

Breen's brave, remarkable road back

QUITE the most remarkable comeback story of this or perhaps any Irish sporting year has been that of Craig Breen's surge to the top of the World Rally Championship S2000 standings.

It must have been an extraordinarily difficult ordeal for the young Waterford pilot simply to drive a rally car again after the wretched accident that took the life of his best friend and co-driver, Gareth Roberts, last June.

But, with the tacit support of the Roberts family, Breen was persuaded

to compete again almost exactly one month after the fatal crash.

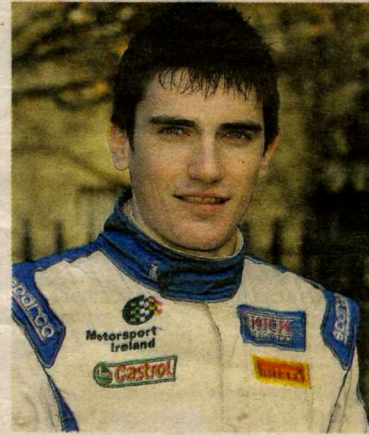
He did so, without fanfare, in a low-key Welsh event, Gareth's brother - Dai - sitting alongside him. For both families, it was a gesture franked with the understanding that, unless Breen returned to competition immediately, his career was essentially over.

That, just three months later, Craig leads the SWRC is nothing less than astonishing. But, with Paul Nagle as co-pilot, his consecutive victories in Wales and last weekend in France,

allied to the Monte Carlo win he enjoyed with Gareth last January, means that Breen goes to next month's final event in Spain as championship leader.

Last season, Breen and Roberts were crowned the inaugural WRC Academy champions following a dramatic victory in Wales. Now, after an unimaginably traumatic year, the Waterford man is on the brink of a second successive world title.

You have to suspect he'll have some pull with The Almighty as he goes for it.



Craig Breen