

Australian rally team, Brendan Reeves and Rhianon Smyth, will start their 2012 World Rally Championship (WRC) campaign this weekend with the running of the opening round of the WRC Academy, Rally Portugal. Brendan and Rhianon are contesting the six-round one-make series for drivers under the age of 25, and have been in Europe for a couple of weeks, acclimatising and getting in some practise.

After a successful day of testing in Spain last week, the brother and sister pair are now in Portugal doing their reconnaissance for the event. Having competed in Rally Portugal last year, where they finished fourth, Brendan is quietly confident of a good showing this weekend, but is not being complacent.

"We have done everything possible to prepare ourselves for the opening round," Brendan said. "We arrived in Europe early and have put ourselves through a fairly rigorous training regime to be at our peak fitness during the rally. We're expecting it to be fairly warm, so we need to be at our best physically for the rally.

"On top of that, we also managed to get in some testing. I haven't driven a Fiesta since the last round of the 2011 Academy in November, so it was good to get back into the car and re-acquaint myself with it," he added.

"Once again, the competition in the Academy will be strong so we're expecting a tough battle. If we can set some good stage times and make improvements on last year, we'll be really happy."

Brendan and Rhianon's R2 is sure to be one of the most recognised cars in the WRC Academy field this year. With a bright Aussie-theme, the car's livery will really stand out.

Rally Portugal gets underway on Thursday evening (Portugal time) in Faro with a ceremonial start, followed by three night stages. Academy competitors will then contest six stages on Friday, and a further 3 on Saturday, totalling 245 competitive kilometres, before the winner of the opening round is decided.

We'll have regular updates on Brendan and Rhianon's progress throughout the weekend.