

IRELAND'S double World Junior Rally champion Craig Breen bagged a second-place finish at the Rally Islas Canaria in the latest round of the European Rally Championship.

In his Team Saintéloc Peugeot 207 S2000, the 23-year-old repeated his second-placed finish from early February at ERC Rally Latvia and — in so doing — moved into second position in the drivers' championship.

Breen was third overnight going into the day's final six stages behind the Citroen of ex-Formula One racer Robert Kubica (Poland) and the Skoda Fabia of Jan Kopecky (Czech Republic).

Such were the time gaps, it seemed as if third place would be as good as Breen could hope for.



ON SONG: Breen and Dempsey



But Breen — partnered by Killarney's Paul Nagle — was elevated to second place when long-time rally leader Kubica

crashed out and both Kopecky and the Irish ace were on hand to benefit.

Over the closing three stages Craig drove within himself — as

the gap to Kopecky was over a minute — to claim the runners-up spot and a decent haul of championship points

"To finish second here is good for the championship but looking more long-term to next year we're learning so much," said a delighted Breen afterwards.

Project

"Everybody in the team is very motivated to make this project work.

"We've all worked really hard to get a good set-up and with the knowledge we've gained we can come back here so much stronger and faster."

Kopecky now leads the series after the opening three rounds on 76 points to Breen's 58 ahead of the all-gravel fourth round in the Azores on April 25-27.

Meanwhile, Meath's Peter Dempsey was second in the first round of the Indy Lights series in St Petersburg, Florida for the US-based Belardi Racing team.

The 26-year-old started the race third on the grid but dropped to fourth early in the race.

However, a crash involving Carlos Munoz and Gabby Chaves — who were battling for the lead — on lap 11 let American Jack Hawksworth in to win with Dempsey just behind.