

Top Australian rally driver Brendan Reeves will join an expanded Force Motorsport line up for the final round of the Brian Green Property Group New Zealand Rally Championship, the Mahindra Goldrush Rally Coromandel, on August 20.

Reeves will line up in the team's older Mazda 2 campaigned across the past three seasons by Andrew Hawkeswood, while Hawkeswood will continue to drive the new generation AP4 based Mazda 2 that he has campaigned in the 2016 NZRC, where he is currently in a strong position to take second in the championship.

Reeves is no stranger to New Zealand roads, having contested the International Rally of Whangarei APRC round four times plus Rally New Zealand in 2008. The 27-year old also has vast international experience that includes contesting the WRC Academy/Junior World Rally Championship twice and winning the Rally America two-wheel drive title.



After having the opportunity to test the team's latest creation a few weeks back, the chance to join the Force Motorsport team for the NZRC series finale was too good an offer for Reeves and co-driving sister Rhianon Gelsomino to pass up.

“I wanted to come over and try out Andrew’s (newer) AP4 Mazda so I did that a couple of weeks ago with the guys and tried to do a bit of set up work with him and the car before the last round (Rally Gisborne).

“When I checked in after the event, Andrew said he had his old car here that had done some rally cross stuff at the start of the year but not much else, so he asked if I wanted to have a drive of it. Of course I said yes!

“I’ve done five events in New Zealand before but never this one,” Reeves said.

With no previous experience of the event that is based from the holiday destination of Whitianga, Reeves has modest expectations but is looking forward to the format of the event.

“From what I’ve heard there is a fair bit of incline through the mountain. I think it will be a bit of a sprint rally being 120 odd kilometres, which is what I like. I don’t like doing Dakar style events!

“Basically the plan is to enjoy the drive. I’ve tried to enjoy what I’ve been doing the last couple of years and not take things so seriously and that’s been working out for me. I’d like to get in the top five, that would be good. The championship has been really strong this year.”

At this stage, the appearance is likely to be a one-off, but Reeves claims he would love to put together a full campaign in one of the team's latest generation AP4 cars in the future.

"I'd love to, but opportunities would have to happen basically. I'd love to get in an AP4 car in the future. Having driven Andrew's car, I really enjoyed it, it's a proper race car. The car is the complete package – the way it transfers weight when you're on the brakes and throttle, the car is really light, it's got really good balance and good performance from the turbo motor. It's a proper race car, just like an R5 or a WRC car which is what you want in a car."

Mahindra Goldrush Rally Coromandel takes place on August 20, with crews tackling 121 kilometres of special stages all across the Coromandel Peninsula.

Photo: Geoff Ridder

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