



ŠKODA Motorsport Press Release, Page 1 of 5

WRC 2: ŠKODA showdown at the Rally Spain heralds crucial phase of title race

- › Last year's winner Pontus Tidemand and Czech champion Jan Kopecký at the wheel for the ŠKODA works team
- › Teemu Suninen another title contender in the ŠKODA FABIA R5 – ten ŠKODA FABIA R5s in the starting field
- › Seven wins already for ŠKODA in the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2)
- › Michal Hrabánek: "The most experienced driver tends to win the Rally Spain"

Mladá Boleslav, 10 October 2016 – Ten ŠKODA FABIA R5s on the starting list, three of which are still in with a chance of winning the championship – the Rally Spain heralds the crucial phase of the FIA World Championship (WRC 2) with a genuine showdown between the ŠKODA drivers. Representing the ŠKODA Motorsport works team are last year's winner Pontus Tidemand (S) and his co-driver Jonas Andersson (S), and Czech champions Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler (CZ). From Thursday to Sunday they can expect an exciting battle with the man currently second in the championship, Teemu Suninen (FIN), at the wheel of a ŠKODA FABIA R5 run by a private team.

"We are at the business end of the season, and we have a high-class field," said ŠKODA Motorsport Director Michal Hrabánek. "Anyone wanting to win here must be on the very top of their game." He sees the Rally Spain as one of the highlights of the world championship season, as it is the only "hybrid rally", with one day predominantly on gravel and two on asphalt. "The most experienced driver, who copes best with all the different surfaces, tends to win the Rally Spain. It goes without saying that the driver also needs a perfect car to cope with these specific challenges. The fact that the field in Spain includes so many ŠKODA FABIA R5s speaks volumes for our rally car," said Hrabánek.

Although the first 3.20 of the 340 kilometres of special stage will take place on the asphalt roads of Barcelona on Thursday, the ŠKODA FABIA R5s will start with a gravel set-up. The reason: roughly 89 per cent of Friday's special stages will be contested on gravel roads. The ŠKODA Motorsport team then faces a big challenge on Friday evening: the mechanics have just 75 minutes to ensure the high-tech cars are ready for a return to asphalt roads, as the majority of Saturday and Sunday's special stages will be held on this surface.

Last year, the ŠKODA Motorsport drivers passed this test with flying colours: Pontus Tidemand and Jan Kopecký finished first and second – a success the two works drivers would love to repeat this year. "I obviously have fantastic memories of the Rally Spain. I definitely want to get back on the top step of the podium, although the opposition will be



ŠKODA Motorsport Press Release, Page 2 of 5

tough - particularly the ŠKODA's of Jan Kopecký and Teemu Suninen," said Tidemand. Recent victory at the Rally Uppsala in his native Sweden has given Tidemand a boost of confidence. On the same weekend, Kopecký finished runner-up at the Rally France. This represented the 20th podium for ŠKODA Motorsport with the FABIA R5 in the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2).

"I am looking forward to the Rally Spain. It will all come down to who adapts quickest to the different surfaces," said Kopecký. "If I can manage that, I have a good chance of winning. After three runner-up finishes in a row in WRC 2, it is about time I won one." Like team-mate Tidemand, he needs a win to keep his chances of winning the WRC 2 title alive. The man best placed in the title race is Teemu Suninen, who is currently second behind Elfyn Evans (120 points/seven races) with 93 points from five races. The third ŠKODA works driver Esapekka Lappi (82 points/five races) is also still in contention. He will not be in action in Spain, but could still pick up points in the remaining two races in Great Britain and Australia.

Seven of the last eight WRC 2 races have seen a ŠKODA FABIA R5 driver winning. Works driver Lappi won his home rally in Finland and triumphed again in Germany, while team-mate Pontus Tidemand (S) celebrated a win at the Rally Portugal. Victory in Mexico, on Sardinia and at the Rally Poland went to Suninen, while Nicolás Fuchs (PE) triumphed for ŠKODA at the Rally Argentina.

