

Baltic battle for Breen in Rally Estonia

BY TREVOR MCGRATH

After an intense two days of rallying on Rally Estonia, Craig Breen claimed 28th overall and 2nd in class. A hold up on stage six and tyre choice were the overriding factors of the pre Finland test but the Irish driver was delighted with his final result at the finish, "We were on the Pirelli tyre that we use in the WRC Academy, which is a harder compound than many of our rivals here this weekend. Alistair Fisher was our only gauge and we managed to overhaul him on the final stage so I'm very happy." It was the perfect preparation that Craig needed as he now looks forward to WRC Rally Finland in two weeks time.

The rally began on Friday evening with three tests, the first on Gravel and then two runs over the 5km super special. Craig made the perfect start by claiming fastest time on the opener but was hampered on the city tarmac stages as he had to use his gravel tyres and lost 5.6 seconds over the double run. He finished the day 4th in class and 44th O/A.

Stage four on Saturday morning saw the resumption of the action and Breen climbed one place to third in class over the first run of Alaküla and on stage five Breen recorded third best class time, which was enough to claim 2nd in class. Stage six was the defining test of the event for Craig however as he stopped in the stage at the scene of an accident and then drove a road pace to the end of the stage losing over a minute. In service Craig revealed "Our Pirelli tyres are too hard a compound for the surface but as they are the control tyre for the academy it makes more sense to stay with them. The gravel stages here in Estonia remind of the European Pirelli Shootout last year in Sweden."

After dropping to fourth in the class on stage six, Breen consolidated that position over stages seven and eight but going into the final test the gap to Alistair Fisher in third was only 5.1 seconds, so it all went down to a final push over the 24kms of Sulaoja. Craig duly obliged by overhauling both Fisher and Sergey Karyakin to take second place in the class and 28th overall.