

https://www.heraldbanner.com/news/local_news/resilience-determination-and-fortitude-iron-lions-return-from-australia-with-wealth-of-life-experience/article_5e9d1053-48ca-4a2b-99ce-168658fd7903.html

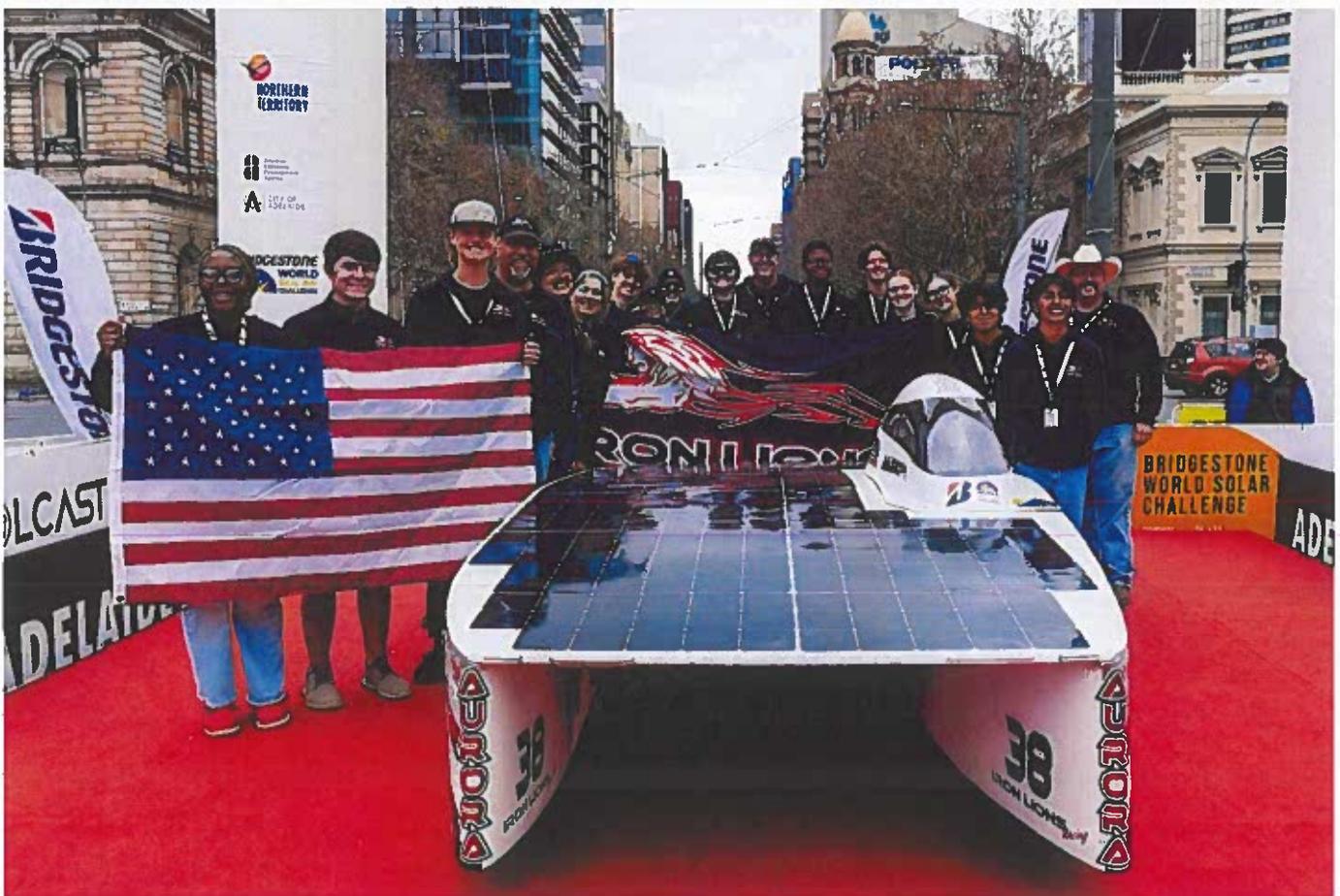
CENTERPIECE FEATURED BREAKING EDITOR'S PICK

RETURNING FROM THE OUTBACK

Resilience, Determination and Fortitude: Iron Lions return from Australia with wealth of life experience

Awarded both Bridgestone E8 Commitment Award "for their total participation in every aspect of the event" and online media company Scientific Gems Youth Award

By Travis Hairgrove | thairgrove@heraldbanner.com
Sep 1, 2025



Greenville High School's Iron Lions solar car team celebrate as they pass the finish line in Adelaide, South Australia after a taxing week-long adventure through the Outback in the Bridgestone World Solar Challenge.

