

Brendan's co-driver (and sister), Rhianon Gelsomino, is recovering in the United States after a nasty incident during a rally last weekend. Rhianon, who now lives in America with her husband, was co-driving for Nick Roberts in the Oregon Trail Rally when their rally car caught fire and burst into flames during a stage.

Rhianon suffered second degree burns to her face and hands but despite the pain she is remaining positive and is keen to get back in the co-driver's seat again soon.

How did the fire start?

The fire started after we sustained a mechanical failure which punctured the fuel tank.

What injuries did you and Nick sustain?

I suffered burns to my face and both my hands. Nick did not sustain any injuries

What is the recovery process you are undertaking and how long until you expect to be fully healed?

Since I sustained the burns I have been into hospital each day for treatment. Tomorrow I will go to a burns specialist who will assess my burns and tell me the next steps in the recovery process. So far it's been about redressing the burns each day and preventing infection. The burns are healing very well and the pain is mainly only in the right hand now.

At this stage, what is your next event?

I am working to compete in the next round of Rally America - STPR with Nick, however this depends on my recovery and Nick's team building a new car all within three weeks.

Rally cars today are built with a huge amount of safety equipment and crew members must wear fire-retardant clothing. Do you think this limited your injuries and what can you and other rally competitors learn from this incident?

In the Rally America Championship you are only required to wear the fire proof race suit, HANS device and a helmet. They have no rulings on balaclavas, footwear or fireproof underwear. However, regardless of the rules I always wear the full safety equipment that's possible. In the fire I was wearing all my fire proof apparel. I was also wearing a full face Stilo helmet which saved me from many more burns on my face. I am very thankful for that.

Do you think there should be any changes made to the current regulations to improve the crew members' safety even more?

In Rally America I believe they should make fireproof apparel compulsory to wear, but in the ARC I think the rules in place currently are perfect and do the job needed.

Any final thoughts?

I am now going to try out wearing co-drivers gloves and suggest anyone to consider a full face helmet.

Thanks Rhianon - best wishes from all your supporters for a very speedy recovery!