



**GREAT YEAR: Craig Breen won the FIA World Rally Championship Academy**

# BREEN SET FOR SUPER CAMPAIGN

CRAIG Breen has confirmed that he will contest all but one round of the Super World Rally Championship — the second tier of the WRC series — next season.

Breen has also confirmed that he will be competing in his own Ford Fiesta S2000, which he took to a magnificent fourth place at Rally Scotland this year, a round of the Intercontinental Rally Challenge (IRC).

The 21-year-old Waterford driver won the 2011 FIA World Rally Championship (WRC) Academy, and with it a bonus of €500,000.

Now with a decent budget, options are opening up for the Irishman, recently crowned the International Driver of the year at the Motorsport Ireland awards.

Having won the Academy class, Breen will now step up to SWRC, a series for non-WRC cars which includes the S2000 and Group N4 machines, that are becoming

more and more popular as drivers and manufacturers move away from the more expensive WRC machines.

The IRC came into being a few years ago as an alternative to the WRC.

## Chance

It offered the chance for drivers and manufacturers to compete at a world level, without the expense of backing WRC cars.

The WRC, fearful of what the IRC was offering, responded with the SWRC's introduction in 2010.

Spain's Xavier Pons won that year in a Ford Fiesta, while Finland's Juho Hanninen took the title this season in his Skoda Fabia.

Breen will now enter an exciting phase of his International rallying career when he lines up for the first of his seven rounds in the SWRC.

That will start with the Monte Carlo Rally in January.

Breen is delighted to be running in a machine he knows well.

"The Ford Fiesta is the best car out there in Super 2000," he said.

"My car has been given a few upgrades just before the Barum Rally in the Czech Republic and it's been on form since then.

"I'm ready to start in the SWRC and we will back it up with an IRC programme as well."

The Donnelly Group Circuit of Ireland will also be part of the IRC in 2012 — and Breen says it's great that an event like that will



will be ready."

Breen's plan is to do seven of the eight rounds of the SWRC.

He hopes to do seven rounds of the IRC as well, which will be enough to qualify him for the overall championship.

The only round he says he will miss in the SWRC is New Zealand in June.

"New Zealand is just too far away so we will skip that, but I will do the others as the best seven count overall.

"I want to be fighting for the championship.

"I want to start as I mean to go on. I will start to push on the Monte Carlo and see what type of result we can get.

## Caution

"The Monte Carlo is one we will treat with a certain amount of caution, but from then on we will be competing in events that I am familiar with, such as Portugal and Finland, and I wouldn't be happy if I wasn't on the pace."

The problem that Breen may face is that he is not backed by Ford's WRC programmes, who are also seriously looking at their WRC involvement next year.

Its parent company is facing massive losses in 2011 and their WRC programme is under scrutiny as a result.