

AUSSIE SOLAR CAR TEAM PRAYING FOR RAIN IN JAPAN

23 July 2008

The famous Melbourne Australia based solar car team Aurora is poised to compete in Japan's biggest solar car race 1-3 August 2008. This will be held at the Formula 1 race circuit in Suzuka. The Suzuka 'Dream Cup' has been held every year since 1992 and attracts the biggest field of sun racers in the world. Between 75 and 80 entrants are expected on this eighteenth occasion of staging the 'Dream Cup'. Aurora has raced in 4 events so far including the inaugural race in 1992.



Aurora in action

Its return in 2008 for the fifth time will be heralded by a special musical welcome from a Japanese team. Mr Maeda has composed a unique number especially for Aurora and will play it on a commemorative trumpet used in the opening fanfare of the 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games. A most appropriate gesture just a week ahead of the Beijing Olympics for 2008. This Olympic association with the dream of solar cars reflects the Charta of Olympia signed in Olympia, Greece, in 2004 by many of the members of the solar car community.



Mr Maeda

Strangely, Aurora team leader David Fewchuk says that the team will be praying for rain. "Aurora has been built to meet the new regulations of the World Solar Challenge 'Silicon Challenge' class which amongst other things limits the solar panel size to just 6 square metres and the cell type to common high volume silicon materials. As a result the Aurora 101 car will have a maximum of just 1200 watts of solar energy. The top three entrants sport over

8 square metres of solar panel made up of more powerful space program solar cells generating up to 1800 watts of power."



The top 3 Suzuka entrants

David Fewchuk also explained that, "We expect that the Aurora 101 solar car will be the lightest in the field and the car with the lowest wind resistance. So wet weather would even up the competition and slightly favour the Aussie solar car." The race is over two, 4 hour heats of the 5.81 kilometer track held on consecutive days. The track features many hills and tight corners which tax the capabilities of the solar cars and their electric systems. The two top teams from Japan are TIGA and OSU, both from Melbourne's sister city, Osaka. But Aurora is not expecting sisterly or even brotherly love once the flag drops.

The Aurora team have nominated three drivers. Derrick Rodgers from Hamilton Victoria is the proven gun driver returning for his third occasion. Derrick has previously held the solar car lap record at Suzuka. Paula Elstrek is the 'rookie' driver. That's a bad description as Paula holds the distinction of being the fastest woman on earth in a 4 wheel car.....575 kph. As well she has regularly driven jet powered dragsters. Perhaps the job is to have Paula drive on a strict energy diet to make sure the car continues for the 4 hours. The third driver is Mechatronics student Therese McArthur who has yet to gain a regular car driver's licence. Therese was one of the drivers in Aurora's successful effort to break the electric car distance record on one battery charge. This took place on 29 December 2007 at the Ford Australia test track near Geelong Victoria. The new record was established at 811 kilometers.



Drivers Paula Elstrek



Derrick Rodgers



Therese McArthur

Altogether Aurora will have 9 team members including four first timers. Aurora's Japanese Foundation Sponsors, Sumitomo Corporation and Mazda will be especially hoping for a good result as will 101 Collins Street, Minter Ellison, CSIRO and Marand Precision the remaining Foundation Sponsors.