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 (cancelled)
Rally France	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



ŠKODA Motorsport Press Release, Page 3 of 5

Did you know ...

... the starting list for the Rally Spain features no fewer than ten ŠKODA FABIA R5s? As well as the two works duos Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson (S/S) and Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler (CZ/CZ), the following eight customer pairings will also be in action: Teemu Suninen/Mikko Markkula (FIN/FIN), Armin Kremer/Pirmin Winklhofer (D/D), Abdulaziz Al-Kuwari/Killian Duffi (Q/IRL), Ghislain de Mevius/Johan Jalet (B/B), Max Rendina/Emanuele Inglesi (I/I), Julien Maurin/Olivier Ural (F/F), Ole Christian Veiby/Stig Rune Skjærmoen (N/N) and Bernhard Ten Brinke/Davy Thierie (NL/NL).

... the WRC 2 drivers can only score points in seven selected rallies? The best six results then make up the driver's overall score. Britain's Elfyn Evans currently leads the way with 120 points following his victory at the Rally France. However, Evans has already completed his seven races, in which he can score points towards the overall standings. This leaves the title race wide open. Spain represents the penultimate opportunity to pick up points for second-placed Teemu Suninen (93 points) in his ŠKODA FABIA R5. ŠKODA works driver Esapekka Lappi (82) is not racing in Spain, but also has a further two opportunities to add to his points tally, with a maximum 25 points up for grabs at each rally. The other two ŠKODA works drivers, Jan Kopecký (55 points) and Pontus Tidemand (49), also have a mathematical chance of winning the title. To achieve this, however, they would have to win each of the three remaining rallies in Spain, Great Britain and Australia.

... the ŠKODA mechanics must be on the very top of their game at the Rally Spain? An extra-long service on Friday evening gives them 75 minutes to switch the two ŠKODA FABIA R5s of Pontus Tidemand and Jan Kopecký from a gravel to an asphalt set-up. In the case of many rally cars, this time will be used to replace springs and shock absorbers, adjust the right height and fit a thinner underbody protection, among other things.

... the drivers' visibility will be seriously hampered on the gravel roads on Friday? The dust whipped up by the cars often hangs in the air for several minutes, particularly in the valleys in the hilly Spanish landscape.

... the Rally Spain was held for the first time in 1957? It has formed part of the FIA World Rally Championship since 1991. It was first staged on the Costa Brava, before moving to Salou on the Costa Daurada.

... the service park is located in a theme park? The "PortAventura" park in the popular tourist town of Salou, near Tarragona, attracts thrill-seeking holidaymakers from around the world every summer. It also includes the Costa Caribe waterpark and four hotels.



ŠKODA Motorsport Press Release, Page 4 of 5

... the rally features what is probably the most spectacular roundabout in the World Rally Championship? The rally drivers must drive all the way around a roundabout on the Duesaiģües special stage. Failure to do this results in a 30-second penalty. This spectacular action obviously goes down well with the fans, thousands of whom flock to the stage, which, as it did last year, will again form the closing Power Stage in 2016.

For more information:

Zbyněk Straškraba, Communications Motorsport

T +420 605 293 168

zbynek.straskraba@skoda-auto.cz

<http://skoda-motorsport.com>

ŠKODA Motorsport:

 Facebook

 YouTube

 Twitter

 Instagram

Media images:



ŠKODA at the World Championship rally in Spain

Swedish ŠKODA works driver Pontus Tidemand won last year's Rally Spain alongside co-driver Emil Axelsson (S). This year, Jonas Andersson (S) will be navigating for him.

[Download](#)

Source: ŠKODA AUTO



ŠKODA at the World Championship rally in Spain

Czech ŠKODA works duo Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler claimed their third runner-up finish of the year in the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2) at the recent Rally France.

[Download](#)

Source: ŠKODA AUTO



ŠKODA Motorsport Press Release, Page 5 of 5

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, KODIAQ 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.