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Wonderful rally weekend: ŠKODA celebrates in Australia as well

- › **Second one-two result for ŠKODA in the FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC): Gaurav Gill/Glenn Macneall victorious ahead of Fabian Kreim/Frank Christian, in extremely difficult conditions**
- › **The Rally Queensland and the Rally Hustopeče: two ŠKODA triumphs, 15,500 kilometres apart**
- › **Michal Hrabánek: "Proud of this rally weekend"**

Imbil/Australia, 19th June 2016 – It was a wonderful rally weekend for ŠKODA: triumph at the Rally Hustopeče at home in the Czech Republic was followed by a one-two result at the Rally Queensland in Australia. Despite extremely difficult driving conditions, Gaurav Gill/Glenn Macneall (IND/AUS) and Fabian Kreim/Frank Christian (D/D) repeated their achievements from the season-opener in New Zealand, securing the top two positions for the brand at the second race on the FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC) calendar. The previous day, 15,500 kilometres away, the ŠKODA works duo Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler completed a hat-trick of wins in this year's Czech Rally Championship (MČR).

"I am proud of this rally weekend. In Australia, we were victorious on muddy gravel tracks and we also won on asphalt at our brand home in the Czech Republic. This shows that ŠKODA drivers, ŠKODA teams and the ŠKODA FABIA R5 can beat all sorts of challenges," concluded Michal Hrabánek. The ŠKODA Motorsport Director praised the concentrated performance of the drivers from the ŠKODA MRF team in Australia: "Our youngster Fabian Kreim continued to progress at his second gravel rally and kept his nerve despite the wet and slippery conditions. Congratulations to Gaurav Gill, who claimed his second win of the season."

At the rally near the Sunshine Coast, the drivers had to contend with very muddy stages after heavy rainfall. Conditions became so bad that four stages had to be cancelled on Sunday. "They call it the Sunshine Coast? The rain and mud made my second gravel rally even harder, especially as we were not familiar with the stages. So I am more than pleased with my second place in the APRC," commented Kreim. The 23-year-old has only been competing in rallies since 2013, but he was able to hold off more experienced drivers on these stages, such as New Zealand's Michael Young.

Experienced ŠKODA driver Gaurav Gill remained unchallenged in his FABIA R5. The 34-year-old took the lead in the first special stage and gradually extended his lead. Having repeated his performance from the season-opener in New Zealand, the Indian driver celebrated a dominant victory. This was the fifth win in a row for ŠKODA in the APRC championship at the Rally Queensland in Australia. In 2012, Australian Chris Atkinson



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triumphed for the first time in the FABIA SUPER 2000, which proved unbeatable in the years thereafter. Finland's Esapekka Lappi won in 2013, Jan Kopecký (CZ) claimed victory in 2014, and Swedish driver Pontus Tidemand finished in first place last year. A sequence of success that has seen all three current ŠKODA Motorsport works drivers top the podium in Australia.

ŠKODA also has a good chance of securing the fifth consecutive APRC title, having extended the lead in the manufacturers' standings. The top two in the drivers' championship, Gill and Fabian Kreim, have also built up a lead over the competitions after two of the season's six races. "My aim is to repeat my title win of 2013. Victory in Australia was an important step in that direction. It was extremely slippery but we found the right rhythm and our ŠKODA FABIA R5 remained fast and reliable to the finish, even in these extreme conditions."

The next stop for the APRC is China, on 6th and 7th August. Fabian Kreim is in action again before this – on Friday and Saturday he will be competing at the Rally Stewer Berg in the German Rally Championship, and one week later he will be racing at the Rally Bohemia in the Czech Rally Championship. The home race for ŠKODA takes place on 2nd and 3rd July, and will also feature this weekend's victorious works duo Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler.

The number for the Rally Queensland: 13

The ŠKODA MRF team was the clear winner in the APRC championship at the Rally Queensland, with the two FABIA R5s recording the best times in all 13 special stages. Gaurav Gill won all eight special stages on Saturday, finishing fastest 11 times overall. Fabian Kreim claimed first place on two occasions in the APRC. Sixteen stages had been scheduled originally, but four had to be cancelled due to heavy rain on Sunday afternoon. Only one stage could take place, and that was shortened to 1.20 kilometres.

FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC)

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date</u>
Rally Whangarei – New Zealand	29.04.–01.05.2016
Rally Queensland – Australia	18.06.–19.06.2016
Rally China – China	06.08.–07.08.2016
Rally Hokkaido – Japan	24.09.–25.09.2016
Rally Malaysia – Malaysia	29.10.–30.10.2016
Rally India – India	10.12.–11.12.2016



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Media images:**ŠKODA at the APRC rally in Australia**

The German duo Fabian Kreim and Frank Christian (D/D) finished in second place for the second time in the FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC).

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO

**ŠKODA at the APRC rally in Australia**

The newcomers were only beaten by team-mates Gaurav Gill/Glenn Macneall (IND/AUS), who lead the APRC overall standings with the ŠKODA MRF team.

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO





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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/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).

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.

