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Rally Portugal: ŠKODA's Pontus Tidemand aiming for hat-trick victory in WRC 2 category

- › After victories in 2016 and 2017, current WRC 2 overall leaders Pontus Tidemand and Jonas Andersson, driving a ŠKODA FABIA R5, target third category win in a row
- › ŠKODA Junior Team Juuso Nordgren/Tapio Suominen from Finland compete for the first time in the 2018 World Rally Championship (WRC 2) for ŠKODA Motorsport
- › In total twelve ŠKODA crews fighting for honours in WRC 2 category and RC 2 class

Mladá Boleslav, 14 May 2018 – Reigning WRC 2 Champions Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson (SWE/SWE) are entering the competition at Rally Portugal (17/05–20/05/2018) leading the WRC 2 championship standings. Second placed ŠKODA teammates Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler (CZE/CZE) will compete at Rallye Český Krumlov at the same weekend instead of travelling to Portugal. Meanwhile promising Finnish juniors Juuso Nordgren/Tapio Suominen will make their 2018 WRC 2 season debut driving another ŠKODA FABIA R5 run by the factory team of ŠKODA Motorsport.

Three years ago, the ŠKODA FABIA R5 started its success story with a strong debut on the gravel roads of Rally Portugal. Homologated on 1 April 2015, the brand-new R5 machine proved right from the start that it will be the car to beat in WRC 2 and currently is the most successful car in the category. On top of that, Pontus Tidemand and Jonas Andersson have more good memories of Rally Portugal. "Back in 2015, it was my first rally with the ŠKODA FABIA R5. One year later, we could win there for the first time, and in 2017, we were lucky to be the winners again after a dramatic final on the last stage. I really love to drive the nice gravel stages of Portugal and want to win for a third time in a row," reigning WRC 2 champion Tidemand looks forward to the sixth round of the 2018 FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2).

Promising Finnish juniors Juuso Nordgren/Tapio Suominen will start their 2018 WRC 2 campaign driving a second ŠKODA FABIA R5. "My first rally for ŠKODA Motorsport this year was the second round of Czech Rally Championship, the Rally Šumava Klatovy, where I finished third. It was nearly hundred per cent on tarmac roads with only some small gravel sections. Now I am really looking forward to drive the ŠKODA FABIA R5 on pure gravel roads," says Nordgren.

With four wins out of five rounds in the WRC 2 category of the 2018 FIA World Rally Championship, ŠKODA Motorsport boss Michal Hrabánek is hoping for another great result for the Czech manufacturer. "The competition will be very tense at Rally Portugal. I am happy to see, that among the 35 entries in WRC 2 category and RC 2 class no fewer than twelve crews are competing with a ŠKODA FABIA R5. With three starts Pontus Tidemand so far won two of the five 2018 rallies. He can further increase his lead in the WRC 2 Championship. For Juuso, it is all about learning. Last year, he already proved, that he is really fast on gravel," comments Hrabánek.

After moving back to the north of the country to the region around Porto in 2015, Rally Portugal is one of the most spectator crowded events of the FIA World Rally Championship. The notorious Fafe jump alone every year attracts tens of thousands of spectators.



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The rally starts on Thursday (17 May) with a show stage on the rallycross circuit of Lousada. The first full day of action on Friday (18 May) features eight stages in the far north near the border to Spain, covering nearly 150 kilometres. Like in 2017, Saturday (19 May) offers the longest leg, running over nearly 155 kilometres divided in six special stages with a mixture of sandy roads, rocks and deep ruts during the second pass of the stages. The right tyre choice between soft compounds for more traction and hard compound in order to manage tyre wear on the long stages is one of the keys to success. On Sunday (20 May), the spectacular Fafe loop with five stages on fast and smooth gravel roads, including the famous jump, is the spectator highlight of the event. In total, the teams will face 20 special stages of 358.19 kilometres, before the winner will reach the podium on Sunday at 15h45 in Matosinhos close to the city of Porto.

Did you know...

... that Rally Portugal was first held in 1967 and in 1973 was one of the founding events of the then new World Rally Championship?

... that until 1994 the rally traditionally started in Estoril close to Lisbon and the first leg was held on tarmac before it became an all-gravel event in 1995?

... that in 1996, due to the FIA's calendar rotating system, Rally Portugal did not count for the World Rally Championship?

... that from 2007 to 2014 the rally was held in the Algarve region before moving back to the north?

...that the ŠKODA FABIA R5 made its World Rally Championship debut at Rally Portugal in 2015 and up to now 200 units of this model have been sold to customer teams worldwide?

... that in 2012 Sébastien Ogier won his class with a ŠKODA FABIA S2000, finishing an impressive 7th overall, and again in 2013 Esapekka Lappi won WRC 2 with a ŠKODA FABIA S2000?

The calendar of the 2018 FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2)

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date</u>
Monte-Carlo	24/01–28/01/2018
Sweden	15/02–18/02/2018
Mexico	08/03–11/03/2018
France	05/04–08/04/2018
Argentina	26/04–29/04/2018
Portugal	17/05–20/05/2018
Italy	07/06–10/06/2018
Finland	26/07–29/07/2018
Germany	16/08–19/08/2018
Turkey	13/09–16/09/2018
Great Britain	04/10–07/10/2018
Spain	25/10–28/10/2018
Australia	15/11–18/11/2018



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ŠKODA at Rally Portugal 2018

Reigning WRC 2 Champions Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson (SWE/SWE), driving a ŠKODA FABIA R5, want to achieve a hat-trick win in the WRC 2 category.

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



ŠKODA at Rally Portugal 2018

Finnish ŠKODA juniors Juuso Nordgren and Tapio Suominen are making their 2018 WRC 2 season debut on board a ŠKODA FABIA R5.

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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.

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 the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2) 2016, Esapekka Lappi/Janne Ferm (FIN/FIN) won the title for the Czech car maker. 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.

2017 was the most successful year in the history of ŠKODA Motorsport. Works duo Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson (S/S) became WRC 2 Champions, ŠKODA Motorsport won the Team Championship. Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler (CZ/CZ) won the Czech Rally Championship (MČR) for the third time in a row and are the spearhead of in total 14 crews winning their country's national titles. Furthermore the FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC), the FIA South American Rally Championship (CODASUR) and the FIA African Rally Championship (ARC) have been won by teams competing in a ŠKODA FABIA R5.

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, KAROQ, KODIAQ and SUPERB.
- › in 2017 delivered more than 1.2 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, Algeria and India mainly through Group partnerships, as well as in Ukraine and Kazakhstan through local partners.
- › employs over 35,000 people globally and is active in more than 100 markets.

