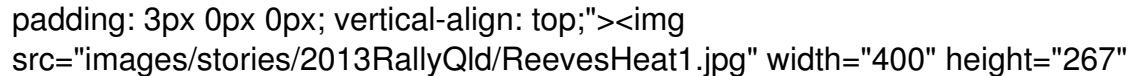


Victorians Brendan Reeves and Rhianon Smyth have recovered from a difficult day in the International Rally of Queensland to be lying in sixth place after the first 10 stages.

Driving their

[Rallyschool.com.au](http://rallyschool.com.au/) Mazda2, the pair started the fourth round of the ECB Australian Rally Championship (ARC) in brilliant fashion, finishing second in the Power Stage around the Nambour Showgrounds on Friday night, and picking up three bonus championship points.

With suspension modifications made to the Mazda2, Reeves was hopeful of continuing that form into the first day's special stages, and third fastest time on the opening test showed the car's potential.

However, a broken driveshaft on the second stage meant that the former Junior World Rally Championship driver had to manhandle the car over the next three stages, and saw him drop to ninth place.

"Things had started so positively this weekend, but when the driveshaft broke we just had to try and limit the time loss as much as possible and get to the first service break," Reeves explained.

"We struggled when the roads were uphill, or tight and twisty, but by getting the car back to service we still retained a positive outlook."

With the car repaired in the 20-minute service break, Reeves was back to full speed straight away.

On the 6.85km 'Pomona Dash' stage he was fourth quickest, then set the fastest time on the repeat of the stage, improving his time by nearly a second per kilometre.

From then on, he was never out of the top three stage times, and worked his way brilliantly up the field to be sixth by day's end.

"To be honest, we didn't push as hard as we could over the afternoon stages, because it's vitally important to get to the finish of the event and claim as many championship points as possible," Reeves added.

While the weather was fine today, a couple of tomorrow's stages are likely to be extremely rough, and we need to keep chipping away and making the most of any problems our rivals may have."

The event is classified as an "endurance" round of the ARC, with bonus points on offer for the event. Twenty points are awarded to the winner of each day, but a bonus 40 points is given to the driver whose combined time for both days is the fastest. (PLEASE CONFIRM)

"We're sixth at the moment, but with a clean run tomorrow there's no reason why we can't push for a podium place in Heat 2, and be in the running for a top three finish overall, so there's still plenty to play for."

"Apart from one small problem, the Mazda2 has been great today, and the improvements we've made to the suspension have really improved the handling of the car."

"The factory Renaults are reporting a 10 per cent power increase for this event, and we're right on their pace, so I'm really looking forward to tomorrow."

The opening heat was taken out by championship leader, Eli Evans, in a Honda Jazz, ahead of the factory Renaults of Scott Pedder and Tom Wilde.

Among those to suffer misfortune were Jack Monkhouse (Nissan) with a blown engine, and the VW Polos of Justin Dowel (gearbox) and Michael Boaden (mechanical).

Heat 2 of the Rally of Queensland continues with a further nine stages, before the podium finish in Imbil, north west of Caloundra, on Sunday afternoon.

Heat 1 results

International Rally of Queensland

1. Evans / Weston, Honda Jazz, 1h02m30.5s
2. Pedder / Moscott, Renault Clio R3, +24.3s
3. Wilde / Hayes, Renault Clio R3, +1m24.9s
4. Pedder / Ryan, Honda Jazz, +3m03.4s
5. Box / Payne, Nissan 370Z, +5m11.2s
6. Reeves / Smyth, Mazda2, +5m57.2s