

UM Solar Car Team gears up to race 1,100 miles in American Solar Challenge

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In a solar-powered vehicle that reached 100 mph in testing, the University of Michigan Solar Car Team is aiming for a third consecutive North American title. The team is in Cresson, Texas, this week testing the car in preparation for the 2010 American Solar Challenge, which begins June 20.

"No one we have spoken to has ever heard of a [solar car](#) reaching 100 mph and a U-M car has never reached it," said Rachel Kramer, the team's project manager. "Our goal for the 2010 American Solar Challenge is to win Michigan's sixth North American championship. We hope to win an unprecedented third consecutive title."

The week-long, biennial competition for solar-powered vehicles runs from Tulsa, Okla., to near Chicago.

The Solar Car Team built its first vehicle, Sunrunner, in 1990, and has amassed five North American titles since winning the inaugural event two decades ago. The team's 10th-generation vehicle, Infinium, was unveiled in June of last year and placed third in the 2009 Global Green Challenge, a 1,880-mile race across Australia formerly known as the World Solar Challenge.

The American race, which was formerly the North American Solar Challenge, alternates years with the Australian competition (essentially the world championships for solar vehicles).

The last time the American Solar Challenge was held, in July 2008, it was a 2,400-mile race from Dallas to Calgary, Canada. This year, the race will run just 1,100 miles, from Tulsa, Okla., to Naperville, Ill.

"The race is structured to be less of an endurance competition this year," Kramer said, "and more like a series of one- or two-day-long sprints. This will offer unique challenges from a race strategy perspective."

In testing at the high-speed oval track at Ford Motor Co.'s Michigan Proving Ground in Romeo, Mich, Infinium exceeded 100 mph for more than thirty seconds, reaching a top speed of 105 mph.

Before the start of the American Solar Challenge, the Infinium team will compete in the Formula Sun Grand Prix, a track race held at Motorsport Ranch in Cresson, Texas, beginning June 16.

The team receives donations from hundreds of corporate and private sponsors. Major sponsors include the College of Engineering, AT&T, Delta, Ford Motor Co. and General Motors.

The Solar Car Team is one of the largest student teams at Michigan, comprising hundreds of students from a range of different schools and colleges.

"Over the course of the two-year Infinium project, there have been about 150 students involved with the team in some capacity," says Kramer, a neuroscience major in the College of Literature, Science and the Arts. "For this particular race, we have a crew of 19 students who will be traveling with and racing the car."

Provided by University of Michigan

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