

# Successful Irish Fiesta R2 debut for Craig Breen

FOR 19 year old Waterford rally star Craig Breen, the weekends ALMC Stages Junior Rally provided a unique experience. Craig and co-driver Gareth Roberts made the Irish debut of the new 1600cc R2 specification Fiesta. With the car on loan from the factory Ford Motorsport team, and the cars designer to see its progress, Craig finished the Junior Rally in second place, behind Marty McCormack in Citroen's much developed R2 machine.

"It was a superb opportunity for me, and there was a lot to learn. We tested the car on the Friday before the event, and I think we established a good base set up for the Irish roads, and really it was all there to try on the five stage event."

The event however didn't get off to a perfect start with intermittent electrical problems causing the Fiesta to cut out on the opening loop.

"We lost a lot of time, and on stage two Marty actually caught and passed us. We got to service and couldn't find anything obvious, but checked all the connections, and after that the car didn't miss a beat." With the minor teething problems solved in the new rally machine, Craig set to work on the stages, recording a fastest time, on his way to second place, just 54 seconds behind winner McCormack.

"I was really happy to get a fastest time, so early on for the car, and in the afternoon I had a chance

to really experience the car. I was very impressed with it, especially in the high speed corners. It has a longer wheelbase than the ST Fiesta, so that seems to help it, and like the ST the Reiger suspension is very good. Of course the sequential gearbox is superb, and there is more power. It's very enjoyable to drive." The result at the weekend puts Craig back into the lead of the National Junior Rally Championship, with the next round the Cork two day forestry and Craig would love to debut the new car on gravel here. "It would be good to try and get the car for the Cork Forestry, and also in time for the Fiesta International round in Catalunya."

The Kel-tech Craig Breen team get the car ready during a stage break.

