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## Championship battle enters finishing straight in Great Britain: three ŠKODA drivers set sights on the title

- › ŠKODA works drivers Esapekka Lappi and Jan Kopecký, as well as Teemu Suninen, still in with a shout of winning the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2)
- › All three works duos - Esapekka Lappi/Janne Ferm, Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler and Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson - line up in the WRC 2 class at the penultimate rally of the season
- › Michal Hrabánek: "The key now is to keep a cool head"

**Mladá Boleslav, 24 October 2016 – Three ŠKODA drivers will be fighting to keep their title hopes alive in the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2) at the Rally Great Britain. For works drivers Esapekka Lappi (FIN) and Jan Kopecký (CZ), as well as Teemu Suninen (FIN) in a ŠKODA FABIA R5 run by a private team, the penultimate round of the season from Friday to Saturday will go a long way to deciding who ends the year as champion. ŠKODA Motorsport is represented by three duos on the notorious Welsh gravel routes: Esapekka Lappi/Janne Ferm (FIN/FIN), Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler (CZ/CZ) and Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson (S/S).**

"The key now is to keep a cool head. This crucial stage of the season is all about driving to the best of one's ability, and also who has the strongest nerves," says ŠKODA Motorsport Director Michal Hrabánek. "This is all the more important because the Rally Great Britain is unpredictable, due to its unsettled weather. However, we go into the race full of confidence with our three teams, on the back of our one-two at the Rally Spain," Hrabánek continues.

The Rally Great Britain is regarded as one of the biggest challenges on the WRC calendar. Meteorologists agree that the weather in Wales is particularly unsettled. As well as unforeseeable weather, the crews are also faced with unpredictable surfaces. Parts of the gravel rally soon transform into a mud and sludge rally. For a total 332.87 kilometres against the clock, spread over 22 special stages, the drivers struggle with extremely low grip levels and the constant risk of crashing and ruining any hopes of success.

Despite this, Esapekka Lappi, who sat the last two rallies out, is looking forward to the Rally Great Britain: "I love these pressure situations and travel to Wales full of confidence. After all, we won our last two rallies in a row in Finland and Germany." Jan Kopecký is also riding the crest of a wave after his victory at the Rally Spain: "I showed



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there that I can also perform on gravel. I'm out to underline that in Wales," Kopecký continues.

The position is clear: ahead of the final two races in Great Britain and Australia, three ŠKODA drivers are still in contention in WRC 2. Teemu Suninen remains in second place with 105 points. He is followed by the two works drivers Esapekka Lappi (82) and Jan Kopecký (80). However, the two ŠKODA Motorsport drivers have competed in just five races this season, meaning they both have another two chances to pick up the 25 points on offer for a win. Suninen, on the other hand, can only pick up points at the Rally Great Britain. WRC 2 leader Elfyn Evans (GB/120 points) has already contested his full quota of seven races, at which he can score points towards the overall standings.

The chances of another ŠKODA triumph in Great Britain are looking good. After all, eight of the last nine WRC 2 races have been won by a driver at the wheel of the Czech carmaker's high-tech four-wheel drive car. Works driver Jan Kopecký won the Rally Spain last time out. Team-mate Esapekka Lappi was victorious at his home rally in Finland and in Germany. Teemu Suninen (FIN) came out on top in Mexico, Sardinia and Poland, while Nicolás Fuchs (PE) won the Rally Argentina for ŠKODA. Works driver Tidemand claimed victory at the Rally Portugal. The Swede may no longer be in with a shout of winning the title, but is out to show his potential in Great Britain: "I obviously want to make it onto the top step of the podium with ŠKODA!"

### 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
<b>Rally Great Britain</b>	<b>27.10.-30.10.2016</b>
Rally Australia	17.11.-20.11.2016



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### Did you know ...

... the Rally Great Britain is one of the absolute classics of the rally world and was held for the first time in 1932? Back then it was known as the "Royal Automobile Club Rally" and featured 367 crews.

... the Rally Great Britain predominantly takes place in Wales? This year it will return briefly to England for the first time since 1999. The Cholmondeley Castle stage is the final challenge facing the drivers on Saturday.

... no fewer than eight ŠKODA FABIAs have registered for the Rally Great Britain? As well as the three works duos of Esapekka Lappi/Janne Ferm (FIN/FIN), Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler (CZ/CZ) and Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson (S/S), five customer duos have also signed up for the WRC 2 class: Teemu Suninen/Mikko Markkula (FIN/FIN), Nicolás Fuchs/Fernando Mussano (PE/ARG) Abdulaziz Al-Kuwari/Killian Duffi (Q/IRL), Ole Christian Veiby/Stig Rune Skjærmoen (N/N) and David Bogie/Kevin Rae (GB/GB).

... ŠKODA Motorsport leads the Team competition in WRC 2? The Czech manufacturer tops the overall standings with 144 points, ahead of M-Sport (131) and Oreca (99).

... the drivers can only score world championship points if they have registered for the WRC 2 class? Each driver can score points towards the overall WRC 2 standings in seven races over the course of the year. The top six results count.

... ŠKODA has six drivers in the top seven places in the overall WRC 2 standings? After 11 of the season's 13 races, the chasing pack behind British leader Elfyn Evans (120 points from six starts so far) consists solely of FABIA R5 drivers: Teemu Suninen (105/six starts), works driver Esapekka Lappi (82/five starts), Jan Kopecký (80/five starts), Pontus Tidemand (67/five starts), Nicolás Fuchs (59/five starts) and Armin Kremer (D/55/six starts).

... one of the wettest places in Europe is located in Wales? The heaviest rain falls in the Snowdonia National Park, in the north-west of Wales, at the time of the rally - between October and March. Meteorologists record annual rainfall of about 3,000 millimetres here.

... the Rally Great Britain was cancelled in 1957 due to the Suez crisis and a fuel shortage?

... the 1986 Rally Great Britain was the last time Group B cars were used? Following the season finale in Great Britain, the "turbo monsters" were banned from the World Rally Championship for being too fast and too dangerous.



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#### ŠKODA at the World Championship rally in Great Britain

Esapekka Lappi/Janne Ferm (FIN/FIN) were victorious at their home rally in Finland and in Germany this season, and are the best-placed ŠKODA works duo in the overall standings in third place.

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



#### ŠKODA at the World Championship rally in Great Britain

Czech champions Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler won the most recent rally in Spain. Asphalt specialist Kopecký has picked up a total of 61 world championship points from the last three rallies.

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



#### ŠKODA at the World Championship rally in Great Britain

Swedish works duo Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson are the third ŠKODA works duo in action at the Rally Great Britain. They finished second to complete the ŠKODA one-two in Spain.

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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, KODIAQ and SUPERB.
- > in 2015 delivered more than 1 million vehicles to customers worldwide.
- > has belonged to Volkswagen Group since 1991. The Volkswagen Group is one of the most successful vehicle manufacturers 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.