

Consistency has defined the start of Craig Breen's 2013 European Rally Championship campaign.

At the beginning of February the Irish driver began his new job as Peugeot Rally Academy number one driver by claiming second overall on Rally Liepāja-Ventspils.

A month later he repeated that performance on Rally Islas Canarias El Corte Inglés.

This weekend the 23 year old has completed the hat trick by again taking second overall on round four of the season on Sata Rally Azores.

On some of the most demanding stages the Irish driver has ever had to contend with the Peugeot ace showed maturity under pressure and scored yet another major points haul.

At the finish ramp Craig said, "I'm very happy with this second place. The team did a fantastic job. The weather was unbelievable but we go here in the end! This was my first time to compete here and I'm very pleased to be in the fight for the victory. I tried to push more this morning to win but Jan (Jojecky) was faster. He has more experience of this rally and experience is very important here. It was an incredible rally and I'm delighted we carried on our consistent start to the season. I'm now looking forward to the Tour de Corse."

Sata Rally Azores round four of the 2013 ERC was based on the on the Atlantic archipelago's largest island of São Miguel. The event is famous for its stunning countryside and changeable weather conditions and over the three days the competing crews sampled all that the Azores climate could through at them.

When the action did start Peugeot

Craig Breen and co-driver Paul Nagle picked up another podium place when they finished second on the Sata Rally Azores.



Hat trick of podium finishes for consistent Craig

Rally Academy number one crew of Craig Breen and Paul Nagle completed the first stage in second overall, 2.2s down on Robert Kubica. Overnight the 23 year old was fourth, 11.7s behind Kubica.

There was drama from the beginning

as the rally resumed on Friday morning for day two. A double loop of four stages set the scene and Breen was immediately on the move claiming third position as the action resumed on stage five.

Craig's Peugeot 207 S2000 suffered

its second puncture of the event on SS7 dropping 16 seconds to stage winner and championship leader Jan Kopecky but the Irishman stayed in third 27.1 sec in arrears.

On the final stage of day two Craig took his first fastest stage time of the

event beating Kopecky by 2.8 seconds and heading into the final day the gap between the top two was 13.1 seconds.

The erratic weather conditions did not abate as the crews took to the final day.

Kopecky went 2.6seconds faster than Breen on the Saturday opener widening the gap to 15.7sec but more worrying for the Peugeot crew was that Craig reported smoke coming into the cockpit as they negotiated the stage.

The fight continued throughout the day but by the penultimate stage Kopecky had extended his advantage to 26.7 seconds, holding on to finish first overall.

While happy with another podium finish Breen is confident of winning soon. "It's all very well racking up these second places, second is getting monotonous. I want to win. For sure to come to the finish and get a podium is great but it would have been nice to get a win. The win will come, we are on top form."

Rally of the Lakes

Next weekend Craig and Paul take a break from the ERC and to the delight of their home fans the pair compete in the Rally of the Lakes. Craig also takes a break from his Peugeot 207 Super 2000 as next Saturday morning the SWRC champion will steer a Mk11 Escort up the famous Molls Gap special stage.

The drive comes by way of a two event deal with long-time friend and sponsor of Craig, James Coleman/Suirway Forklifts & Suirway Farm Machinery. Craig and Paul will also take on the Donegal International Rally in June.