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WRC Spain: Challenging first day for ŠKODA Jan Kopecký third and Juuso Nordgren fifth

- › Last year's winner Jan Kopecký delayed by dust, fighting back to third in WRC 2 at RallyRACC Catalunya, the Spanish round of the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC)
- › 2015 Finnish Junior Champion Juuso Nordgren inside top five after difficult start
- › ŠKODA Motorsport boss Michal Hrabánek: "There are two more challenging days on tarmac to come, I am confident that Jan and Juuso can catch up."

Salou, 6 October 2017 – ŠKODA Motorsport teams Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler (CZE/CZE) and Juuso Nordgren/Tapio Suominen (FIN/FIN) faced a challenging start at RallyRACC Catalunya – Rallye de España, the Spanish round of the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC). Driving a ŠKODA FABIA R5 Czech Rally Champion Jan Kopecký was delayed during the third stage, when he caught the competitor in front of him. Due to visibility problems in the dust he lost more than one minute. In the same stage Juuso Nordgren almost had to stop when a competitor blocked the road after an accident. Putting those mishaps aside both ŠKODA factory teams fought back to third respective fifth position in the overall standings of the WRC 2 category.

The Spanish round of the World Rally Championship, RallyRACC Catalunya – Rallye de España, offers a unique challenge. It is the championship's only mixed surface rally. The first leg on Friday was run mainly on gravel. After two pure gravel stages over 12.5 and 6.5 kilometres, the third stage "Terra Alta" offered nearly 39 kilometres of gravel and some tarmac sections. This classic Catalunya stage caused all kind of dramas in the WRC 2 field. ŠKODA Motorsport's Jan Kopecký caught the car in front of him (which was started three minutes ahead of him) and had to complete the last part of the stage in his competitor's dust. Delayed by more than a minute he dropped from second to fourth position. "I am not happy. We asked for a bigger gap between us and the car in front of us. I knew that even three minutes were not enough. As we didn't get it we have lost a lot of time in the dust before we caught them. It should not be like this", complained a disappointed Kopecký. At the end of the day, with a fastest time on last test, the Czech champion moved back into third position in WRC 2 category.

Youngster Juuso Nordgren, competing in one of the factory team's ŠKODA FABIA R5 for the very first time, also had a special moment. "Stage 3 was really a difficult one. Hiroki Arai crashed and rolled his car, which was lying together with a tree in the middle of the road. I had to slow down and to drive around very carefully." He was third fastest in the last three stages of the day and moved up to fifth position at the end of leg one.

"The opening day of RallyRACC Catalunya was a really challenging one for ŠKODA Motorsport. But that's rallying! There are two more demanding days on tarmac to come. I am confident that especially Jan will do his best to catch up in the WRC 2 standings, while Juuso has to continue his learning process," concluded ŠKODA Motorsport boss Michal Hrabánek at the finish of the first leg.

At the evening service in Salou the cars were changed from gravel to tarmac specification. They were equipped with bigger brakes, tarmac suspension and slick tyres. On Saturday and Sunday all





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stages are entirely run on asphalt. Saturday will be the longest day of the rally, featuring seven stages totalling around 122 kilometres.

Standings RallyRACC Catalunya – Rallye de España after leg 1 (WRC 2)

1. Suninen/Markkula (FIN/FIN), Ford Fiesta R5, 1:15:16.6 h.
2. Tempestini/Bernacchini (ITA/ITA), Citroën DS3 R5, +1:17.2 min.
3. Kopecký/Dresler (CZE/CZE), ŠKODA FABIA R5, +1:18.8 min.
4. Guerra/Cué (MEX/ESP), ŠKODA FABIA R5, + 1.44.4 min.
5. Nordgren/Suominen (FIN/FIN), ŠKODA FABIA R5, +2.31.9 min.
6. Pieniazek/Mazur (POL/POL), Peugeot 208 T16, +2.46.6 min.

Number of the day: 75

At the evening service the mechanics had 75 minutes to completely change the ŠKODA FABIA R5 from a car with gravel specification to a race car with tarmac set up for the remaining 13 asphalt stages on Saturday and Sunday. Mainly suspension, brakes and tyres will be changed by the ŠKODA Motorsport mechanics.

The 2017 calendar of the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2)

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date</u>
Rallye Monte Carlo	19/01/–22/01/2017
Rally Sweden	09/02/–12/02/2017
Rally Guanajuato México	09/03/–12/03/2017
Tour de Corse – Rally France	06/04/–09/04/2017
Rally Argentina	27/04/–30/04/2017
Rally de Portugal	18/05/–21/05/2017
Rally Italia Sardegna	08/06/–11/06/2017
Rally Poland	29/06/–02/07/2017
Rally Finland	27/07/–30/07/2017
ADAC Rallye Deutschland	17/08/–20/08/2017
RallyRACC Catalunya – Rallye de España	05/10/–08/10/2017
Wales Rally GB	26/10/–29/10/2017
Rally Australia	16/11/–19/11/2017

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Media images:



ŠKODA at RallyRACC Catalunya – Rallye de España

At the Spanish round of the WRC 2 youngster Juuso Nordgren is competing for the first time in a factory run ŠKODA FABIA R5 of ŠKODA Motorsport

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



ŠKODA at Rally RACC Catalunya – Rallye de España

After being delayed in the beginning Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler (ŠKODA FABIA R5) moved into third in WRC 2 category at RallyRACC Catalunya – Rallye de España

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO

ŠKODA Motorsport Overview

ŠKODA has been successful 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 winning the title in the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2) for the first time in 2016, 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.

2016 was one of the most successful years in the history of ŠKODA Motorsport. In the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2), Esapekka Lappi/Janne Ferm (FIN/FIN) won the title for the Czech car maker for the first time. In total, ten of the 2016 season's races in the World Rally Championship were won by a ŠKODA FABIA R5. ŠKODA drivers Gustavo Saba (PRY) and Gaurav Gill (IND) also won the continental championships in South America and the Asia-Pacific region at the wheel of the successful ŠKODA FABIA R5. Nasser Al-Attiyah (QAT) was unbeatable in the Middle East Rally Championship (MERC), while a further ten national titles also went the way of ŠKODA drivers.

The ŠKODA FABIA R5, a high-tech 4x4, was homologated by the International Automobile Federation FIA on 1 April 2015. ŠKODA's new FABIA R5 is successfully continuing the long tradition of ŠKODA Motorsport. Its predecessor, the FABIA SUPER 2000, won 50 national and international titles around the world. In 2017, works duos Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson (SWE/SWE) and Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler (CZE/CZE) will contest selected races in the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2). Kopecký/Dresler will also compete in the Czech Rally Championship (MČR), where they will be looking to claim a third title in a row.

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- › 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 2016 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 30,000 people globally and is active in more than 100 markets.

