

Australian brother and sister rally duo, Brendan Reeves and Rhianon Smyth, will resume their campaign to be crowned the world's best junior rally team when they tackle Rally Finland later this week.

The pair are competing in the World Rally Championship (WRC) Academy for the second year, and after two rounds in 2012, and with two podium finishes, are sitting in third outright in the championship.

The WRC Academy consists of six events in Europe run on both gravel and tarmac surfaces, with all competitors driving Ford Fiesta R2s prepared by M-Sport, the team that prepare the cars for the Ford World Rally Team.

The third round, Rally Finland, a super-fast gravel event with lots of high speed crests, is often referred to as the Finnish Grand Prix. Having competed at Finland last year, Brendan is excited at the prospect of driving the iconic Finnish roads again and is taking the lessons learnt from last year, and a beneficial test session, into the event, where he aims to again finish on the podium.

"Learning how to set the car up for the big crests and picking the right driving line was something I worked on a lot with our pacenotes last year," Brendan said.

"Having some of the pacenotes already from last year is a huge help and gives us a boost of confidence, as we have already driven those stages competitively."

Brendan and Rhianon's Academy commitments started on Monday, the first of two and a half days of reconnaissance where they drive the rally route in a road car and write the pacenotes

that will guide them around the course when they are driving at competition speed. They will then have a short test in their WRC Academy car, a Ford Fiesta R2.

The Aussie pair have already taken the opportunity for further testing, though. Through a fund-raising campaign which was run through the Brendan Reeves Supporters Club, enough funds were secured to lease a car similar to their competition vehicle and organise a test session with the head instructor from Tommi Makinen's rally driving school in Finland.

"The test on Sunday was really beneficial," Brendan commented. "We used a 2km piece of road in both directions. We found a lot of improvement in the driving for the fast stages and were very happy with what we learnt on the day.

"Trying to keep the car as straight as possible and benefit from as much grip as you can get adds to extra speed out of the corners, so this is just one thing that will help us in the event.

"We've also prepared a bit differently for the rally this year. The test we did on Sunday was a big help as last year we only did a short test the day prior to the event in our Academy car.

"We have also planned our days prior to the rally much better. Last year, the days before the event were so full-on with reconnaissance, Academy and media commitments that we didn't have a spare minute, so this year we arrived in Finland earlier so that our schedule wasn't quite so hectic."

Rally Finland starts in Jyväskylä, about three hours north of Helsinki, on Thursday afternoon. The event is comprised of 300 kilometres of competitive driving over 18 stages. Academy competitors will complete all but the final (Power) stage of the rally, before the winner is crowned on Saturday evening. Brendan and Rhianon, the only all-Australian crew in the World Rally Championship, are aiming to take the 'gold'.