

A fantastic drive today sees Brendo and Glen holding third outright after Leg 1 of the Rally of Whangarei in New Zealand's north island.

Starting as car 9 on the road, Brendo was soon right on the pace, with second fastest time on the first stage of the day. The young Aussie adapted well to his loaned Subaru WRX STI, despite never having driven it in competition before.

The rally started off in dry conditions but showers rolled in as the morning progressed and created new challenges for the drivers. The event consisted of four stages in the morning before a service break, and then a repeat of the stages again in the afternoon.

The morning's stages held a slight advantage for cars starting a little further down the order as the first couple of cars on the road were forced to act as 'road sweepers' - sweeping the loose stones from the surface. The afternoon, though, was back to an even playing field and Brendo proved his talent, keeping in touch with current Asia Pacific Series leader, and three-time champion, Cody Crocker - even beating him on one stage.

A slight handling problem later in the day caused Brendo to drive a little more cautiously but he maintained his third outright placing which he held from the second stage of the day. He is confident the team have now rectified the problem and will start tomorrow brimming with confidence.

"It was close at the end but it was a good day all-in-all and we are looking forward to tomorrow," Brendo said. "We'll try some open tyres in the morning and in the afternoon hopefully go to a bit tighter tread and try to still keep up with Cody in the stage times. Today we used him as a benchmark - we knew this morning we might be quicker than him, but this afternoon he was faster but we held our lead."

Former New Zealand Rally Champion, Richard Mason, holds the overnight lead, with Kiwi young-gun, Hayden Paddon, in second place. Crocker sits fourth behind Brendo, whilst Rhianon Smyth, Brendo's sister and regular co-driver, is in sixth place. Rhianon is co-driving for

Emma Gilmour in all the 2009 Asia Pacific Rally Championship rounds.