

Breen is absolutely brilliant in WRC Rally Finland debut!

"It was just an amazing weekend, and an amazing rally. Really the test on the Monday before the rally really set us up well, and we got a feel for what the roads were like. There are so many crests, and there are very few crests you just drive over the middle of. There are so many lines over them and really there was a lot of detail put into our pace-notes. Gareth did a brilliant job on the event, as it must have been difficult to get all the pace-notes called out, due to the detail and the speeds we were approaching things at. Every crest really had to be bang on, and on the first run through the stages, we were just able to make detail changes to our speed for the second pass. I have to admit at night it was difficult to sleep,

or 19-year-old Waterford/South Kerry rally star Craig Breen, 2009 WRC debut in a year where he has put himself in the rallying map, and now after the first bank holiday weekend's WRC Finland, on a world scale.

On his first attempt at one of the most specialised, and fastest rallies on the World Rally Championship calendar, Breen and co-driver Gareth Roberts trounced the International Tarmac Championship and brought their own competition and brought their own N Fiesta ST home in a fabulous place overall! It was truly a dream result that puts Craig back in the driver's seat for the Dairwood Design team, and a result that puts Craig back in the driver's seat for the Fiesta International Trophy series.

just thinking whether I'd got this crest marked right or wrong."

The hard work paid off to produce one of the most significant results for Irish rallying at WRC level in recent years, and in the three days of intense competition the car ran faultlessly. "Tom Gahan and the team did a superb job on the car, and it was tough, really tough at times on the car. There were many rocks, some almost the size of the wheels, but the car ran extremely well, with no mechanical problems."

Surprise

For Craig the main Fiesta opposition was expected to come from Finnish ace Jussi Kumpumaki, and it was no surprise when he recorded fastest time on the opening super special stage. But the real surprise was to come as Craig stormed into the lead, opening up an impressive 50 second lead by mid day on Saturday.

"Then he started to come back at us a bit. He took a few seconds off that buffer, and there was a 30 kilometre stage ahead. We sort of knew he was going to attack, so we just had to go as fast as we could over the stage. At the end we took 3 seconds off him, so it was the right decision, and really I think that helped to sow the rally up for us."

The result moves Craig to within 40 points of Fiesta International series leader Patrick Anglade from Germany, with WRC Rally Catalunya on the Spanish tarmac next up. "I'm looking forward to that one too, but we have a wee while to think about it and a few events to concentrate on in between. The next event for us is the Cork Forestry which



Craig Breen and co-driver Gareth Roberts take the acclaim of the crowd and (left) the Dairwood Design 'dream team' put their Fiesta through its paces.

we hope to contest in the R2 Fiesta. "It's important for our Billy Coleman Award aims, and it won't be easy. There are a lot of fast drivers, going well and rallying on a tight budget as well, so it should be a good race. Then we have the Ulster International, and I think that will be an excellent event. It's just a matter of keeping the head down and getting on with all the rallies."

For Craig and co-driver Gareth Roberts it was a landmark weekend in Finland. "It's by far the best win of my career so far, and the feeling we got driving onto the ramp at the finish was incredible." The result of 26th overall was higher than any previous result these little Fiesta's achieved in Finland,

and it would have put him inside the top 6 Junior WRC competitors, with 9 fastest Fiesta times along the way, which accrued the Waterford youngster 9 extra bonus points.

At the present moment Craig leads the British and Irish Fiesta series, in a strong position in the International Tarmac Championship, and is aiming to strike gold in the National Junior Championship. Allied to this fabulous finish in Finland, Craig has to be one of Ireland's greatest World Rally hopefuls. "I just need to keep my feet on the ground at the moment. There is a long way to go in all these series, and anything can happen in rallying"

