

Coleman award caps great year for teenage star Breen

by **Martin Walsh**

TEENAGE rally star, Craig Breen has won the Billy Coleman Award for the Young Rally Driver of the Year.

The announcement, made yesterday by Motorsport Ireland, caps an unbelievable season for Breen, who lives in Kilmurry on the outskirts of Waterford city.

The 19-year-old, who has been rallying for just two years, beat off fellow finalists, Jonathan Cunningham (Claregalway) and Kevin O'Connor (Askeaton, Co. Limerick).

Although he was widely tipped as the likely winner of the

Coleman award, Breen was surprised when the announcement was made.

He said: "This rounds off a great year, that's brilliant news."

Breen has been in outstanding form this season and clinched the Irish and British Fiesta Sporting Trophy Championships on the penultimate round of both campaigns.

He also won the inaugural National Junior Rally Championship and last month clinched the International Fiesta ST series at Rally GB. In addition, Breen took third overall in the Birr Forest Rally where he drove the Fiesta R2 car. The presentation of the

Coleman award, that carries a prize fund of €50,000, will be made at the Champions of Irish Motorsport luncheon in Dublin on Tuesday, December 8.

However, the date poses a dilemma for Breen, who may not be able to attend the function as it is also the second day of the Fiesta Shoot-Out at M-Sport in Cumbria where Breen and other national Fiesta winners battle for a 12-month contract to work with the World Rally Championship outfit that prepare the cars for the BP Ford Abu Dhabi team.

Breen makes no secret of his ambition to compete in the WRC next season - he is likely to contest



Craig Breen: Young Rally Driver of the Year.

the British Rally Championship in a four-wheel drive car - possibly in Ford's new S2000 car. Funding for the Billy Coleman award is provided jointly by Motorsport Ireland - through its affiliated clubs and the Irish Sports Council.