



Hard-fought Fiesta Sports Trophy the icing on cake for Breen

MOTORSPORT Declan Quigley

LAST weekend's WRC Rally GB proved as nail-biting a weekend for Craig Breen as it was for world champion Sebastien Loeb, with the 19-year-old Waterford driver bidding for a fourth different championship title in his first full rally season.

After clinching the UK and Irish Fiesta series on the Ulster

International Rally and then wrapping up the National Junior Championship, Breen scooped the hugely prestigious Fiesta Sport Trophy International (FSTI) title.

Added to this, a win in class N3 on the Irish Tarmac Championship and finishing third two-wheel drive in the Irish Forestry series means it's been a truly amazing season for Breen, who was a European championship karter until late last season.

Breen and his co-driver Craig Roberts dominated the early stages

of Rally GB. On stage 6, however, the R2 Fiesta stopped and the crew believed their title hopes had ebbed away by the time Roberts found a loose wire in the engine control unit.

"I thought it was all over to be honest at one point, the car just wouldn't go," admitted Breen. "We lost eight minutes and dropped from first to last, and we made the decision not to Super-Rally but keep going as the penalties were less."

It was a wise decision as 12 fastest stage times over the weekend provided them extra

bonus points, and Breen moved up into third in the FSTI rankings.

"The final day was agonising, as we knew if we stayed third we would clinch the FSTI crown, and we heard every little rattle. To come back, though, and to have done enough was a superb feeling, and it's been a year that has been way beyond my expectations."

Meanwhile, the judging panel for the €50,000 Dunlop Young Racing Driver of the Year award is ready for the next phase of the process.

Kildare Kevin O'Hara is the

September winner after his race-winning exploits in the Chinese Radical sportscar championship.

O'Hara can now look forward to an interview with the judges in a bid to make the final shortlist to go forward to the skills test.

Dublin teenager Gary Thompson arrived in Japan yesterday ahead of the penultimate event in the Formula BMW Pacific

Championship. Thompson leads the Rookie Cup standings and lies second overall in the Formula BMW championship.