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One-two at the Rally Italy: ŠKODA passes the ultimate test of durability

- › ŠKODA works duo Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler finish runner-up behind fellow ŠKODA pair Teemu Suninen/Mikko Markkula
- › Fourth win in a row for the ŠKODA FABIA R5 in the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2) – Fastest time on all 19 stages
- › Michal Hrabánek: "ŠKODA cars successfully mastered one of the most difficult challenges of the year"

Alghero, 12 June 2016 – One-two: ŠKODA passed the ultimate test of durability at the Rally Italy with flying colours. Czech works duo Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler finished an excellent second at what is probably the toughest rally on the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2) calendar. After a dramatic 322.82 kilometres of racing, fellow ŠKODA pair Teemu Suninen/Mikko Markkula from Finland took their place on the top step of the podium. They claimed the fourth WRC 2 win in a row for the ŠKODA FABIA R5, which was the fastest car in its class on all 19 special stages on the Mediterranean island of Sardinia.

"Heat, big jumps, loose sand akin to that on the Rally Dakar, and big stones on the roads – the Rally Italy really put the drivers through their paces. The ŠKODA cars successfully mastered one of the most difficult challenges of the year," said ŠKODA Motorsport Director Michal Hrabánek: "Jan Kopecký and Pavel Dresler kept a cool head and completed a great success for our works team. Special congratulations go to the winners, Teemu Suninen and Mikko Markkula. The whole result on Sardinia is yet more proof of the class of our FABIA R5, and motivation to keep working hard."

The Rally Italy was the most eventful rally of the 2016 World Rally Championship so far – both on and off the route. The event reached its dramatic highlight in the WRC 2 category on Saturday, on the 44.26-kilometre "Monte Lerno 1" stage – the longest stage of the rally, which also features the iconic "Micky's Jump". Leading going into the stage, the ŠKODA works duo Esapekka Lappi/Janne Ferm (FIN/FIN) failed to finish – as did fellow ŠKODA pair Umberto Scandola/Guido d'Amore from Italy, who went into the penultimate day as the WRC 2 leaders.

The other top ŠKODA drivers Kopecký, Suninen and Nicolás Fuchs (PE) were stopped temporarily by race stewards following a crash involving Italian WRC driver Lorenzo Bertelli. "A steward showed us an SOS board, so we did not complete the entire stage at top speed," Kopecký explained. The dominant ŠKODA drivers consequently lost the lead in WRC 2, but were then deservedly given it back thanks to the decision of a jury late on Saturday evening.



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They were given a time in accordance with their performance on the second running of the "Monte Lerno" stage.

ŠKODA driver Nicolás Fuchs then dropped out of the battle for second place with Jan Kopecký on Sunday's opening stage. "I feel sorry for Nico, as we were having a really great duel! This Rally Italy was an emotional rollercoaster for us. First we dropped almost a minute and fell back down the standings due to a puncture, then we fought our way back to second place," said Kopecký, who finished third on Sardinia last year. "That is a really happy ending! Especially as a ŠKODA FABIA R5 won again."

Teemu Suninen claimed the fourth WRC 2 victory in a row for the high-tech, four-wheel drive powerhouse. The 22-year-old Finn kicked off the winning run at the Rally Mexico, while Nicolás Fuchs proved unbeatable in the quick and reliable car from Mladá Boleslav at the Rally Argentina. The works team did not contest the overseas rallies, but triumphed through Pontus Tidemand at the Rally Portugal. The Swede is the best-placed works driver in the overall WRC 2 standings in fourth place (43 points/two starts). Britain's Elfyn Evans (62 points/ four starts) leads the championship, ahead of ŠKODA customers Fuchs (55 points/four starts) and Suninen (50 points/3 starts). Each driver can score points towards the race for the WRC 2 title at seven races in 2016.

Works driver Esapekka Lappi did manage to finish ninth to pick up two points at the Rally Italy. He re-joined the rally on Sunday and won all four special stages with a series of outstanding times. "Thank you to all the mechanics and the entire ŠKODA team, who got our car up and running again! We landed in a large hole after a jump on Saturday and were unable to continue. We will go on the attack again at the Rally Poland," Lappi promised. Like Pontus Tidemand, the Finn will contest the next WRC 2 rally from 30 June to 3 July. Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler are back in action this Friday and Saturday at the Rally Hustopeče in the Czech Rally Championship (MČR).

