

This weekend sees the running of the final round of the 2012 World Rally Championship (WRC), Rally Spain, as well as the final instalment of the WRC Academy, a one-make series for drivers under the age of 24. Australian brother-sister team, Brendan Reeves and Rhianon Smyth, head into the event with the chance to make history in a number of areas.

Whilst the 2012 WRC Academy drivers' title has already been won by Welshman Elfyn Evans, Brendan goes into the rally in second place, two points ahead of Spaniard Jose Suarez. As long as he finishes ahead of Suarez, second outright in the championship will belong to Brendan, giving him the honour of being the highest placed Australian driver ever in a WRC championship.

Rhianon, meanwhile, currently leads the co-drivers' championship, with Evans changing co-drivers throughout the series. A victory for Rhianon would make her the first woman in history, and the first Australian (either male or female) to secure an official WRC championship (other than the WRC Ladies' Cup which ran from 1990-1995).

Should results go their way, Brendan and Rhianon would also be the highest placed brother and sister team in any WRC series in history.

The Australians achievements are even more impressive given the efforts required to get to each event. Their main rivals all live in Europe or the UK and regularly compete in local rallies in cars similar to, or the same as, their WRC Academy cars, whereas the Australians return home after each event to eke out a living so that they can return again for the next round.

Before they can create history, though, the pair will have their work cut out in the only dual surface event of the season. Of the five previous rounds, three have been run on gravel and two on tarmac but Rally Spain throws up a different challenge - a bit of both! Day one consists of a total of 150 kilometres on gravel roads followed by 161 kilometres on tarmac on day two. The service crew will be busy on the overnight change-over with only 75 minutes allotted to

completely change the car from a gravel beast to a tarmac slayer.

Brendan and Rhianon have only limited experience in Spain but they have arrived at the event early in order to put in the best preparation possible. A test session in Spain earlier in the year has given them a taste of what to expect from the roads this weekend but Brendan is under no illusion that it will be an easy rally.

"We have a little bit of experience from rallying in Spain – we were here for the Pirelli Star Driver programme in 2010 and we did a pre-Portugal test in the north of Spain earlier this year. But when it comes to the stages, this event will be completely new to us," he said.

"The dual surface will certainly be a challenge. We'll do the Academy test on gravel which will prepare us for the first day, and we are coming off the back of two tarmac rounds so hopefully the feeling will still be pretty fresh for the second day.

"The first day will have the odd section of tarmac, but for us it will be less about set-up and more about preserving the tyres. You can get a lot of oversteer driving gravel tyres on tarmac sections and this can really damage the tyres – and the stages seem to be quite twisty – so you have to be careful not to completely destroy the rubber.

"I am really looking forward to the battle for second place. Jose [Suárez] will be hard to beat on his home event, but we want to win and second in the championship is our goal."

Rally Spain kicks off with a Ceremonial Start in Barcelona on Thursday afternoon before crews head to Salou, a seaside resort just over an hour south west of Barcelona, around which the rally will be based. After 310 kilometres of driving, Brendan and Rhianon are planning to be high on the podium at the conclusion on Saturday night, and putting themselves in the history books. As Brendan said, "It might not be the running of the bulls but there will certainly be plenty of red

mist and adrenalin flowing to take the battle down to the wire!"