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# Breen guns for second World Rally crown in Spain

BY TREVOR McGRATH

Craig Breen will take on World Rally Spain this week gunning for his second World Rally crown in two years. The Irish driver seized the inaugural FIA WRC World Rally Academy last November in spectacular style on Wales Rally GB and now he is but one step from the 2012 FIA WRC Super 2000 title.

With just days to go before the title showdown, Craig says, "I'm delighted to be in this position but the loss we all suffered in June has left a hole that will never be filled."

Breen began the SWRC season with a maiden win on the opening round on Rallye Monte Carlo and backed up that performance by securing second in the category on World Rally Sweden. Leaving a snow covered Karlstad in February the Ford Fiesta S2000 driver held a comfortable 18 point advantage over his main rival P-G Andersson.

The championship moved to gravel for the first time in March with a trip to the Algarve for World Rally Portugal. A frequent happy hunting ground for the Irish driver turned to disappointment with his first non-finish of the year.

# Final-day heroics clinch World crown for Breen

## MOTORSPORT

IRISH Rally driver, Craig Breen has clinched the SWRC (Super 2000 World Rally Championship) in heroic style on the final day of World Rally Spain.

Breen secured his second consecutive world rally title after winning the inaugural FIA WRC Academy Championship a year ago.

In June, the 22-year-old suffered tragedy when his best friend and former co-driver Gareth Roberts was killed in an accident on the IRC Rally, Targa Florio.

The Waterford driver made a comeback at the World Rally

Finland in August and in the closing three SWRC rounds (Wales Rally GB, World Rally France and World Rally Spain) of the season, stamped his authority on the championship when claiming a hat-trick of wins.

This weekend he completed World Rally Spain in sixth overall, equalling Sebastien Ogier's record of the highest overall finish of an S2000 car in the 2012 Championship.

After taking a commanding advantage on day one, which saw the Ford driver hold an overnight lead of 3:41, Breen adopted a marking tactic over the Saturday and Sunday stages.

Controlling from the front, he kept his arch rival, Swede P-G Andersson, at arm's length, covering every attack while preserving his car all the way through to a flourishing finish.

"Incredible, I can't believe it, you know I've asked myself questions about if I'm making the correct decision. But, for reasons I can't explain, I had to get back in a rally car immediately and I think this confirms it all. You know, we were meant to be here, we were meant to win this title and I'm so happy to have pulled it off."

The final round in the 2012 World Rally Championship was played out around the holiday resort of Salou



Craig Breen: Controlling from the front

on Spain's CostaDorada. The season-ending event held an extra twist, being the only dual surface rally of gravel (day one) and asphalt (days two and three) as the championship went all the way to the wire.

The finale to the SWRC category was expected to be a three-way battle between championship leader Breen (93 points), P-G Andersson (91 points) from Sweden and Yazeed Al Rajhi (73 points) from Saudi Arabia.

As it turned out, it was a showdown between Breen and Proton Motorsport ace Andersson, with the Irish driver ultimately holding his nerve to come out on top.



