

## Breen Rips It Up In Latvia!



Craig Breen and co-driver Scott Martin celebrate their FIA Rally Liepaja victory in Latvia on Sunday.

### Waterford speedster earns welcome Rally Liepaja win

For the first time in almost a year, Waterford's Craig Breen and co-driver Scott Martin occupied top spot on a podium when powering to victory in Latvia's 'Rally Liepaja' last Sunday, in the second round of the FIA European Rally Championship (ERC).

With two previous second place finishes in this three-day event, Craig was determined that both he and Scott Martin would stand on the top step for the first time since their Acropolis Rally victory last March, their maiden ERC success.

With their Peugeot 208T16's reliability issues thankfully resolved, coupled with Craig's previous experience in Latvia, a good showing looked likely last weekend, and thankfully it turned into a great one!

After a positive pre-event practice Craig and Scott took to the short qualifying stage on Friday brimming with confidence.

With temperatures higher than expected in the area the crews were faced with a mostly gravel three-kilometre road on studded snow tyres, the Peugeot Rally Academy pair posted the second fastest time, just 0.05 seconds behind Russian driver Alexey Lukyanuk.

Using his previous experience on the event Craig chose to run 14th on the road for Leg One. Conditions on the opening stage

last Saturday were similar to qualifying, as Craig guided the 208T16 through the slippery slush to finish a mere 0.7 seconds down on the fastest time.

And it was from that point on that Craig started to carve out his lead arriving at the midday service with a 21-second advantage.

As the rain started to fall the roads became even cleaner for the second pass through the near 40-kilometre Kuldiga test, with Breen stretching his lead further to over 22 seconds before tackling the final stage of the leg in the dark.

And it was on this stage that Championship leader Kajetan Kajetanowicz slipped off the road and suffered a broken wheel which forced him into retirement.

Heavy snowfall and a spin on the opening stage on Sunday resulted in a time loss (albeit insignificant), as the Peugeot still checked into service with a 73 second advantage.

Craig knew had to finish without incident, which is exactly what he did over the final three stages. Both car and crew never missed a beat and they took the rally win by just over one minute and 40 seconds.

Craig earned 40 points for the win, which has propelled him into second position in the ERC standings. Next up? Round three of the ERC in the domestic guise of the Circuit of Ireland Rally, which will be based in Belfast over the Easter weekend.

A good showing on home soil would be the perfect follow-up for our outstanding local motoring talent.