Iron Lions Photo

[f](#) [in](#) [p](#) [@](#)

The top two places in the Bridgestone World Solar Challenge may have gone to teams from the Netherlands and the third to a team from Belgium but the students on Greenville High School's Iron Lions will still probably find it difficult to go back to a regular, daily class schedule after the adventures they just had over their nearly 2,000-mile trek through the Australian Outback.

Beset by electrical issues, the Iron Lions' car, Aurora, only completed about 500 of those miles and had to be transported by trailer the rest of the way to the finish line in Adelaide, South Australia.

When they arrived there Saturday afternoon (Central Australian time), they were cheered on by the crowd as they – the only high school team in the race – drove the car its last few yards past the finish line.

"I've said this several times this week. Some you win and some you lose, but if you learn you never truly lose in life," World Solar Challenge ambassador Chris Selwood told the team. "This week, I would suspect that everyone here has learned an immense amount ... so congratulations on getting it here to the finish line at Victoria Square, an amazing achievement in its own right."

Iron Lions head mentor Joel Pitts also had only positive things to say about how the team performed.

"Resilience, determination and fortitude," he told the Herald-Banner. "We have been determined to build a world class solar car, qualify in the challenger class of the Bridgestone World Solar Challenge in order to compete in the hardest solar car competition in the world.

"This challenge required and brought out the true fortitude that our team has," Pitts continued. "We never gave up. We continue to push forward even in the face of unforeseen circumstances."

Despite coming in 20th place in the actual race in the event's advanced "Challenger" division, the hard work of the Iron Lions was still acknowledged at the World Solar Challenge's closing ceremony, where they were awarded both the Bridgestone E8 Commitment Award "for their total participation in every aspect of the event" and online media company Scientific Gems Youth Award.

"Now I'm not a participation trophy guy, but these students deserve the closure at minimum," Iron Lions mentor Lucas Kiowski said. "I will not call them champions. That description isn't appropriate and is woefully inadequate. They are so much more, and they 10,000% are going to be better adults having been through this trial."



Lease the Equipment,
Own Your **Fitness Journey**

[Apply now](#)



https://www.heraldbanner.com/news/local_news/ghs-solar-car-team-to-compete-against-37-elite-teams-in-world-competition/article_59c1e8ef-547c-452b-af8f-15f98e024923.html

CENTERPIECE FEATURED

OFF TO AUSTRALIA

GHS solar car team to compete against 37 elite teams in world competition

Iron Lions about to test their mettle at Bridgestone World Challenge

By Travis Hairgrove | thairgrove@heraldbanner.com
Aug 8, 2025



Members of the Iron Lions solar car team and some of their chaperones take a short break during a layover in Fiji while on their way to Australia.

Iron Lions Photo

[f](#) [in](#) [p](#) [@](#)

Students on Greenville High School’s Iron Lions solar car team left town to much fanfare on Thursday before beginning their flight to Australia to compete in their first-ever Bridgestone World Solar Challenge.

There, they will be one of three teams from the U.S. – and the only team representing an American high school – as they compete against 37 elite teams representing universities, technology and innovation institutes and other pre-collegiate schools from 18 countries across four continents.

While the Iron Lions built their newest car – named Aurora – specially for the world competition’s ultra-sleek, high-endurance “challenger” division, the team has been participating in the Solar Car Challenge national competition since 2012, where they have taken home eight national championships over the years.

The World Solar Challenge will see them powering through nearly 2,000 miles over five days from Darwin, Northern Territory to Adelaide, South Australia, from Aug. 24 through Aug. 28.

Before they compete though, the team will undergo multiple days of “scrutineering,” in which judges will make sure the car is safe to race and will test students’ knowledge to make sure they’re ready for the rigors ahead.

When the Iron Lions make it Down Under, it will actually be the first time they’ve seen Aurora since it began its transoceanic voyage three months ago.

However, the team’s three longtime mentors Joel Pitts, George Kroncke and Lucas Kiowski left for Australia in late July to make sure all was well with Aurora. Since then, Kiowski has been posting regular updates about their travels.

