering at 8 AM on Friday. These plans were not followed. First of all we were asked to anchor a television spot with the national TV program Sunrise, first thing on Friday morning. We also needed to take more time to stiffen the rear wheels with aluminum reinforcing. The battery balancing work was delayed because of the continued work with Eli's battery monitoring system. Hence no track testing was conducted.

The interesting highlight of the morning was to take a closer look at Michigan's solar panel. As well as normally arranged solar cells it has a concentrator array section. This is expected to add substantially to the total array output. The concentrator cells allow the car to comply with the Challenge Class by reducing to total array area from 8 square metres back to 6 square metres with the concentrator cells comprising only a fraction of this total area.

The team members of Michigan have been very careful not to allow close inspection of their car by other team members in the pits. This has made them prone to being the subject of some good-natured banter. We are wondering how long their drivers will last in the seating position they have designed (a crouch position). In the afternoon Michigan completed their scrutineering session with flying colours. Their car weighed in at 245.5 Kg.

The Michigan car and concentrator array section.

Reverse angle, Michigan car.

The driver position in the Michigan Car.

On the Aurora battery front, Eli pursued his last effort to have the battery monitoring system operational with more shielding of wires being installed. Eli has spent 6 months designing and building this system so we are all hoping with crossed fingers that this last modification will be successful. Today it was Rob Shandley's turn to maintain good relations with the Annersley College entrants. Annersley College have a dual powered vehicle with a petrol engine driving the front wheels and an electric motor driving the rear wheels. This had been undertaken as a school project under the leadership of Peter Gubbins.

Our friends from the Philippines in the Sinag car were also preparing for scrutineering. Team leader, Rene Fernandez, had the job of creating the warning sign for the emergency electrical shut-off for the outside of the car. This is a mandatory safety requirement for all entries and allows external shut-off of the complete electrical system.

Rob Shandley meets an Annersley College member.

Eli continues work on the battery monitoring system.

Rene Fernandez works on safety warning signs.

Although we are keeping an eye on the top teams we are also amazed at the effort that some of the low budget teams have put it just to get to Darwin. A Swiss family with two young children have made a family project of the Helios entry. Not very fancy - but still a solar car running on its own power. Helios has no trailer and we needed to take them to scrutineering in the afternoon. Their car was approved.

The Greenfleet Class has attracted the entry of a two seat electric car named 'Trev'. This has been a project at University of South Australia involving Aurora team member and usual race strategist, Peter Pudney. This means that Peter will be involved in the journey from Darwin to Adelaide with 'Trev' and Tom Baker will take over the strategy work on Aurora 101.

With the second Aurora entry Christine, the strategy decisions will be made by Greg Locock who has had considerable solar car racing experience. In both Aurora entries we lack knowledge on the car characteristics so we expect strategy to be developed along the way.

The Swiss Helios entry.

The South Australian University entry 'Trev'.

Some of the team had a late finish as they were working on battery balancing and the noise protection of the battery monitoring system. The rest had an evening break at the famous Mindl night market in Darwin. Although this is a weekly market it attracts a great crowd, providing music, multicultural food and a mix of Darwin residents with many tourists.

Electrified didgeridoo at Mindl Markets playing aboriginal rhythms.

Tomorrow, Aurora will anchor a live TV interview with the national Channel 7 morning program 'Sunrise'. Then all 4 Aurora associated teams face the scrutineers.