

Craig Breen: World Champion

# Wonderful welcome home for World Champion Breen

By Trevor McGrath

It has been an incredible week for Irish Rally Driver Craig Breen. Just a week ago he and his Welsh co-driver Gareth Roberts clinched the FIA World Rally Championship on the last stage of World Rally Great Britain, the final round of the WRC Academy Series.

By Tuesday, Craig had travelled to Melk, Austria, to take part in the FIA Institute Trials. After four days of driving and non-driving assessments Craig received news on Friday that he had made it on to the FIA 2012 Institute Programme. But on Saturday afternoon celebrations took the place of competition as Waterford welcomed back their World Champion!

Craig returned home to his native Waterford City for the first time claiming the FIA World Rally Academy Championship (World Junior Championship) to a hero's welcome by his family, friends and supporters.

John Roberts Square, Waterford City became electrified with the sound of the screaming Ford Fiesta S2000 as Craig screamed up the Quay by the bank of the river Suir, turning into the City Centre at the Clock Tower and onto the stage in front of hundreds of fans that came out to salute their hero and his achievement on the world stage.

Like true rally fans, inclement weather was not going to deter the CBH supporters from greeting their hero. With the rain falling and under the sea of Christmas lights the new World Academy Champions exited the Fiesta S2000 and were greeted to cheers as they joined Eddie Wymberly on stage.

Eddie officially welcomed Craig home as World Rally Academy Champion and Welsh man Gareth Roberts was for the day an

honorary Waterford man for the huge role he played in Craig's success.

Mayor of Waterford, Cllr Pat Hayes offered his congratulations to the new world champion.

"I first want to congratulate Craig and

two victories." Ray was convinced though that Craig and Gareth had the ability to be successful.

"What impressed me most about the two guys is that they never gave up. Just before the Wales trip I asked Craig how he felt. He assured me he was fine and confident they could do it. That's all I needed to know."

Craig was thrilled to be back in Waterford and delighted with the reception he received. He acknowledged the support of his family and in particular his dad.

"Growing up in the environment of motorsport, being there with my Dad as a young boy, I was in my element and I loved every minute of it. On Sunday morning I was up with my John Moyinhan suit and I was happy. Having Dad there competing was brilliant, he was my idol."

"To receive this reception, the phone call, messages and emails, even from people not associated with the rally fraternity has shown amazing support for me, it's unbelievable and I want to thank each and every one. I want to keep progressing. At the moment I'm on the crest of a wave but I must keep my head down a keep working, thanks again."

the people who live and work in Waterford are hugely proud of you. We know the commitment and 'drive' to achieve your success is astronomical, we want to wish you well. We hope from the business community that there may be some sponsors willing to come on board."

Motorsport Ireland were represented by President Joe Corcoran, Joe being a huge follower of Craig's last spoke to him during WRC Academy round five in France and welcomed the new super star of Irish rallying saying, "I'm honoured here today to have the opportunity to congratulate Craig on his victory in the WRC Academy."

"Imagine having a four minute lead (in Wales Rally GB Academy Class) and still having to push all the way for stage wins to

secure the championship win". The Irish Motorsport governing body was also represented by James Coleman, Chairman of the Rallies Committee. It was a proud day for James as he's also a member of Carrick Motor Club and one of Craig's long term sponsors.

"What Craig and Gareth achieved last weekend are what dreams are made of. Craig began in karting and only three years ago switched to rallying and has taken the sport by storm. From the Motorsport governing bodies point in Ireland this is what we work for, trying to promote the sport to the highest possible levels and also from a personal level I want to congratulate Craig and Gareth as a fellow club member and as sponsor of the team."

The Irish Sports Council was represented by Austin Mallon who passed on congratulations on behalf of CEO John Carrick on Suir Motor Club Pre George Clancy, George J of the founding member club said, "The Carrick's Motor Club is now an ex years and we've had our competitors in that time we have a man who has heights and is an extra achievement for a young years of age." Explains victory on Wales Rally said, "If you're inside and you understand rally you know what it means was an incredible performance and it left me speechless and Gentlemen, I would say to you now that this is the finest hour of the Carrick on Suir Motor Club."

Terence Kearney, Chairman of the Carrick on Suir Motor Club rounded off an un day for Motorsport in Waterford. He welcomed the new champions home and pr



He welcomed the new champions home and pr

Friday 25 November 2011



Craig signing autographs on Saturday last.

[PHOTOS: NOEL BROWN]



Terence Kearney, Chairman of the Carrick on Suir Motor Club rounded off an un day for Motorsport in Waterford. He welcomed the new champions home and pr



Eddie Wymberly chats with Gareth and Craig.



Mayor of Waterford Cllr Pat Hayes and Anne-Marie Caulfield, President Waterford Chamber pictured with Craig and Gareth and Craig's parents Ray and Jackie Breen.

## Thrilled to be back in Waterford

Three generations of the Breen family were present as the new World Rally Champion was welcomed home to Waterford on Saturday last.

No one though was as proud as Craig's father Ray who himself is a former National Champion and has played an important role in his son's success.

"I must admit to being a bit selfish for my part, because in the very early days when Craig was only a little nipper, his babysitting consisted of accompanying my friend Johnny Purcell and I to events."

For a proud Dad the first two rounds of the championship were not what he expected.

"The opening two rounds in Portugal and then Sardinia were seriously disappointing. They had a non-finish in Portugal and a mechanical failure in Sardinia. The two lads had only amassed a few points from the two events and to make matters worse Estonian driver Egon Kaur had picked up

two victories."

Ray was convinced though that Craig and Gareth had the ability to be successful.

"What impressed me most about the two guys is that they never gave up. Just before the Wales trip I asked Craig how he felt. He assured me he was fine and confident they could do it. That's all I needed to know."

Craig was thrilled to be back in Waterford and delighted with the reception he received. He acknowledged the support of his family and in particular his dad.

"Growing up in the environment of motorsport, being there with my Dad as a young boy, I was in my element and I loved every minute of it. On Sunday morning I was up with my John Moyinhan suit and I was happy. Having Dad there competing was brilliant, he was my idol."

"To receive this reception, the phone call, messages and emails, even from people not associated with the rally fraternity has shown amazing support for me, it's unbelievable and I want to thank each and every one. I want to keep progressing. At the moment I'm on the crest of a wave but I must keep my head down a keep working, thanks again."



Terence Kearney, Chairman of the Carrick on Suir Motor Club presents a framed picture to Craig at the homecoming.



A section of the large crowd.



World Champion Craig Breen with co-driver Gareth Roberts.