Puerto Rican solar car put to the test [1]

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By Gladys Nieves Ramírez gnieves@elnuevodia.com [2] endi.com [3] Exhibiting the colors of the Puerto Rican flag, the solar car Caribbean Warrior is ready to measure forces with its rivals from the United States, and to prove that the use of the solar energy is an alternative to the gasoline, which prices keeps rising. It is the first time that Puerto Rico participates in the annual competition Solar Dell-Winston Car Challenge, whose 11th edition started in Fort Worth, Texas yesterday. The Residential Center of Educative Opportunities of Mayagüez (CROEM), that made the vehicle, will become the first superior school of Latin America in competing in the event. “It is going to be a good experience either, for both my students and for me. We are really happy”, expressed from Texas, teacher Elba M. Sepúlveda, one of the supervisors of the Solar Team group, made up of 14 CROEM students. There will be more than 3,000 students of around 20 superior schools of the United States that will participate in the event, whose intention is to motivate the young people to look for alternatives to gas use. During four days, the students will be testing their novel creations in the track Texas Motor Speedway. The Carribbean Warrior is product of more than 18 months of arduous work, investigations, tests and adjustments in the design areas, mechanics, electricity and quality control. During the process, the car was put under extreme tests, to assure that it was prepared for the competition, according to the captain of the CROEM Team, Héctor Colon, 17 years. The body of the vehicle has an inverted drop form, to be able to cut the wind better. It is four meters and 90 centimeters long, a meter and a half of height and two meters wide. It will run with six modules of solar panels and it will have a seventh module to regulate the 12 volts that need the fans within the cabin, the lights and the brakes system. Sepúlveda explained that, although it can reach 65 miles per hour, they will try to keep it in less than 35 because the most important test is the endurance. “The car that lasts the most laps around the track without running out of energy wins. We cannot go too fast because then we’ll consume all the energy stored in the batteries”, she emphasized. There will be seven sessions of competitions that will extend until Friday. In addition to durability, the judges will also evaluate factors like aesthetics, turns,

suspension, voltage, acceleration, force, security, and going up and down hills. Also there will be a prize for the best new team, indicated the teacher. Although the Puerto Rican group expects to be among the first, Sepúlveda said that competing already is a great satisfaction. “Knowing that we already have the car here is a great feeling. This is a thing exceeds our expectations”, she affirmed.

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