



ŠKODA Motorsport, Page 1 of 4

Rally Finland: ŠKODA driver Lappi leaves rivals in his wake at home race

- › Seven stage wins with the Fabia R5 en route to first place in WRC 2 – including two wins on the iconic Ouninpohja stage
- › Team-mate Pontus Tidemand makes it a ŠKODA one-two at end of day one
- › Esapekka Lappi: “I am loving this Rally Finland”

Jyväskylä, 31st July 2015 – ŠKODA driver Esapekka Lappi (FIN) literally raced away from everyone in the Fabia R5 at the start of the Rally Finland. At the end of the first leg, Lappi and co-driver Janne Ferm (FIN) hold a commanding lead in the WRC 2 standings, ahead of team-mates Pontus Tidemand/Emil Axelsson (S/S). Many jumps and a high percentage of the route at full throttle meant “Formula One in the Forest” lived up to expectations on Friday, providing a great spectacle in the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2). The two leading ŠKODA drivers face a further 159.48 kilometres over the course of the weekend.

“I am loving this Rally Finland! The day was simply perfect. However, we were once again provided with a perfect implement in the form of the Fabia R5. Janne and I are delighted to have been able to put on such a display in front of the many fans lining the route, and to lead the rally. However, we have not won anything yet – we must keep cool,” said Lappi after the first 157.63 kilometres. Four weeks ago, the 24-year-old claimed a historic maiden WRC victory with the new Fabia R5 at the Rally Poland – and he followed on where he left off with a dazzling performance on home soil around the service centre in Jyväskylä.

After a cautious start on Thursday’s only stage, Lappi wasted no time in moving to the top of the WRC 2 standings with a stage win on Friday morning. More fastest times saw him gradually extend his lead. The highlight of his performance were two outstanding wins on the iconic Ouninpohja stage, which, with more than 70 jumps over the course of 34.39 kilometres, is regarded as the ultimate test of courage in the world of rallying. In total, local favourite Lappi won seven of Friday’s nine special stages in front of thousands of passionate fans along the route.

“It is incredible how fast you can drive through the forest here. It is mega fun to experience this in a rally car like our ŠKODA Fabia R5,” said an equally impressed Pontus Tidemand. The runner-up from the Rally Poland lost some time thanks to a minor mistake on the first running of Ouninpohja, but still managed to put himself in an excellent position to claim another top result.

Eight stages totalling 130.68 kilometres are planned for Saturday, including two attempts at the famous Mõkkiperä stage. Two things are more important than anything else at the fastest rally of the year: full throttle and a whole lot of courage.



ŠKODA Motorsport, Page 2 of 4

Number of the day for the Rally Finland: 127.13

ŠKODA driver Esapekka Lappi achieved an incredible average speed of 127.13 kilometres per hour on the second running of the legendary Ouninpohja stage. This allowed him to complete the 34.39-kilometre stage – the longest of the Rally Finland – in a time of 16:13.8 minutes. In doing so, he lived up to his nickname of the "Flying Finn": his Fabia R5 left the ground over 70 times on its rollercoaster ride through the Finnish forests.

Rally Finland – WRC 2 standings

1. Lappi/Ferm (FIN/FIN), ŠKODA Fabia R5	1:19:37.7 hrs
2. Tidemand/Axelsson (S/S), ŠKODA Fabia R5	+ 1:08.0 min
3. Lefebvre/Prevot (F/B), Citroën DS3 RRC	+ 1:41.9 min
4. Protasov/Cherepin (UA/UA), Ford Fiesta S2000	+ 2:54.7 min
5. Nikara/Lindström (FIN/FIN), Ford Fiesta R5	+ 2:59.8 min

FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2)

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date</u>
Rally Monte Carlo	22.01.–25.01.2015
Rally Sweden	12.02.–15.02.2015
Rally Mexico	05.03.–08.03.2015
Rally Argentina	23.04.–26.04.2015
Rally Portugal	21.05.–24.05.2015
Rally Italy	11.06.–14.06.2015
Rally Poland	02.07.–05.07.2015
Rally Finland	30.07.–02.08.2015
Rally Germany	20.08.–23.08.2015
Rally Australia	10.09.–13.09.2015
Rally France	01.10.–04.10.2015
Rally Spain	22.10.–25.10.2015
Rally Great Britain	12.11.–15.11.2015

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ŠKODA Motorsport, Page 3 of 4

Media images:



ŠKODA at the Rally Finland:

European champions Esapekka Lappi (FIN) and Janne Ferm (FIN) produced a dazzling performance on home soil.

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



ŠKODA at the Rally Finland:

The second works duo of Pontus Tidemand/Emil Axelsson (S) made it a ŠKODA one-two at the halfway point of "Formula One in the Forest".

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO

ŠKODA Motorsport Overview

ŠKODA has been involved in the world of motorsport since 1901. The brand has taken home many trophies from the Intercontinental Rally Challenge (IRC), FIA European Rally Championship (ERC), FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC) and several famous races, such as the oldest rally in the world – the Monte Carlo, which has taken place annually since 1911.

The Fabia Super 2000 rally car is the most successful model in ŠKODA's 114-year history in motorsport. In 2014, ŠKODA won a hat-trick of titles in the Manufacturers' and Drivers' competitions in the APRC. The new reigning champions Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler (CZ/CZ) achieved the momentous feat of becoming the first duo in history to win the Drivers' title in the ERC and then the APRC in consecutive years.

In the ERC, ŠKODA Motorsport took the title for the third time in a row in 2014, thanks to Esapekka Lappi/Janne Ferm (FIN/FIN) with the ŠKODA Fabia Super 2000. Before Lappi, the Finn Juho Hänninen (2012) and Jan Kopecký (2013) had won the European title with the ŠKODA Fabia Super 2000.

Between 2009 and 2014, ŠKODA Fabia Super 2000 drivers won nearly 50 national and international titles.



ŠKODA Motorsport, Page 4 of 4

The International Automobile Federation FIA approved ŠKODA's new rally car - the Fabia R5 on 1 April, 2015. The new rally car was presented to the International Press in the Czech Republic on 15 April. The ŠKODA Fabia R5 celebrated its competitive début at the Šumava Rally, Czech Republic in 2015.

ŠKODA AUTO

- > is one of the longest-established vehicle production companies in the world. In 1895, the Czech headquarters in Mladá Boleslav began producing bicycles, followed by the production of motorbikes and cars.
- > currently offers the following models in the range: Citigo, Fabia, Roomster, Rapid, Octavia, Yeti and Superb.
- > in 2014 delivered more than 1 million vehicles to customers worldwide for the first time in a single year.
- > has belonged to Volkswagen since 1991. The Volkswagen Group is one of the most successful automotive groups in the world. ŠKODA, in association with the Group, independently manufactures and develops vehicles, as well as components, engines and gear transmissions.
- > operates at three locations in the Czech Republic, produces in China, Russia, Slovakia and India mainly through Group partnerships, as well as in Ukraine and Kazakhstan through local partners.
- > employs over 25,900 people globally and is active in more than 100 markets.