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ŠKODA's WRC 2 Champion Pontus Tidemand leading in Wales – Juuso Nordgren seventh

- › After the first leg of Wales Rally GB, British round of the 2017 World Rally Championship (WRC), Pontus Tidemand and co-driver Jonas Andersson head the WRC 2 category
- › ŠKODA teammates Juuso Nordgren/Tapio Suominen drove cautiously, steadily improving their stage times and eventually moved up to seventh position in WRC 2
- › Driving a factory ŠKODA FABIA R5 for the first time Norwegian youngsters Ole Christian Veiby/Stig Rune Skjaermoen rolled during stage 5 and had to retire from second
- › ŠKODA Motorsport boss Michal Hrabánek: "Pontus is driving really well while Juuso is showing steady progress on his first Wales Rally GB."

Deeside/Wales, 27 October 2017 – Mixed emotions for the team of ŠKODA Motorsport at Wales Rally GB, the penultimate round of the 2017 World Rally Championship (WRC). While newly crowned WRC 2 Champions Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson (SWE/SWE), driving a ŠKODA FABIA R5, moved into the lead already on the first stage and built a convincing lead until the end of the first leg, Ole Christian Veiby/Stig Rune Skjaermoen (NOR/NOR) had to retire from second after they rolled their ŠKODA FABIA R5 during the fifth stage. Meanwhile teammates Juuso Nordgren and Tapio Suominen from Finland demonstrated a steep learning curve. Step by step they improved their speed, eventually moving up to seventh position at the end of the first leg.

After the 1.53 kilometres short but spectacular show stage at the Tir Prince trotting track in Towyn, which was won by Pontus Tidemand, the real action started on Friday morning in the Welsh forests. The biggest challenges for the drivers were the unpredictable surface and frequent grip changes on the gravel stages. As bright blue sky and sunshine are not the typical weather conditions in Wales at this time of the year, some passages of the stages offered a lot of grip, others were still muddy and slippery. "You have to read the road and have to adapt your driving style permanently," ŠKODA factory driver Pontus Tidemand described the challenge.

Having prematurely won the WRC 2 Championship, Pontus Tidemand and co-driver Jonas Andersson could start without any tactical considerations. Already on Friday's first special stage, the 20 kilometres of Myherin, they set the fastest time. On the 4 kilometres short stage "Sweet Lamb", which was visited by ten thousands of spectators, he was fastest again. Unfortunately, on the next stage he lost some time stuck behind a slower competitor from the WRC Trophy who had started in front of him. ŠKODA's young Norwegian O.C. Veiby was fastest in there. Up to the rest halt after four stages in Newtown, Tidemand and Veiby had secured a double lead for ŠKODA Motorsport. On his very first Wales Rally GB Juuso Nordgren opted for a cautious approach, at that time nevertheless lying inside the top ten after a trouble free morning.

The afternoon saw the repetition of the three morning stages. For second placed Norwegian youngster team Ole Christian Veiby/Stig Rune Skjaermoen all went wrong during the second passage of the Hafren stage. They rolled their ŠKODA FABIA R5 just 1.2 kilometres after the start into a ditch. A broken damper finished their day prematurely. "I cut a corner too much, hit a stone and rolled, what a pity," commented Veiby. Meanwhile team captain Tidemand scored another



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fastest stage time and steadily moved away from his closest competitor, Ford driver Eric Camilli. At the end of leg 1, Tidemand was leading the WRC 2 category by more than 40 seconds. "In the middle of the last stage I struggled to find the rhythm, but afterwards it got better. But for sure I like this rally," admitted the newly crowned WRC 2 champion during the evening service at Deeside.

Juuso Nordgren steadily improved his speed during the second passages of the Friday stages, moving up to seventh position in the WRC 2 category standings. ŠKODA Motorsport boss Michal Hrabánek commented at the finish of leg 1: "Pontus is driving really well, Juuso impressed us with his constant progress on his first Wales Rally GB. I am sorry for O.C., he was really fast before his accident happened – but that's rally!"

On Saturday a real marathon is waiting for the crews. They have to face 17 hours on the road, including 142 kilometres on nine stages – seven of them without any service in between. On Sunday, five stages and 41 kilometres will bring the final decision, the eventual winner crossing the podium at the seaside resort of Llandudno around 14h00.

Standings Wales Rally GB after leg 1 (WRC 2)

1. Tidemand/Andersson (SWE/SWE), ŠKODA FABIA R5, 1:13:37.1 h.
2. Camilli/Veillas (FRA/FRA), Ford Fiesta R5, +43.1 sec.
3. Cave/Morgan (GBR/GBR), Ford Fiesta R5, +46.4 sec.
4. Brynildsen/Frederiksson (NOR/SWE), Ford Fiesta R5, +53.6 sec.
5. Bogie/Rae (GBR/GBR), ŠKODA FABIA R5, + 1:01.9 min
6. Loubet/Landais (FRA/FRA), Ford Fiesta R5, +1:21.2
7. Nordgren/Suominen (FIN/FIN), ŠKODA FABIA R5, +1:33.1 min.

Number of the day: 5

The newly crowned WRC 2 Champions Pontus Tidemand and co-driver Jonas Andersson, driving a ŠKODA FABIA R5, scored five fastest times on the so far seven stages of Wales Rally GB. One fastest time went to teammate O.C. Veiby, Ford driver Teemu Suninen was quickest on the last stage of the day.



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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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ŠKODA at Wales Rally GB

WRC 2 Champions Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson, driving a ŠKODA FABIA R5, are convincingly leading Wales Rally GB after leg 1

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



ŠKODA at Wales Rally GB

Juuso Nordgren and Tapio Suominen (ŠKODA FABIA R5) are steadily improving their speed on the challenging special stages of Wales Rally GB

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO





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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.

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 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.