Just The Facts

The Iron Lions will be one of three teams from the U.S. – and the only team representing an American high school – as they compete against 37 elite teams representing universities, technology and innovation institutes and other pre-collegiate schools from 18 countries across four continents.

https://www.heraldbanner.com/news/local_news/ghs-iron-lions-begin-racing-in-world-solar-challenge-this-weekend/article_0d37464d-9f17-45b5-9f4a-8e6e134fd4c.html

CENTERPIECE FEATURED BREAKING

READY FOR THE GREEN FLAG

GHS' Iron Lions begin racing in World Solar Challenge this weekend

Aurora's 2,000-mile Outback trek set for Saturday afternoon Greenville time

By Travis Hairgrove | thairgrove@heraldbanner.com

Aug 22, 2025



A judge at the Bridgestone World Solar Challenge in Australia checks to make sure the Iron Lions' Aurora meets the competition's regulations. Iron Lions Photo

[f](#) [in](#) [p](#) [@](#)

This Sunday morning (Australian CST)/this Saturday afternoon (North America CST), Greenville's Iron Lions solar car team is slated to begin racing its car, Aurora, on a 2,000-mile, five-day trek through the Australian Outback in the Bridgestone World Solar Challenge.

Since arriving in Australia two weekends ago, the team has been troubleshooting and preparing for the race (including practicing setting up tents for the four nights of camping they have ahead of them).

"Teams have been getting more definition when it comes to how they're gonna run their cars and how they're going to operate their teams," former Iron Lion and GHS Class of 2024 Salutatorian Sebastian Gonzalez said. "This is to make sure that they get into a consistent groove that will give them a good advantage."

Over this past week, the Iron Lions and the 33 teams from across the world they'll be competing against completed "static scrutineering," which is a rigorous battery of assessments by judges to make sure each car meets safety requirements and event regulations.

While things calmed down later in the week, the Iron Lions had their share of nail-biting moments this past Sunday and Monday, right up to the beginning of scrutineering.

"It was a roller coaster that included, but definitely not limited to, a major scare for the car," Iron Lions mentor Lucas Kiowski said. "When testing our regen (braking system), we thought we lost our very expensive motor controller which also renders our very expensive motor inoperable."

Luckily, after swapping both components with the team's back ups, the same problem persisted and they discovered that the issue was actually caused by a fault with "a much cheaper component," and they were able to get it corrected in time.

With the "static" tests completed, the teams had their "dynamic scrutineering" trials at 6 p.m. Friday afternoon (U.S. Central Time), where the cars performed various maneuvers on the track to demonstrate speed, stability and braking performance.

After the final battery of tests, the race is scheduled to start in State Square in Darwin, Northern Territory on Sunday at 8:30 a.m. (Saturday at 5:20 p.m. U.S. Central Time).



Being the only high school team competing, the Iron Lions have plenty to be proud and excited about, but they have also been making the effort to acknowledge the hard work of those teammates who came before them – competing in the National Solar Car Challenge since 2012 and taking home seven national championships in that time.

“The Iron Lions ... feel very strongly that we are standing on the shoulders of giants,” Kiowski said. “We truly feel a weight of responsibility in representing you all well.

“What I mean to say is this ... As we look through our camera rolls, we see the same pictures we saw the very first year, and every year since we started doing this,” Kiowski continued. “Our students fully engaged in this project ... designing, problem solving, honing people skills, fabrication techniques, strategic decision making, electrical skills, maintenance routines, weather forecasting, data logging ... the list goes on and on.”

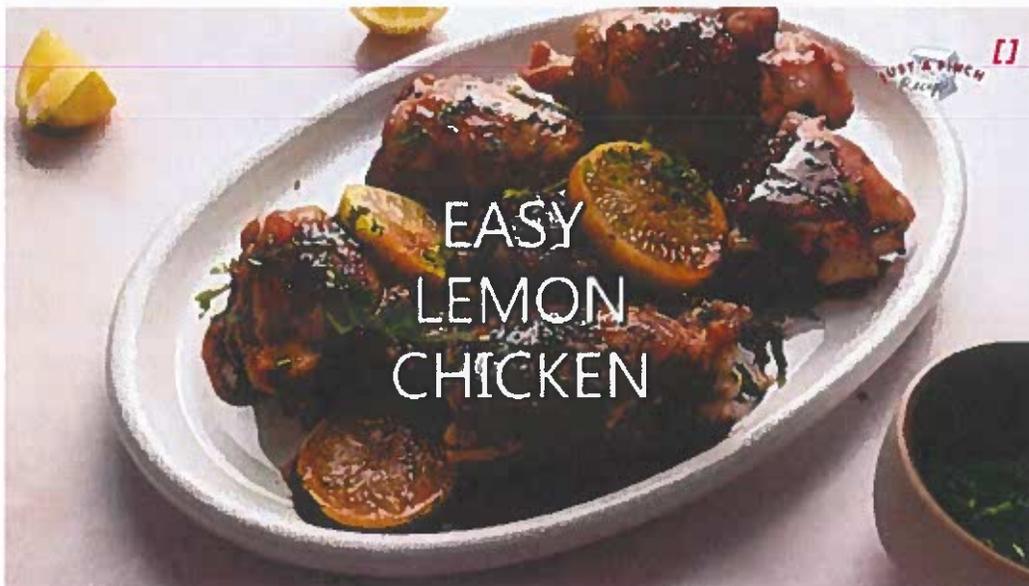
In recognition of this, the Iron Lions have started encouraging the use of the hashtag #IronLionsLegacy in social media posts about the team’s continuing adventures in the Outback and beyond.

