

Breen gunning for spot in FIA Academy

MOTORSPORT

Declan Quigley

CRAIG BREEN has been selected to take part in the shootout for a place in the FIA Institute 2012 Young Driver Excellence Academy.

Breen, who is finalising preparations for the final round of the 2011 FIA WRC Academy series at Wales Rally GB tomorrow week, will then turn his attention to the race for places on the FIA Institute

in the shootout from November 15-18 in Melk, Austria.

The Waterford star, currently second in the WRC Academy one-make series using Ford Fiestas, will face 29 other hopefuls from 25 countries for a place in the Institute, which aims to develop young drivers' skills for a future in motorsport, with particular emphasis on safety.

Breen, already a road safety ambassador for the FIA through Motorsport Ireland, has yet to make a final decision on his plans for next season,

but clearly he and his management are eager to maintain strong links with the governing body.

Many of the world's most talented young racing and rally drivers will take part in a series of assessments over four days, both driving and non-driving, after which 18 will be chosen for the fully-funded training programme in 2012.

"It's a great honour to be among the 30 drivers to go forward and I'll be giving my all over the four days in Austria," said Breen.

"It would be another achievement in my career if I could make it into the 2012 FIA Institute Academy."

Meanwhile, Peter Dempsey is still on track to keep his place in Andretti Autosport's Indy Lights team for 2012 after setting the fastest time on the first day of open testing on the 2.5-mile road course in Indianapolis last week.

Dempsey topped the times before handing over the car to Star Mazda Champion Tristan Vautier, who set the fastest time on day two. Vautier car-

ries scholarship funding from Mazda, but Dempsey will be hoping that Andretti will hold a place for him after a number of podium visits in a part programme of races with the team this year.

"They're looking to get their drivers for next year and I want to be in position to stay with them," Dempsey said.

"To top the two sessions by a comfortable margin feels good. Obviously, I have a bit more experience in the cars than some of the others, but I'm very happy."

SPORT IN BRIEF

Niland fails to find his groove

TENNIS

CONOR NILAND yesterday failed to drive on from a strong first-set performance in the ATP Challenger Tour event in Eckental, Germany.

Returning to the second-tier Challenger circuit after two tournaments on the third-tier Futures programme, Niland took the opener in his first-round match against