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“Formula 1 in the forest”: ŠKODA Fabia R5 to contest the fastest rally of the year

- › **Rally Finland: Average speed well above 100 km/h**
- › **After the first WRC 2 victory for the Fabia R5, Esapekka Lappi is looking forward to his home rally – Pontus Tidemand at the wheel of the second ŠKODA rally car**
- › **Michal Hrabánek: “Rally Finland enthral fans and drivers”**

Mladá Boleslav, 28th July 2015 – Next stop, Rally Finland: ŠKODA is hoping to add another chapter to the success story of the new Fabia R5 at the “Formula 1 in the forest”. Three and a half weeks after the historic first WRC 2 victory for the new high-tech rally car, the ŠKODA works duos Esapekka Lappi/Janne Ferm (FIN/FIN) and Pontus Tidemand/Emil Axelsson (S/S) take on the fastest rally in the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2). In addition to a perfectly tuned car, the 319.38 kilometres of this rally demand courage and driving precision.

“The Rally Finland is undoubtedly one of the highlights of the year. It enthral fans and drivers alike, because it has everything that rallying is about,” said ŠKODA Motorsport Director Michal Hrabánek. Its high average speed of well over 100 kilometres per hour and large sections driven at full throttle mean that the Rally Finland is also dubbed “Formula 1 in the forest”. Ideal terrain for the new ŠKODA Fabia R5 and the two works drivers Lappi and Tidemand, who brought home an acclaimed one-two victory at the Rally Poland, which is also extremely fast.

“This victory confirmed that we are on the right track with our new ŠKODA Fabia R5. But the success is no reason for us to rest on our laurels. Naturally we want to be up there fighting for podium spots again at the Rally Finland,” said Hrabánek. European Champions Lappi/Ferm are particularly motivated, after all the Rally Finland is an emotional home event for them. Many Finnish rally drivers became national heroes on legendary stages such as 'Mökkiperä' and 'Myhinpää'.

After a year off, the legendary 'Ouninpohja' stage is back on the rally schedule this year; some of the drivers jump further than 50 metres in their cars on this stage. “Plenty of full throttle and long jumps: I love this rally in my home country,” said Lappi. “You need a lot of courage at the Rally Finland and can’t afford to make even a minor error. We are really looking forward to our home rally and want to delight the fans,” he said, with his sights set on another win: “Naturally we will try to bring home the next victory. The last rally in Poland demonstrated that the Fabia R5 has all the important qualities of a winning car.”

Pontus Tidemand is also a fan of the fast gravel tracks through the Finnish forests and past the proverbial 1000 lakes. “I drove onto the podium here as a junior, the high-speed passages and jumps are just magnificent. There probably won’t be much of a gap



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between the drivers. That means you need to find just the right mix of calculated risk and clever driving," said ŠKODA's second Scandinavian driver.

Both Lappi and Tidemand could continue to make up ground in the WRC overall standings with another top result at the Rally Finland. Although the two ŠKODA drivers have only contested three of the seven events of the season so far, they are already in fifth and sixth place. The new Fabia R5's success rate is also impressive: In the WRC 2 classification of the FIA WRC, ŠKODA has already bagged five podium positions, including one win, in three starts.

In the Czech Rally Championship (MČR), Jan Kopecký (CZ) and co-driver Pavel Dresler (CZ) have celebrated four wins in four races with the new car so far. The most recent chapter in the success story: An acclaimed home victory at the 42nd Rally Bohemia in the region around ŠKODA headquarters in Mladá Boleslav.

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

Did you know that ...

... Esapekka Lappi and Janne Ferm are real Rally Finland experts? On their debut start in 2011, they finished in 32nd place in the overall standings. This year will be the fourth time that the successful duo contests their home rally. It is also a mini anniversary: Lappi/Ferm are competing in their 10th event in the FIA World Rally Championship.

... Pontus Tidemand also has experience of the Rally Finland? He contested the rally as part of the WRC Academy and the FIA Junior World Rally Championship in 2012 and 2013, and finished on the podium twice. Tidemand won the Junior World Champion title in 2013.



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... the two ŠKODA works drivers Esapekka Lappi and Pontus Tidemand are on the advance in the WRC 2 overall standings, even though they have each completed only three of the seven rallies of the season so far? Lappi catapulted his way into fifth place with 45 points after his win in Poland. Tidemand is right behind him with 43 points. Finland's Jari Ketomaa is in the lead with 67 points. Including Finland, there are six WRC rallies to go this year, with 25 points up for grabs for each win.

... the Rally Finland was held for the first time back in 1951? At that time it was the Finnish drivers' qualifier for the legendary Rally Monte Carlo.

... the Rally Finland was part of the World Rally Championship for the first time in 1973? Back then it was known as the Rally of 1000 Lakes, the name was changed in 1994 at the main sponsor's request.

... the majority of the route is the same as last year? Thursday's opening stage, the 2.27-kilometre 'Harju' through the streets of Jyväskylä is new.

... the legendary 'Ouninpohja' stage celebrates its return this year after a year off? Its spectacular leaps make it the ultimate test of courage in the rally world. The record for the furthest jump was set by Estonia's Markko Martin back in 2003: He flew 57 metres in his rally car!

... Friday is the most challenging day at the Rally Finland? A total of 157.63 kilometres are scheduled, including two passes of the 34.39-kilometre 'Ouninpohja' stage. It is the longest stage of the whole rally. The cars must get through the entire day without a service.

... the university city of Jyväskylä is the centre of the rally? Thousands of fans flock to the Paviljonki service park each year. Matti Nykänen is probably the most famous person to come from the city, he is one of the most successful ski jumpers of all time.

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Media Images:



ŠKODA at the Rally Finland:

European Champions Esapekka Lappi (FIN) and Janne Ferm (FIN) celebrated the first WRC 2 win for ŠKODA in the new Fabia R5 in Poland.

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



ŠKODA at the Rally Finland:

Pontus Tidemand (S) is already in sixth place in the WRC 2 drivers' standings, behind team-mate Lappi – even though both of them have only driven in three WRC rallies.

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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.



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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.