

Brendan and Rhianon will tackle the tarmac roads of the Alsace region of France this weekend when they contest Rallye France, round 11 of the World Rally Championship (WRC) and round 5 of the WRC Academy.

Based in Strasbourg for the second year running, Rallye France is a popular event amongst competitors and the Aussie duo are looking forward to the rally and aiming to add more valuable Championship points to their tally. After the first four rounds of the WRC Academy, Brendan is third in the overall standings.

Arriving in France from Australia on Sunday, Brendan and Rhianon have a busy week ahead of them. Their first task was to collect their recce car in Brussels and drive it to France where they have set up base for the rally. Monday involved documentation and becoming familiar with area, whilst Tuesday and Wednesday will be spent doing reconnaissance for the event and writing their pacenotes. After Shakedown on Thursday afternoon (their first opportunity to drive their Academy-mount, a Ford Fiesta R2) since the previous event in August, the rally gets underway on Thursday evening with a Ceremonial Start.

Academy crews will contest Day 1 and 2 of Rallye France, totalling around 300 kilometres of competitive driving and Brendan is expecting the roads to be more open and flowing than those of the previous round, Rally Germany. He hopes to take all that he learnt in Germany and use it to his advantage this weekend.

"We learnt so much from Rally Germany and I'm really looking forward to putting that into practice this weekend," Brendan said. "This time round I'll know how much grip to expect from the tyres and to drive neater and smoother into the corners."

"My aim is to put in a really consistent drive this weekend. We will definitely be driving for Championship points rather than outright victory as those points could be very valuable come Rally GB," he added.

Fine weather is forecast for the rally, and with wider, more open roads being used, Brendan expects the event to be more like the tarmac 'Targa' events he is used to in Australia.

Whilst smooth, consistent driving will be a top priority for Brendan and Rhianon this weekend, they'll also be hoping the Fiesta suffers no mechanical issues. Saturday's stages will have more of an endurance feel to them as crews are only allowed a remote service at the lunch break. This means that crews can only change tyres and make repairs using tools carried in the car - no spare parts are allowed to be carried by the Academy crews - so getting the car home

in one piece will also be high on the agenda.

Rallye France starts on Thursday evening, with the podium presentation for the WRC Academy competitors on Saturday night.

After a compulsory Academy post-rally debrief on Sunday morning, Brendan and Rhianon will return to Australia before their next European trip in November for the final round of the series in Great Britain.

We'll have regular updates during Rallye France. You can also check live stage times during the event on www.wrc.com