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Rally Portugal: ŠKODA's Tidemand storms into lead of WRC 2 – teammate Nordgren up to sixth

- › After a set back with two punctures during the Friday leg, WRC 2 Champions Pontus Tidemand /Jonas Andersson powered their ŠKODA FABIA R5 back into the WRC 2 lead
- › Despite another two punctures, ŠKODA Junior Team Juuso Nordgren/Tapio Suominen climbed to sixth on the WRC 2 leader board at the end of Saturday
- › ŠKODA Motorsport boss Michal Hrabánek: "Pontus impressed me with his strong performance on the longest day of the rally."

Matosinhos, 19 Mai 2018 – During the Saturday leg of Rally Portugal, sixth round of the FIA World Rally Championship, reigning WRC 2 Champions Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson (SWE/SWE) stormed through the WRC 2 field and moved into the category lead. After two punctures on Friday, the ŠKODA FABIA R5 crew had to fight back from fifth. Their Finnish teammates Juuso Nordgren/Tapio Suominen, after having encountered the same bad luck the day before, initially progressed a lot throughout the day. But another two punctures on the last two stages of the day put them back to sixth in the WRC 2 standings.

The opening leg on Friday was one of the toughest in modern history of the FIA World Rally Championship. A record number of punctures and the fact, that even in the main WRC class only eight competitors made it to the day's finish in Matosinhos near Porto, were a clear proof of the tough challenge all the teams had to face. ŠKODA factory crews Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson and Juuso Nordgren/Tapio Suominen were as well affected by mishaps, both crews suffering two punctures each. But apart from that, their ŠKODA FABIA R5 proved again to be rock solid. Pontus Tidemand and Jonas Andersson started Saturday in fifth position, Juuso Nordgren on ninth place in the WRC 2 category. The longest day of Rally Portugal on Saturday, comprising of six special stages totalling nearly 155 kilometres with a mixture of sandy roads, rocks and deep ruts during the second pass of the stages, was waiting for the crews.

And the ŠKODA drivers started well into the day. Tidemand was fastest in the opening stage and moved up to fourth position, while his young teammate Nordgren was second quickest. Once in a good rhythm, Swedish WRC 2 Champion Tidemand started to storm through the WRC 2 field, setting two more fastest times and moving up to second until the midday service break at Matosinhos. Nordgren was third fastest on the longest stage of the rally, the 37 kilometres of Amarante, and found himself in seventh place in the interim WRC 2 standings. After the service, Pontus Tidemand set a string of fastest times, conquering the WRC 2 lead after the repetition of the more than 37 kilometres long Amarante stage. Lukas Pieniazek delivered a great performance as well, moving up to second of the day's classification in his private ŠKODA FABIA R5. After suffering two more punctures during the last two stages of the day, ŠKODA junior Juuso Nordgren nevertheless reached Saturday's finish sixth in the WRC 2 category standings.

"Pontus impressed me with his strong performance on the longest day of the rally. Now he is in a good position for a hat-trick win in Portugal. I feel sorry for Juuso, but mishaps like these are part of the learning process of a young driver," commented ŠKODA Motorsport boss Michal Hrabánek.





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On Sunday (20 May), the spectacular Fafe loop with five stages on fast and smooth gravel roads, including the famous jump, is set to be the spectator highlight of the event. The rally winner will reach the podium on Sunday at 15h45 local time in Matosinhos close to Porto.

Standings Rally Portugal after Day 3 (WRC 2)

1. Tidemand/Andersson (SWE/SWE), ŠKODA FABIA R5, 3:29:22.7 h
2. Pieniazek/Mazur (POL/POL), ŠKODA FABIA R5, +1:19.4 min
3. Lefebvre/Moreau (FRA/FRA), Citroën C3 R5, +2:07.7 min
4. Loubet/Landais (FRA/FRA), Hyundai i20 R5, +2:15.8 min
5. Arai/Macneall (JPN/AUS), Ford Fiesta R5, +2:52.8
6. Nordgren/Suominen (FIN/FIN), ŠKODA FABIA R5, +4:06.6 min

Number of the day: 6

During the Saturday leg, ŠKODA factory crew Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson won all six stages.

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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Media images:



ŠKODA at Rally Portugal 2018

WRC 2 Champions Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson (SWE/SWE), driving a ŠKODA FABIA R5, fought back into the lead of the WRC 2 category at Rally Portugal

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



ŠKODA at Rally Portugal 2018

Finnish ŠKODA juniors Juuso Nordgren and Tapio Suominen were delayed by another two punctures and are sixth after the Saturday leg

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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.

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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, 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.

