



JUST REWARDS: Ireland's Craig Breen celebrates after being crowned champion

Super Breen shows drive to succeed

IRELAND'S Craig Breen is set for a full season in the Super World Rally Championship (SWRC) in 2012 after an incredible win in the WRC Academy in his Ford Fiesta R2.

In an unbelievable climax to the 17 stages of the WRC Academy Breen was crowned champion and claimed the prize of €500,000 at the end of the class at Wales Rally Great Britain, the final round of the 2011 WRC.

The title went all the way to the final stage but the 21-year-old from Waterford withstood the pressure to bring off one of the biggest wins in Irish Rallying history, matching the WRC Production class victory of Niall McShea in 2004.

The odds were stacked against Breen, as he was required to win the rally — and if Estonian Egon Kaur finished second he would also be required to win 14 of the 17 stages.

Final

Breen led comfortably after the opening two days, with Kaur making his way up to second having been 12th earlier on.

On the final day six stages remained and Breen initially had to win four as there was a bonus point for individual stage victories.

Kaur however posted the fastest time on the opening stage on the last day, which meant that Breen now had to win the remaining five stages.

Breen hit back on the Sweet Lamb 1 stage 13 and then on the final test in the morning loop Breen and Kaur battled it out on stage 14 with the Irishman taking it by one second.

This set up a dramatic final loop of three stages with Breen still requiring all three to tie the championship points table and win the series on count-back of fastest stage times

■ JOHN KENNY reports

throughout the year.

Kaur was off the pace on the re-run of Hafren 2 and finished 18.3 seconds down on Breen who racked up stage win number 12 of the weekend while number 13 followed on the short 4km Sweet Lamb 2 run.

By virtue of his better overall position Breen entered the final stage 11 minutes before Kaur.

Moment

In the end Breen beat Kaur by 7.1 seconds on the stage and won the class by 4 minutes 36.1 seconds to equal Kaur's points but won the title on countback.

"I can't find words to describe this moment," said Breen. "I never lost the faith."

Breen will almost certainly compete in the Super WRC class in 2012.

Jari Matti Latvala won the main Rally for Ford as Sebastian Loeb (Citroen) failed to finish after a crash on the road section yesterday with a spectator.

Irish pairing of Kris Meeke and Paul Nagle took a stunning 4th place overall in the Mini Cooper.

TIGER: I FEEL GREAT