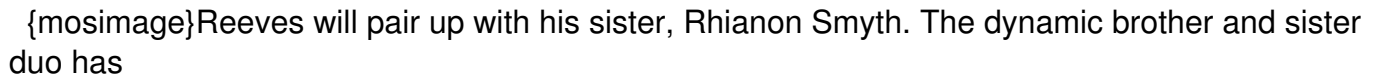


Mazda is pairing experience and youth in the two Mazda MPS performance hatchbacks set to contest the 2009 Targa Tasmania Showroom Competition.

Rally up-and-comer Brendan Reeves will be piloting the second specially-prepared Mazda3 MPS. He's the youngest driver to score a factory drive in Targa Tasmania, and is keen to show that youthful aggression can be just as effective as years of experience.

 Reeves will pair up with his sister, Rhianon Smyth. The dynamic brother and sister duo has competed in more than 25 rallies together, including rounds of the World Rally Championship. They won the Showroom class in the Tasmania Tarmac Challenge in October 2008 in the same Mazda3 MPS they'll drive in Targa.

"I am really excited to be driving my first Targa with Mazda," says Reeves, who turned 20 in August. "It's a real privilege to drive for Mazda Motorsport."

"The Mazda3 MPS has a proven rally pedigree at endurance events like Targa, and I've already had some competitive time in the car, so I am confident I can get a great result for Mazda."

Reeves and Smyth will drive alongside experienced team mates in the form of Rick Bates, an eight-time Targa competitor, and Anthony McLoughlin.

Mazda Motorsport manager Allan Horsley believes the Mazda3 MPS hatchbacks driven by Bates and Reeves will dust up some of the more highly fancied competitors.

"Rick and Anthony will be very quick in the proven Mazda3 MPS and I have equally high expectations of Brendan and Rhianon.

"Last year the Mazda3 MPS came home ahead of Lamborghinis, Porsches, Evos and other exotica, and I'm confident the boys can do it again this year."

The 2009 Targa Tasmania runs from April 28 to May 3 and comprises around 1890km, including 465km across 40 competitive closed-road stages.

The Mazda RX-8 will be competing in the Modern Competition. The Mazda3 MPS will be competing for honours in the Showroom 2WD Competition. All Modern and Showroom competitors are competing for outright honours.

Mazda3 MPS

Showroom Competition

Engine: Direct injection 2.3-litre turbocharged 4-cylinder

Transmission: 6-speed manual, FWD

Power: 190 kW

Torque: 380 Nm

Fuel tank: 55 litres

Kerb weight: 1403 kg

Wheels: 18-inch alloys

Official Mazda Motorsport Press Release