

Australians Brendan Reeves and Rhianon Smyth are back in action in the United States of America this week, competing in the fifth round of the Rally America series, the New England Forest Rally, in Maine.



After the International Rally of Queensland a fortnight ago, the Victorian pairing will be aiming for their third straight victory in Rally America's competitive two-wheel drive category.

Having never competed in the USA before this year, Reeves and Smyth drove a Team O'Neil Ford Fiesta R2 to a class win in the Oregon Trail Rally and the Susquehannock Trail Rally in Pennsylvania earlier this year.

They were victories that set the US rally scene alight, and with further support from Team O'Neil and Ford, the Australians are back to try and take a hat-trick of victories.

"I'm really looking forward to getting behind the wheel of the Team O'Neil Ford Fiesta R2 again," Reeves said. "Once again this is a brand new event for us, but the car we're driving is really well sorted, and I'm confident of being able to reduce the gap to the leader in the two-wheel drive category."

The category is led by Hollywood's Andrew Comrie-Picard, but Reeves has clearly shown that he has the speed to take the title, with two events still remaining after the New England Forest Rally.

"I'm expecting it to be hot and humid for the event, which takes place on Friday and Saturday," Reeves added. "It's pretty cold at home at the moment, so I did some heat training before I left Australia, hitting the gym in long pants and a jumper and with a beanie on – hopefully it acclimatises me for the hotter temperatures I'll face this weekend."

Along with competition from Comrie-Picard and second-placed Dillon Van Way, Reeves will face a challenge from fellow Australian, Will Orders, who won the two-wheel drive category on this event last year. "Of course it would be great to beat Will on this event because we've had

some great battles in Australia in the past, but in reality he's not a title contender, so we just need to make sure we stay ahead of all the Rally America series regulars.

"The Fiesta is a reliable and well-sorted package, and with my experience driving a similar car in the World Rally Championship in 2011 and 2012, I'm confident that we can get the job done.

"This event only allows for one pass of reconnaissance before the rally (on Thursday), but Rhianon and I have got a great system of making pacenotes now, and that shouldn't cause a problem."

The Team O'Neil Ford Fiesta R2 will have a new gearbox fitted for the event, and the team have also made some changes to the braking efficiency of the car. With some parts support from Ford America, everything is in place.

"Once again we've had tremendous support from our fan base, with 30 fans paying to have their names on the bonnet of the Fiesta. They are doing a tremendous job of ensuring that we can continue to compete at a high level, and Rhianon and I are extremely grateful for their support," Reeves said.

Based a Newry, in Maine, north of Boston, the New England Forest Rally will be run on gravel over 13 special stages, with a competitive distance of 120 miles.

Results during the rally will be available from www.newenglandforestrally.com/results