

Brilliant Breen and great Guerra celebrate clinching world titles

Now there are two dates in 2012 that Craig Breen will never, ever forget. One was his darkest day in June, when he lost his best friend and co-driver Gareth Roberts on the Targa Florio Rally. The other was last Sunday in Salou, when he did Roberts proud and took the two of them to the top of the world.

The SWRC race was simple: whoever was quicker out of Breen and Proton driver P-G Andersson would be champion. And it was Andersson who took control early on, building a lead on Friday morning before a broken driveshaft dropped him a minute behind Breen. The Swede's efforts then went further awry when he went off the road later in the day, trying to make the time up.

"I didn't actually go off the road," he said, "but it's true to say that I wasn't in the middle of the road..."

The steering damage cost him three minutes and the deal was done. For the second half of the event, Breen waited, watched, drove sensibly, slowly and counted down the stages.

"There's no point beating about the bush," he said on Saturday night, "I'm nervous as hell..."

The anxiety was etched deep into

the 22-year-old's face as he departed Salou pre-dawn on Sunday morning. Eight hours and six stages later, he'd done it. World champion for a second time in as many years.

"I can't believe this," said Breen. "Honestly, I just can't believe I have done it. After this year, after everything, this is some light, finally. This is for Jaffa, he's been with me, I've felt him all the time. I've got to say a big thank you to Paul [Nagle, co-driver] as well, he's been incredible.

Andersson was utterly magnanimous in defeat, saying: "Tonight, we celebrate with Craig after the year he's had."

Because of Breen's mid-season change of co-driver Andersson's navigator Emil Axelsson took the SWRC co-driver's title.

There were more celebrations in Salou on Sunday night, as Benito Guerra clinched his – and Mexico's – first ever world rally title. Guerra was crowned PWRC champion after a nail-biting three days in his Mitsubishi Lancer E10.

Six drivers arrived in Spain with a chance of taking the PWRC title, but Guerra and his Ralliart Italia team-mate Michal Kosciuszko were

the favourites. When Kosciuszko put his Lancer off the road on the second Saturday stage, the race was effectively run.

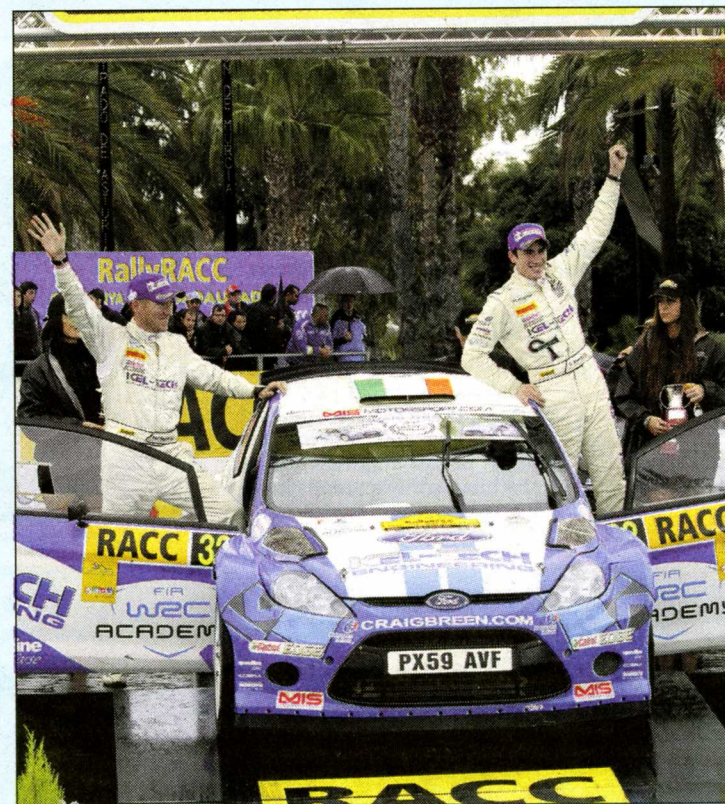
Marcus Ligato led the event initially, only to suffer chronic brake problems with his Subaru on SS9. The South American star recovered to second at the finish.

With six minutes in hand, Guerra emerged unscathed from a nervy Sunday drive to enjoy the biggest moment of his career.

Guerra said: "This is the best day of my life, the first Mexican to take a world rally title and we're number one in PWRC, incredible."

The third and final support series – the WRC Academy – had already been sewn up by Elfyn Evans in France. The Welshman finished third in Spain, a puncture having stymied his attack in Catalunya.

Local hero Jose Suarez took his first Academy win, but it was Swede Pontus Tidemand who was set the pace through the first day's gravel stages. The Swede stormed into the lead with five fastest times on the dirt, before a puncture dropped him to second. Scot John MacCrone finished in fourth.



Breen and Nagle took a dominant win to wrap up SWRC title in style