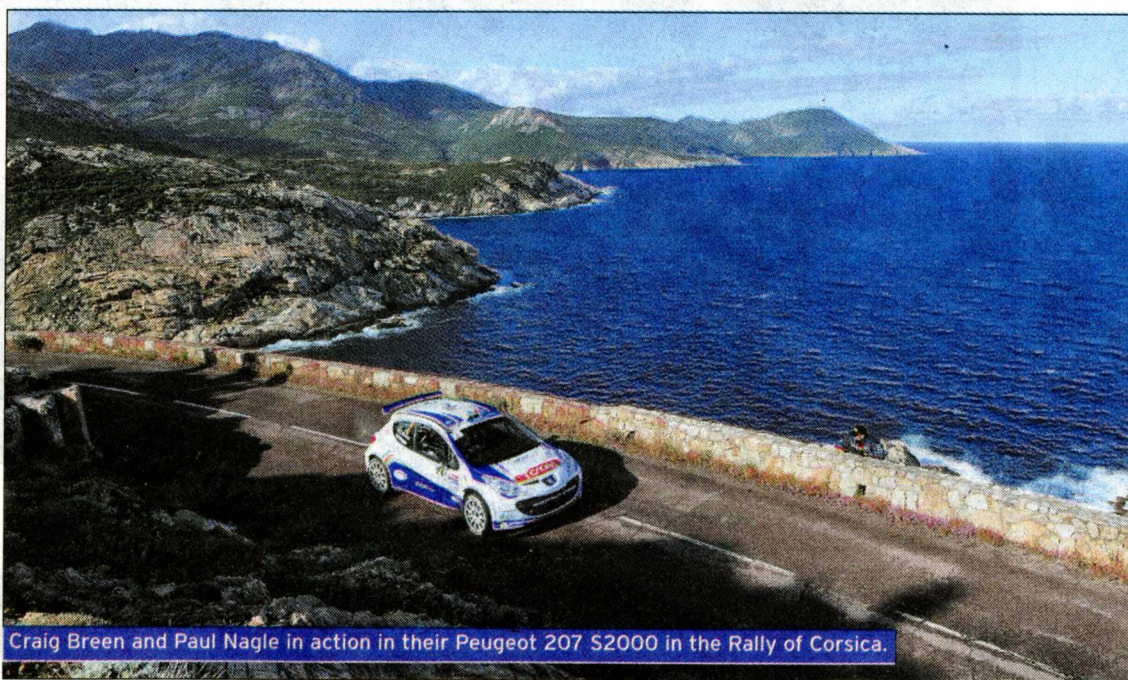


Breen wins Colin McRae award in Corsica

For the first time this year Craig Breen did not claim a podium finish in an ERC event but his performance and 4th place finish on this year's Tour de Corse emphasises the immense talent of the Peugeot Rally Academy driver. Four fastest and three second fastest stage times on the eleven stage ultra-technical tarmac rally illustrates the outright speed of the Irish man.

At the finish Breen said, "We really pushed to gain that podium place on the final stage but it wasn't to be. What I'm most happy about is we've shown extremely good speed here this weekend. We were one of the stronger forces on day one and but for our puncture on stage four it could have been a different story. I've got a brief to gain experience this year and this is a rally I was relatively familiar with so we could push a little. This is the first year of a long programme and I'm very happy."

For Craig's outstanding performance over the two days he was awarded the Colin McRae ERC Flat Out Trophy ERC General Co-ordinator Jean-Pierre Nicolas, who along with Eurosport Events' Director of Editorial Gilbert Roy and Colin's father, Jimmy McRae, forms the judging panel, explained why Breen had been chosen.



Craig Breen and Paul Nagle in action in their Peugeot 207 S2000 in the Rally of Corsica.

"Craig, a driver who is just 23 years old, was fast from the beginning of this rally and it's not often that a driver without a Mediterranean background produces this kind of performance," said Nicolas. "But this was a standout performance by Craig and it's with very great pleasure that we present this award to him."

Receiving the award Craig

said "I am thrilled to receive this award. It's a very good feeling after a difficult weekend for me. This is my second time to win this award and I'm honoured to receive it."

DAY ONE

Day one of the rally began in spectacular style for the Peugeot Rally Academy driver with a hat trick of fastest stage times as

Breen built a lead of 26.4 seconds over Polish ex-F1 driver, Robert Kubica. His advance was halted however on stage four when he ran wide on a left corner, hitting a bank pulling the right-rear tyre off the rim. As a result of the mistake Craig dropped to 5th, 1 minute 23 seconds behind leader Kubica.

In service Craig explained what happened, "It was a left

corner, maybe two kilometres from the start. There had been a delay of about five to 10 minutes starting the stage and the temperature of the tyres had gone down. I went into the corner at the perfect speed, braked early and came off the brakes, turned, everything was perfect but I just lost the rear of the car halfway round and we touched the bank. The right-rear tyre

went down and we had to drive 10 kilometres on the rim."

After dropping out of the top three and his confidence shot, Breen began a fight back on SS5 with his fourth fastest time of the day reclaiming 4th from Stephane Sarrazin and as the Citroen DS3 RRC of the then rally leader Robert Kubica was struck by an electronic problem forcing him to retire, Craig was up to 3rd.

On the final stage of day-one (SS6) Craig went second fastest just 0.1 behind Jan Kopecky. Kopecky's fastest time was enough to hold a 3.4 sec rally lead over Bryan Bouffier, with Craig a further 36.2 back in 3rd position.

DAY TWO

Day two began with SS 7, Carbuccia - Tavera 1. Overnight showers had left road conditions wet and slippy, Craig decided on a strategy two hard and two soft compound tyres for the test which proved the wrong

choice. In the slippy conditions Craig hit a bridge with the rear, pulling the bumper off. The incident didn't affect the drivability of his Peugeot 207 but he did drop time and fell to 4th, 15 seconds behind Stephane Sarrazin (France).

The time loss sustained over SS7 was regained through stages eight and nine as Craig climbed back to third, reaching midday service with a slender 0.6 advantage over the Frenchman Sarrazin in the Mini John Cooper Works S2000.

On the penultimate test Breen struggled from handling problems with his Peugeot 207 Super 2000, going into the eleventh and final stage he trailed the Mini driver by 7.9 seconds.

Craig pushed his Peugeot to the limit on the final test pulling 4.7 seconds from Sarrazin but in the end it wasn't to be. After a hectic two days on the Corsican Island 4th position was Craig's final result.

Sam Bennett hoping to star in Rás 2013

An Post Sean Kelly team manager Kurt Bogaerts has named his team for this year's Rás, which is ongoing all this week all over Ireland.