

Brendan and Rhianon have continued their solid performance in the World Rally Championship (WRC) Academy at the weekend. Competing in round three of the six round series, Rally Finland, the duo staved off a final day challenge to finish third - their third podium finish from three events. The strong result moves them to second outright in the Championship at the half way point.

The Aussie duo returned to Finland after contesting the event in their inaugural WRC Academy season last year and their experience from that event, and a beneficial pre-rally test session, gave them plenty of confidence going into the iconic rally, often referred to as 'the Grand Prix of gravel'. Despite a conservative start, Brendan finished Day 1's three stages in third place.

Day 2 of Rally Finland consisted of eight stages, four stages each run twice. Brendan suffered a few handling issues in his Ford Fiesta R2 during the first loop of stages, dropping him back to fourth, so some set up changes were the order of the day at the lunch time service. Keen to improve his stage times from the morning's run, he set out on a mission and was rewarded with two stage wins to finish the day, taking him back into third place overall.

The final day of Rally Finland is regarded as one of the most demanding in world rallying. The high speed roads and crests of the Ouninpohja stage are infamous and Reeves had a real battle on his hands. Over the last three stages of the rally, the battle for the final podium place changed three times with three drivers separated by just 1.8 seconds. With one stage to run, Brendan held a narrow 3.4 second lead over Dutchman Timo Van Der Marel, but the young Australian managed to hold his nerve and grab the podium. Van Der Marel went off the road in the last stage, halting his quest for third place.

After finishing second at Rally Portugal and third at Greece's Acropolis Rally, third at Finland moves Brendan up to second in the overall Championship standings. With two additional points for each of his stage wins in Finland, he now sits just 18 points behind series leader, and Rally Finland winner, Elfyn Evans from Wales.

◆We are very happy to be on the podium at the finish. It has been a great battle right from the start, so it was a real shame that Timo [Van der Marel] went out like that, but we managed to keep Jose [Suarez] at bay and kept pushing on.

◆Our outright time was really good in the last stage [SS17], which was a great way to finish. We have consistently improved over the course of the event and have gained some great experience. We will go away very happy and confident ahead of the change to Tarmac in Germany.

Brendan and Rhianon will remain in Europe to start their preparations for the next round of the WRC Academy, Rally Germany. Both Rally Germany and the following round, Rally France, are tarmac events, and Brendan is hoping his experience in Australia's famous tarmac rally, Targa Tasmania, will hold him in good stead for these events. The final round of the Championship will be a mixed surface rally in Spain in November.

Rally Finland WRC Academy results

1. Elfyn Evans, GBR,
2. Pontus Tidemand, SWE
3. Brendan Reeves, AUS

WRC Academy standings after Round 3 Rally Finland

1. Elfyn Evans, GBR, 70 points
2. Brendan Reeves, AUS, 52 points
3. Alistair Fisher, GBR, 49 points

The WRC Academy is a one-make series contested over six European WRC events. All drivers drive identical Ford Fiesta R2s prepared by M-Sport, the team that build and maintain the Ford World Rally Team cars. Drivers must be under 24 years of age to compete in the Series.

[Browse photos of Brendan and Rhianon in action at Rally Finland.](photosvideos/photo-gallery/2012-rally-finland)