

Craig Breen to represent Ireland at FIA Institute shoot-out

BY TREVOR McGRATH

The FIA (Governing body of World Motorsport) released the list of drivers that have made the cut to take part in the FIA Institute Shoot-out and Ireland's Craig Breen is one of 30 young hopefuls to battle for a place in the FIA Institute, 2012 Young Driver Excellence Academy.

In only its second year, the Academy has expanded its intake to ensure that more drivers from around the world have access to this important safety-focused initiative. The shortlist is made up of young drivers from 26 different countries covering every continent, including competitors from Australia,

Columbia, Costa Rica, Denmark, India, Ireland, Lebanon, Lithuania, Malaysia, South Africa, UAE, UK and USA.

They are some of the most talented young drivers in motor racing and rallying, with the shortlist featuring a number of event winners from the Intercontinental Le Mans Cup, Intercontinental Rally Challenge and Formula 3 Championships, as well as drivers with Formula One and World Rally experience.

The FIA Institute Young Driver Excellence Academy is an initiative to develop young driver talent worldwide. It offers a fully-funded training programme that helps drivers develop their motor sport careers, whilst increasing safety skills

and actively promoting the principles of safety, fairness and responsibility on and off the track.

The shootout will take place over four days, 15 – 18 of November in Melk, Austria. Following the driving and non-driving assessments, only 18 of these will be chosen to join the 2012 Academy programme.

On hearing the news Craig said, "It's a great honour to be among the thirty drivers to go forward and I'll be giving my all over the four days in Austria. It would be another achievement in my career if I could make it into the 2012 FIA Institute Academy. During this year Egon Kaur, who's a fellow WRC academy com-

petitor and Andreas Mikkelsen, whom I competed against at Rally Scotland, have been contesting in the 2011 Institute and rally driver Kevin Abbring has just been announced as this year's winner. It's great to see a rally driver winning the inaugural crown. The Institute Academy programme doesn't just focus on driving as it's based on helping young drivers develop their motor sport careers, whilst increasing safety skills and actively promoting the principles of safety on a special stage/track and on the public road."

Alex Sinclair, Chief Executive of Motorsport Ireland, said: "I am delighted that we are represented at the upcoming selection event for the FIA Institute

Academy. It has already proven to be an important development ground for young drivers, not just helping their careers but turning them into ambassadors for our sport."

In total out of the 30 drivers chosen, 9 are from a rallying background including Craig and the Irish man will have competitive knowledge of four of his rivals, Ashley Haigh-Smith, Brendan Reeves, and Timo van der Marel, who he competes against in this year's WRC Academy. Breen also competed against Belgium, Thierry Neuville, in both Barum Czech Rally Zlin and Rally of Scotland in the Intercontinental Rally Challenge.