

Heat 1 of Rally Victoria, the sixth and final round of the ECB Australian Rally Championship, started out to be the perfect day but ended in disappointment for Brendan Reeves and Rhianon Gelsomino.

Starting the event with a 27 point deficit to championship leaders Scott Pedder and Dale Moscott (Renault Clio), Reeves and Gelsomino won the Power Stage, a shootout of the five fastest qualifiers of the event, earning them five valuable championship points.

With Pedder's lead now reduced to just 22 points and with 50 points on offer for a Heat win, Reeves was confident of a good result. After the first two of the day's four forest stages, he held a 2.4 second lead over his rival.

After the mid-way service break, Reeves returned to the stages full of enthusiasm but a rear sway bar on his Mazda 2 broke, causing it to rub on the tyre, and he was forced to push on for the rest of the day, albeit at a slower pace.

Reeves's misfortune handed the Heat win to Pedder who takes a 30 point lead into the final day of competition.

Forecast wet conditions failed to eventuate today and instead crews battled with dust. If the weather remains the same tomorrow, dust could prove a factor on the longer day of competition.

Heat 2 of Rally Victoria, which is based at Warragul, east of Melbourne, consists of eight forest stages totaling 134 kilometres, followed by a 2.28 kilometre Super Special stage around Warragul's Lardner Park to complete the rally.

Another 50 points are on offer for tomorrow's Heat winner and Reeves is still mathematically a chance to lift the Australian Rally Championship crown at event's end.

Results, Heat 1, Rally Victoria

1. Pedder/Moscatt, Renault Clio, 42:58.2
2. Reeves/Gelsomino, Mazda 2, +14.5
3. Sullens/Barkley, Citroen DS3 R3T, +1:24.9
4. Coppin/Batten, Citroen DS3 R3T, + 1:30.4
5. Roe/Glenney, Ford Focus, +2:24.6