Final result of the Rally Italy (WRC 2):

1. Suninen/Markkula (FIN/FIN)	ŠKODA FABIA R5	3:44:23.2 hrs
2. Kopecký/Dresler (CZ/CZ)	ŠKODA FABIA R5	+ 0:49.6 min
3. Kruuda/Järveoja (EST/EST)	Ford Fiesta R5	+ 4:31.1 min
4. Kremer/Winklhofer (D/D)	ŠKODA FABIA R5	+ 6:38.0 min
5. Maurin/Ural (F/F)	ŠKODA FABIA R5	+ 7:39.8 min
...		
9. Lappi/Ferm (FIN/FIN)	ŠKODA FABIA R5	+ 25:59.6 min



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The number for the Rally Italy: 19

The ŠKODA FABIA R5 was the dominant car in the WRC 2 category on Sardinia. The high-tech four-wheel drive car from the Czech Republic topped the time lists all 19 special stages across four days of rallying. Five different ŠKODA drivers won stages: Teemu Suninen (7), Esapekka Lappi (5), Umberto Scandola (4), Nicolás Fuchs (2) and Jan Kopecký (1).

FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2)

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date</u>
Rally Monte Carlo	21.01.-24.01.2016
Rally Sweden	11.02.-14.02.2016
Rally Mexico	03.03.-06.03.2016
Rally Argentina	21.04.-24.04.2016
Rally Portugal	19.05.-22.05.2016
Rally Italy	09.06.-12.06.2016
Rally Poland	30.06.-03.07.2016
Rally Finland	28.07.-31.07.2016
Rally Germany	18.08.-21.08.2016
Rally China	08.09.-11.09.2016
Rally Corsica	29.09.-02.10.2016
Rally Spain	13.10.-16.10.2016
Rally Great Britain	27.10.-30.10.2016
Rally Australia	17.11.-20.11.2016

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Media images:



ŠKODA at the WRC 2 rally in Italy

Experienced Czech pair Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler (CZ/CZ) flew to an excellent second place on Sardinia.

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



ŠKODA at the WRC 2 rally in Italy

The second ŠKODA works duo Esapekka Lappi/Janne Ferm (FIN/FIN) showed its class with five stage wins.

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO

ŠKODA Motorsport Overview:

ŠKODA has been on the motorsport scene since 1901. Be it on the circuit or in rallies, ŠKODA has celebrated victories and won titles all around the world. Historical highlights include numerous title wins in the FIA European Rally Championship (ERC), the FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC) and the Intercontinental Rally Challenge (IRC), as well as the victory in the European Touring Car Championship in 1981. ŠKODA teams have also triumphed in the world's oldest and most famous rally, taking several class victories in the legendary Monte Carlo, which was first held in 1911.

In 2015, ŠKODA celebrated four victories in the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2) with their new ŠKODA FABIA R5 rally car. The high-tech 4x4 was homologated by the International Automobile Federation FIA on 1 April 2015. In the ŠKODA FABIA R5's very first season, factory duo Pontus Tidemand/Emil Axelsson (S/S) secured the fourth APRC title in a row for ŠKODA. In addition, the brand claimed five national titles with their new winning model.

ŠKODA's new FABIA R5 proudly continues the brand's long tradition in motorsport. Its predecessor, the FABIA Super 2000, was the most successful model in ŠKODA's 115-year motorsport history. With the 4x4 from Mladá Boleslav, factory duo Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler (CZ/CZ) achieved the historic feat of becoming the first duo in history to win the drivers' title in the ERC and the APRC in consecutive years. Between 2009 and 2014, ŠKODA FABIA Super 2000 drivers won a total of 50 national and international titles around the world.

In 2016, the factory teams Pontus Tidemand and Jonas Andersson (S/S), Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler and Esapekka Lappi/Janne Ferm (F/F) are competing with the ŠKODA FABIA R5 in the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2).



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ŠKODA AUTO

- › is one of the longest-established vehicle manufacturers in the world. The company was founded in 1895 – during the pioneering days of the automobile. Today, the company's headquarters remain in Mladá Boleslav.
- › currently offers the following models in the range: CITIGO, FABIA, RAPID, OCTAVIA, YETI and SUPERB.
- › in 2015 delivered more than 1 million vehicles to customers worldwide.
- › 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 26,600 people globally and is active in more than 100 markets.

