

Dominant Breen powers to Ravens Rock Rally victory

■ Trevor McGrath

Leading from start to finish, Co Waterford's Craig Breen (Ford Fiesta S2000) and his Welsh co-driver, Gareth Roberts, took a convincing victory in the Carrick on Suir Motor clubs, Raven's Rock Rally on Sunday, the fifth round of the Dunlop National Rally Championship.

At the end of the Kilkenny-based event, Breen/Roberts were a minute and 45 seconds ahead of Colm Murphy/Don Montgomery (Subaru). Third place went to Monaghan's, Sam Moffett/James O'Reilly (Mitsubishi) who were 17 seconds further behind. There were joyous scenes at the Chancellor's Mills finish ramp as Breen returned to a hero's welcome. After spraying the champagne Breen stated, "This is a dream come through for me. As a young boy I can remember going to watch the Ravens Rock and later follow my Dad as he took part in the rally and now to win the event on the 40th anniversary is huge." In winning the rally Craig emulates his father Ray who was the winner of the event in 2005 and 2008.

The rally got underway on Saturday evening with the opening ceremony taking place in High Street, at which seeded number one in the Keltech Engineering Ford Fiesta S2000 was the main attraction. Then on Sunday morning when the live action got underway Breen stamped his authority from the outset, with fastest time on the test, where he took 19 seconds out of Subaru driver Colm Murphy and Welsh Mitsubishi ace Sebastian Ling. Breen backed up this fantastic opening by going fastest again on the next two stages of the loop, while his rivals tried in vain to keep pace with the WRC Academy Driver.

As he entered the first service halt in Chancellor's Mills, Breen remarked: "The stages are very fast, stage three in particular, I was probably a little too conservative with my tyre choice, the compound I selected was too soft. I set out to bed myself in as this is my first time out in this car for five months but I'm delighted to be leading



Craig Breen receives the Column Doyle Trophy from Club President George Clancy and Eoin Doyle

the event at this point".

On the repeat loop, Breen continued to dominate and with three more fastest times, he arrived at the final service halt with a lead of a minute and 28 seconds over second-placed Colm Murphy (Subaru). The rally leader, who spun on S.S. 4, admitted that he had slackened his pace and just wanted to bring home the win on the final loop.

Over the final three stages Craig went on to pull out another seventeen seconds and take Victory by 1minute and 45 from Murphy in the Subaru. Craig has two weeks off now before he competes in Rally Estonia on July 15. The event will see him return to his R2 Fiesta as he prepares for the next round of the WRC Academy in Finland but for Craig can enjoy his rally win on the 'Rock'.



Craig in the Ford Fiesta S2000 in action on the Kells Special Stage.