

Breen takes a brilliant fourth overall in Clare

Craig Breen took delivery of his new 1600cc Ford Fiesta R2 rally car, last Thursday, and promptly took the new machine to a fantastic fourth overall, and first in class finish on Sunday's Clare Stages Rally.

The 19 year old was using the rally as a shakedown and development test, before his all important trip to Catalunya with the car, in his attempt to take the Fiesta International series, to add to his UK and Irish Fiesta titles.

The weather was clear and bright for the Clare Stages rally, with fresh stages, which provided good abrasive surfaces for the crews, with many challenging fast narrow sections over crests and jumps.

"We took the mornings stages to settle into the car. We were held up slightly on the first stage, as the car in front had gone off, we were also hampered by going out on an RS7 (medium compound) front slick which I felt was a bit too soft for the abrasive surface. Still, we held a solid 7th place overall going into the first service.

We altered some suspension settings, and went onto a harder RS5 tyre. Repeating the same stages again we slowly picked the pace up, setting times well within the top 5. We were now on the pace of the top two wheel drive guys, which was my aim for the weekend, and locked in a battle from 4th to 7th!"

Of course it is not the first time Craig has driven the R2 Fiesta this season, but it was his first run in

his own car, run by the Tom Gahan team, and as ever Gareth Roberts was reading the all important pace-notes. It was another impressive drive from the Waterford youngster, as he headed into the final loop of stages in sixth place.

"We came back into service and put two new RS5 on the front, and back out again, with the hope of really giving it a good go. We were 4th fastest on stage 7, which pushed us up to 5th, and a big push on the final two stages saw us move in front of the Burtard brothers in their Evo 8, and claim fourth at the finish". Indeed Craig and Gareth pedalled the 1600 Fiesta to two second fastest overall stage times on the final two stages. To do this they were the fastest two wheel drive crew, taking time from the much more powerful MK2 Escort's of Mike Quinn and Ed O Callaghan, who finished the rally in second and third places respectively.

"I never expected to do this well in my first rally in the car. I am over the moon at how well the weekend went, and the performance of the Fiesta R2. It's shaping up to be a great car in Spain, and I am now really looking forward to an overall result there!"

It's a fabulous result for Craig, and this weekend he will have another new car to learn as he steps into Robbie McGurk's hire Group N Subaru Impreza, for the Bushwhacker Forestry Rally, in what will be Craig's first taste of Group N four wheel drive machinery.



Rising Waterford rally star, Craig Breen, had another great outing, this time in Clare.