For those interested in keeping up with the World Solar Challenge, videos will be posted on the event’s YouTube channel, <https://www.youtube.com/@OfficialWSC/featured>, and results will be posted on its website at www.worldsolarchallenge.org.

“Teams have been getting more definition when it comes to how they’re gonna run their cars and how they’re going to operate their teams. This is to make sure that they get into a consistent groove that will give them a good advantage.”

- Former Iron Lion and GHS Class of 2024 Salutatorian Sebastian Gonzalez

Trending Video



https://www.heraldbanner.com/news/local_news/iron-lions-team-members-grow-as-world-citizens-ahead-of-competition-in-australia/article_85a142a5-3258-4b9c-83c1-203375ff88db.html

CENTERPIECE

FEATURED

BREAKING

EDITOR'S PICK

FROM GREENVILLE TO GLOBAL

Iron Lions team members grow as world citizens ahead of competition in Australia

Students making lifetime memories ahead of solar challenge competition

By Travis Hairgrove | thairgrove@heraldbanner.com

Aug 15, 2025



ABC Darwin's Lillian Watkins (left) conducts a radio interview with Iron Lions team captains Ethan Kiowski and Nicolas Gonzalez.

Iron Lions Photo



At the end of their first full week in Australia, the 11 students who went as members of the Greenville High School Iron Lions solar car team are already making memories.

And as they continue to prepare for the actual racing component of the Bridgestone World Solar Challenge in less than two weeks, they have been interacting with and growing from conversations with college teams from the University of Michigan and University of Minnesota as well as a team from Japan.

“Communication was aided partially by Google Translate but honestly not much,” Iron Lions mentor Lucas Kiowski said of his team’s time with the group from Japan. “Despite the language barrier, the two groups managed to find the common language of solar car and engineering.”

“The Japanese team was blown away when they found out our team was completely high school students – like really shocked,” Kiowski added. “Their questions then intensified, asking what work our students did on our car. See, a lot of these teams have their solar arrays manufactured for them. We make our own, and the quality of that work has got other teams talking.”

The World Solar Challenge is divided into three classes of vehicles: the practical, real-world applicability focused cruiser class; the more diversified explorer class, which allows for not just solar but also electric, wind, synthetic fuel and hydrogen-powered vehicles; and the Iron Lions’ division – the ultra-sleek, high performance-focused, 100% solar challenger class.

The Iron Lions are not only the sole high school to compete in this year’s World Solar Challenge but will also be the first ever to compete in the challenger class (a remarkable feat, seeing as some of the team’s drivers have had their drivers licenses for less than a year). In a radio interview with ABC Darwin, team captains Ethan Kiowski and Nicolas Gonzalez said their goal in the race was not necessarily to “come in first place,” but to be the “first team from a secondary school to finish the race in the challenger class.”

Like their time with the Japanese team, the interview with the Australian radio station proved to be a mutually enjoyable lesson in cultural awareness as the Iron Lions interviewees remarked on Aussies' use of the word "cheers" for "thank you" or "goodbye," and interviewer Lillian Watkins was delightedly taken aback by the young Texans ending all of their responses with "ma'am."

The interview can be listened to online at <https://tinyurl.com/mtpcfwx3>.

"The Japanese team was blown away when they found out our team was completely high school students – like really shocked. Their questions then intensified, asking what work our students did on our car. See, a lot of these teams have their solar arrays manufactured for them. We make our own, and the quality of that work has got other teams talking."

– Iron Lions mentor Lucas Kiowski