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Rally Spain: ŠKODA claims one-two with Tidemand and Kopecký

- › Tidemand/Axelsson triumph in the penultimate WRC race of the year
- › Second place for Kopecký/Dresler emphasises outstanding performance of ŠKODA Fabia R5 on gravel and asphalt
- › Four ŠKODA Fabia R5s take the first four places in the WRC 2 standings

Salou/Spain, 25 October 2015 – ŠKODA Motorsport celebrated a resounding one-two at the Rally Spain. ŠKODA works duo Pontus Tidemand/Emil Axelsson (S/S) won the penultimate race in the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2) in their Fabia R5, claiming their first WRC 2 race victory for the Czech car-maker. Their team-mates Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler (CZ/CZ) finished runner-up to complete the one-two for ŠKODA.

“Congratulations to Pontus and Emil on their first WRC 2 victory in the ŠKODA Fabia R5,” said ŠKODA Motorsport Director Michal Hrabánek. “We are also delighted with the second place for Jan and Pavel. We are happy that this debut season for the new Fabia R5 has proven it to be a worthy replacement for the extremely successful Fabia Super 2000. The ŠKODA Fabia R5 won 17 of the 22 special stages here in Spain, which clearly goes to show how good our car is on gravel as well as on asphalt.”

“What a rally! It's my first WRC 2 win for ŠKODA and I could not be happier,” said Tidemand, who also won the FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC) for ŠKODA this season*. “When this rally started, my aim was simply to finish. I did not expect to be on top of the podium at all. However, our speed through the gravel stages on Friday was the key to our success. We tried to avoid taking unnecessary risks on the asphalt stages on Saturday and Sunday. This tactic paid off, even though Jan and Pavel made up some time on us. Thanks to everyone in the whole ŠKODA Motorsport team! I'm now looking forward to the APRC finale in China!”

Kopecký was also more than happy with the situation. “Before the rally, I was not sure whether we would be challenging for a podium finish,” said the Czech rally champion. “The ŠKODA Fabia R5 performed superbly on gravel as well as on asphalt, and the conversion to a race car set-up on Friday went very smoothly. The ŠKODA team can take the credit for that as their work was perfect. I am delighted to have played my part in a one-two for ŠKODA.”

The 51st Rally Spain was an enthralling spectacle, as all eight winners from the current WRC 2 season were battling it out. It featured 23 special stages and a total of 331.25 kilometres on asphalt and gravel – a first for the World Rally Championship – around the rally centre at Salou on the Costa Daurada. However, the final special stage in the WRC 2 class was not completed, due to an accident involving the VW duo Sébastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia (F/F).



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Tidemand was able to open up a commanding lead during Friday's gravel stages. Second and third places were occupied at the end of day one by Kopecký, racing for the ŠKODA Motorsport II team in Spain, and the third ŠKODA works duo of Esapekka Lappi/Janne Ferm (FIN/FIN). However, an accident on the eleventh special stage meant that Lappi, European champion in 2014, took no further part in the race and had to abandon his hopes of victory in the WRC 2 Drivers' Championship.

The WRC 2 drivers' title was therefore clinched in Spain by Nasser Al-Attiyah (Q)*, who finished just ahead of Armin Kremer (D) in a fascinating battle for third place at the Rally Spain. The time difference between these two experienced drivers, who were both at the wheel of a Fabia R5 from the ŠKODA customer racing programme, was just 0.1 seconds.

Tidemand and Axelsson do not have much time to celebrate their victory. Directly after the Rally Spain, the Swedes are making the 10,000-kilometre journey to China for the finale of the APRC season on Friday. Even before the final race takes place, ŠKODA has been confirmed as champion in the overall APRC standings for the fourth consecutive year. The climax to the season in China will feature a special highlight: Tidemand/Axelsson will present the new ŠKODA Fabia R5 for the first time in the Middle Kingdom.

In its first season, the ŠKODA Fabia R5 has been a guarantee of success. Seven starts in the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2) have produced eleven podium finishes and four victories. In addition to this, the ŠKODA Fabia R5 has won four national titles. Jan Kopecký recorded five straight wins to claim the Czech championship. In Austria, the experience of Raimund Baumstielger (A) combined with the Fabia R5 to secure the national title. Norbert Herczig (H) became national rally champion in Hungary at the wheel of a Fabia R5. "Fast" Freddy Loix (B) also triumphed in his home championship in Belgium.

* subject to confirmation by FIA.

Number for the Rally Spain: 17

The Rally Spain is the only World Rally Championship race to take place on a mixture of asphalt and gravel stages. The first part on Friday started on gravel, with a small section of asphalt. On Friday evening, the cars were modified to prepare for two days of rallying on asphalt. The ŠKODA Fabia R5 once again proved its WRC 2 championship credentials under these challenging conditions. All eight gravel stages were won by ŠKODA works drivers, and the ŠKODA drivers also recorded nine further fastest times on asphalt. This resulted in a ŠKODA Fabia R5 winning 17 of the 22 special stages in Spain (Tidemand seven, Kopecký six, Lappi two, Al-Attiyah two).



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Rally Spain –WRC 2 Final Standings

1. Tidemand/Axelsson (S/S), ŠKODA Fabia R5	3h 21m 45.6s
2. Kopecký/Dresler (CZ/CZ), ŠKODA Fabia R5	+ 10.7s
3. Al-Attiyah/Baumel (Q/F), ŠKODA Fabia R5	+ 4m 5.3s
4. Kremer/Winklhofer (D/D), ŠKODA Fabia R5	+ 4m 5.4s
5. Protasov/Cherepin (UA/UA), Ford Fiesta RRC	+ 7m 41.4s

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 Corsica	01.10.–04.10.2015
Rally Spain	22.10.–25.10.2015
Rally Great Britain	12.11.–15.11.2015

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Media images:



ŠKODA at the Rally Spain

Pontus Tidemand/Emil Axelsson (S/S) claimed their maiden WRC 2 victory for ŠKODA Motorsport.

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



ŠKODA at the Rally Spain

Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler (CZ/CZ) were the pair to beat on Saturday and Sunday's gravel stages.

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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.