



With just hours until the first event of the 2011 WRC Academy kicks off, Brendan is looking forward to what promises to be a tough event.

After two days of recce and a short Shakedown run, Brendan has had a good opportunity to get a feel for the Portugese roads and see what's in store for he and Rhianon this weekend.

"The roads are really quite tough," he said. "Watching the rally on TV, you don't appreciate just how steep some of the hills are and how rocky the roads are."

With his first chance to drive his Fiesta R2 on Wednesday, Brendan did three runs over the 7 kilometre stage and said the car feels "nice and tight". Drivers are only allowed to change the suspension set-up of the Fiestas, and Brendan did this during his test session.

Whilst rally officials have not yet announced the positioning of the Academy cars in the rally field, it is thought they will run at the back of the field. At an Academy briefing on Tuesday night, Ken Block was asked to draw the Academy competitors' numbers from a hat to determine their starting order. Brendan's car number, 106, was drawn out 15th. This means Brendan will be the 15th Academy competitor on the road for Friday's six stages (the field is expected to run in reverse for Thursday night's Super Special), but the Academy field will be re-seeded on Friday night to determine their road position for Saturday.

Rally Portugal will start early on Thursday morning (Portugese time) for Brendan, Rhianon and their fellow Academy competitors when they head to Lisbon to do a reconaissance of the Super Special Stage - in golf buggies!! The rally will officially start with the Super Special Stage at

3.30pm Thursday (2.30am AEST on Friday).

For Brendan and the Academy drivers, Rally Portugal will consist of Thursday's Super Special, three stages each run twice on Friday, and another three stages each run twice on Saturday. All of Friday's and Saturday's stages are over 20 kilometres in length and with conditions expected to be very dusty, all Rally Portugal competitors will run at two minute intervals.

Follow Brendan's website during the rally for regular updates and results