

IRISH TEENS BREEN AND THOMPSON EXCEL ON BIG STAGE

MOTORSPORT

By Andrew Murphy

IRISH youngsters did us proud as they shone on the world stage last weekend. Teenagers Craig Breen and Gary Thompson stepped up to the top of the podium after dominant performances in their respective categories, supporting world championship events last weekend.

Breen showcased his emerging talents with panache in his first competitive experience on a world championship event in Portugal last weekend. He finished 25th overall and best in the supporting Fiesta series. He was fastest Fiesta driver on all stages on the first day and on both Super Specials, but was delayed by a puncture on the second day to take a well-earned win and a 16-point lead in the international series.

Thompson dominated the Formula BMW Asia support races at the Malaysian F1 Grand Prix at Sepang. The 16-year-old Donabate driver started both his races from pole position and enjoyed a lights-to-flag victory in his first-ever car race. After a slow start to his second race, he was scything through the field challenging for second when the race was red-flagged at halfway distance.

As the victorious Breen returns from Portugal another Irish winning combination - A1 Team Ireland and Adam Carroll - heads to the new Autodromo Algarve for the sixth round of the A1GP series this weekend.

Local ace Kenny McKinsty tops the Hankook NI championship section from Seamus Leonard, Denis Biggerstaff, Mark Courtney and his daughter Emma, who also drives a Subaru WRC. Meanwhile, Melvyn Evans tops the MSA Asphalt rally championship and expects stiff competition from David Mann (Subaru), David Kynaston (Audi) and Mark Jasper (Metro 6R4).

The absence of series leader Keith Cronin/Greg Shinnors leaves the door wide open for another crew to establish themselves in the Irish Evo Challenge. Brendan Cumiskey, who makes a welcome return to defend his crown in his championship-winning Evo9, faces tough competition from Alan Carmichael, Neil McCance and Stanley Ballentine, and William Mavitty.

After his outstanding win in Portugal, Craig Breen continues his hectic schedule and will line up for the second round of the Fiesta Sporting Trophy this weekend. "Obviously, it will be very different to Galway with the absence of Alistair (Fisher), but there are a number of other guys who will be pushing hard to try and get the top spot," said the young Kilkenny star who was runner-up to Fisher in Galway.

Racing champion turned rally driver Robert Barrable, who makes his Irish Fiesta series debut, will be hoping his speed and experience on tarmac will leave him in a good position to challenge the regular