

First 'works' drive for Breen in Ulster Rally

BY TREVOR MCGRATH

Next weekend will see Craig Breen take the ultimate step as moves from privateer to works driver on the Ulster International Rally. Craig realises his dream as he begins a new chapter with Peugeot Sport and by taking the wheel of the all new Peugeot 208 R2 as Zero Car for the Ulster event. Looking ahead to his new adventure Craig said, "I've got mixed feelings. On the one hand, it's exciting to be driving for Peugeot Sport for the first time, even if it is as 'zero car' but it will be my first event at home since Gareth's death. It's a big step in my career and it was one of our objectives with Gareth, so it promises to be difficult without him. Gareth and I put in a great deal of hard work this year to build up a good relationship with Peugeot Sport. In the early part of this year we played a significant role in the development of the 208 R2. Now thanks to Peugeot Sport I get to further that development on the Ulster Rally."

Craig made a very emotional return to the rally world just over a week ago in Finland. Competing in round five of the Super

2000 World Championship it was Craig's first event since the death of his great friend, rally partner and former co-driver Gareth Roberts in mid-June. It was a near fairy tale return for the Waterford driver as he showcased all his talents with new co driver, Killarney's Paul Nagle leading the SWRC category until a mistake on the penultimate special stage ended a great display. Craig said afterwards "I was very disappointed to have crashed out so close to the end. The most important thing was that Paul and I were ok. Up to that stage I was really pleased with my performance. I showed a good pace without pushing too hard."

Development work on the Peugeot 208 R2 is continuing with a view to its scheduled launch in November. The next major step in the new car's programme will be an appearance on the Ulster Rally. After serving as 'zero car' on the Tour de Corse, the 208 R2 will make its second 'competitive' outing in the hands of Craig. After playing his part in the early season development of the new 208 R2 Craig said this about the new rallycar, "It's got a great deal in its favour,



Craig Breen in action in Finland on his comeback to rallying.

and I can compare with all the other R2 cars. It's very powerful and its handling is very stable. It is easy to drive and it doesn't take you long to feel comfortable with it. I've had a chance to drive

it on asphalt and on the loose surfaces : it's quick on both and I believe it has the potential to be very successful. Its road holding in mud and in heavy rain is just incredible. The last time I drove

it in testing, we covered a fair distance without any problems whatsoever. I'm impressed by the suspension control as much as I am by the agile dynamic chassis performance."