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2,300-mile solar car race to end on Claremont's Yale Avenue

Twenty cars powered by nothing but the sun will pull into their final destination on Yale Avenue in Claremont, Calif., on July 23. The solar racecars left Chicago July 13 on a 2,300-mile cross-country trek that followed historic Route 66.

The public is welcome to cheer the teams as they cross the finish line and take a close-up look at the 2003 American Solar Challenge (ASC) entries. The ASC challenges college teams and clubs from around the world to build and race the fastest solar-powered cars on the continent. The lead cars could arrive in Claremont as early as 11 a.m.

The Challenge follows old Route 66 as much as possible. After leaving Chicago, the solar cars stop at checkpoints in Springfield, Ill.; St. Louis, Mo.; Rolla, Mo.; Joplin, Mo.; Edmond, Okla.; Sayre, Okla.; Amarillo, Texas; Tucumcari, N.M.; Albuquerque, N.M.; Gallup, N.M.; Flagstaff, Ariz.; Kingman, Ariz.; and Barstow, Calif., before reaching the Claremont finish line.

The car with the fastest cumulative time from Chicago to Claremont will win the ASC. The racers use photovoltaic solar cells to convert sunlight to electricity to power their cars. Weather and energy management will play an important role in the race. The more sunlight available, the faster and farther the cars will run and the more energy can be stored in their batteries.

The American Solar Challenge is the longest solar car race in the world. It can be tracked on the Internet at www.americansolarchallenge.org July 13-23.The Web site will include daily race results, photos and other information as well.

ASC's mission is to advance renewable energy and electric vehicle technologies, promote educational and engineering excellence, encourage environmental consciousness and teach teamwork. The race provides hands-on experience for engineering students, allowing them to build their technical skills.

The race is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy, its National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL), BP Solar and EDS.

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