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Team spirit in car fixing

Sasol Solar Challenge car is in immediate need of a quick fix after trial runs freak accident

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THE NORTH West University (NWU)'s Sasol Solar Challenge got off to a rocky start after gusty winds flipped over the competition car, causing significant damage to the vehicle.

The freak accident happened hours before the challenge started on Saturday. A student who was on the deck escaped unharmed but engineers had to work extra hard to get the car back on track.

The Sasol Solar Challenge involves solar cars from a number of local and international institutions and the journey runs from Pretoria to Cape Town.

The NWU car, known as the Sirius X25, is a product of the university's engineering faculty and it is expected to perform better than many of the international cars participating in the competition.

NWU team leader Prof Albert Helberg said that on the final trial on Thursday afternoon, the Sirius X25 was placed second on the time trial rankings when a freak accident occurred.

"The Sirius X25 was upended by a sudden gust of wind. Luckily, the driver, Estienne Janse van Rensburg, was unharmed, although personnel from



HICCUP: Paramedics attending to a student injured when gusty winds flipped over the NWU solar car, the Sirius X25 on Saturday.

ER24 assisted him on the scene of the accident.

Damage to the solar car was, however, far worse. There was damage to the solar panels, the non-load bearing structure, the cabin exterior, the wir-

ing and parts of the chassis. Our initial thoughts were that Sirius X25 would have to withdraw from the challenge," he said.

However, Helberg said that everyone, including competing teams, rallied

behind the NWU and encouraged that the car be repaired.

"In the spirit of cooperation, other participating teams, including international participants, not only encouraged us to repair Sirius X25 within the remaining 48 hours, they also offered their assistance.

"Furthermore, the CSIR made their facilities available to us. Alumni, who were part of previous solar car teams, voluntarily reported for duty," he said.

Helberg said that the aid and support made students experience team spirit.

"Working till the has burnt down and staying calm can transform a crisis situation into a unique opportunity. Thus, one of the objectives of the solar car project was unwittingly realised.

"May the men and women from our faculty engineering and their volunteers succeed in completing their emergency operation on Sirius X25 so that it can pass its safety test within 48 hours in time for the competition to start on Saturday," he said.

The trip to Cape Town is expected to take a number of days and those who want to follow the Sirius X25's progress can do so by following this link: <https://www.facebook.com/NWUSolarCar>.

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