

An inspired drive over the final four stages of the Quit Forest Rally in Western Australia has seen the Mazda2 of Brendan Reeves and Rhianon Smyth finish in fourth place in Heat 1.

A problem with the car's coil pack over the opening six stages of the event saw Reeves back in sixth place, but fastest times on the final two forest stages, and fourth place on the two spectator stages around the Nannup Oval, saw him charge back to fourth place.

It was a promising finish to the day, and should give the Victorians an added incentive over the second Heat's nine stages.

The first forest stage today felt okay, but we decided we needed to push harder after that, Reeves said. But three quarters of the way through the Ferndale stage the car started to play up, particularly on uphill sections. It felt like we had a blocked muffler, but it turned out to be a faulty coil.

Initially we thought it might have been a crook earth, but the problem remained on the following two stages, and we finally diagnosed the problem and fixed it at the service before the final four stages.

From then on, Reeves' speed was scintillating. He reduced his stage time by 20 seconds on the second run of the Kinky stage, then by an incredible one minute and 16 seconds on the repeat of the 24.30 kilometre Ferndale stage.

It was quite tricky, because in the morning we had been driving the car as smoothly as possible as we were about three seconds per kilometre off the leaders, but then with the car on song we had to push at maximum attack, Reeves explained.

We hit a big rock on a blind corner on Ferndale, which bent a ball joint, but other than that we had a great finish to the day.

The first day Heat 1 was taken out by current Australian Champion, Eli Evans, who drove his Honda Jazz G2 to a 44.7 second victory over the Renault Clio R3s of Tom Wilde and Scott Pedder.

Reeves and Smyth were a further 46 seconds back in fourth place. Heat 2 starts with another tarmac stage on the Busselton foreshore on Saturday night, while Sunday sees a further eight gravel stages, with a distance of 114.99 kilometres.

We'll be trying to win tomorrow and take the most points possible, but we also need to ensure we drive safely and get the car to the finish.

We were able to work on the set-up of the Mazda2 during today's stages, and with some small improvements, hopefully the car will be even better in Heat 2, Reeves said.

Quit Forest Rally ♦ Heat 1 results
1. Eli Evans / Glen Weston, Honda Jazz G2, 1h10m47.2s
2. Tom Wilde / Bill Hayes, Renault Clio R3, +44.7s
3. Scott Pedder / Dale Moscatt, Renault Clio R3, +50.7s
4. Brendan Reeves / Rhianon Smyth, Mazda2, +1m36.2s
5. Jack Monkhouse / John Allen, Nissan Silvia, +1m44.6s