

 Brendan and Rhianon have arrived in Europe to prepare for their next event, Rally Finland, part of the World Rally Championship (WRC). The Aussie pair are competing in the WRC Academy this year, a six-round series of European events to find the world's best driver under 24 years of age. Brendan and Rhianon currently sit third in the Championship after two events, and despite never having driven on the Finnish roads before, they go into the event as one of the favourites.

Phil Short, co-ordinator of the FIA WRC Academy and an experienced former co-driver, told wrc.com he thinks Brendan has what it takes to impress on the flat-out gravel roads of Finland. "For many crews, Finland will be a new experience," said Short. "It's one of the world's greatest rallies with its high speeds and jumps and if I were to pick a few 'dark horses', I'd say Brendan Reeves, who's quietly got on with doing a very impressive job, would be one of them."

Whilst humbled by the praise from the Academy chief, Brendan is under no illusions as to the stiff competition he will face in one of the world's fastest and most challenging events. "The competition in Finland is going to be the toughest so far as the cars are well sorted and a lot of the drivers have experienced the Scandinavian roads before," Brendan said. "I can't wait for the challenge to begin!"

Brendan and the 15 other entrants in the WRC Academy are all competing in Ford Fiesta R2s built and maintained by M-Sport, the same team that run the BP Ford Abu Dhabi World Rally Team in the WRC. With a control tyre and limited modifications allowed to the Fiestas, competition is fierce and largely comes down to driver skill and managing mechanical problems that may strike the car.

As Short says, Brendan has quietly got on with the job so far this season. He finished fourth in the Series on the season-opener, Rally Portugal, after a puncture on Day 1 cost him over four minutes and dropped him back to last place. His climb back up the leader board showed true Aussie grit. A split oil cooler on Rally Sardinia's opening day forced an early retirement, but under SuperRally rules, Brendan re-started on Day 2 and finished fifth overall, setting some fastest stage times in the process. His combined efforts have put he and Smyth in a good position, third outright in the series, just two points behind second place.

Rally Finland gets underway in the central Finnish city of Jyvaskyla on Thursday, July 28. Crews will contest three stages on Thursday night, another 11 on Friday and further five stages on Saturday before the winner is decided. We'll have news updates and photos at the end of each day's competition, so please check back regularly.