

Brendan and Rhianon have had a fantastic start to the 2012 World Rally Championship (WRC) Academy season at Rally Portugal, taking second place. The first round of the six-event series was run in very difficult conditions with heavy overnight rain on Thursday night making Friday's stages treacherous.

The event started perfectly for the Australians - they won the opening stage of the event, the Super Special Stage in Lisbon on Thursday evening - and then set consistent times on the following three gravel stages run at night, to hold down second place at the overnight halt.

The overnight rain on Thursday caused chaos on Friday's morning stages with many crews retiring from the event as a result of sliding off the slippery roads or mechanical issues caused by their cars ingesting water. Brendan, however, kept a cool head and maintained his second position. Friday's three afternoon stages were cancelled by rally organisers due to the deteriorating weather conditions.

With WRC Academy competitors required to complete just the three morning stages on Saturday, Brendan started the final day 59.4 seconds adrift of the overnight leader. Two brilliant stage times on the two opening stages of the day, including a stage win on SS12, saw him reduce the gap to just 39.8 seconds.

With his eyes firmly focussed on a podium place, Brendan again set another impressive stage time to consolidate his second place. The two stage wins will earn him bonus points.

Brendan was absolutely delighted after the rally, the result being a just reward for all the hard

work he and Rhianon have done to get to the event.

Please check back later for more photos from Rally Portugal.

Listen to Brendan's post-event interview with iRally [here](#) .