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Page 1 of 4

RallyRACC Catalunya: ŠKODA youngster Rovanperä second in tense fight at WRC 2 top

- › ŠKODA youngster Kalle Rovanperä and co-driver Jonne Halttunen hold second place in WRC 2 category after second day of FIA World Rally Championship's penultimate round
- › At the end of Friday WRC 2 champions to be Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler fourth with their ŠKODA FABIA R5 in thrilling battle with Volkswagen Motorsport works crews
- › After the gravel leg two more days on tarmac are waiting for the crews

Salou, 26 October 2018 – ŠKODA junior Kalle Rovanperä and co-driver Jonne Halttunen (FIN/FIN) finished the Friday leg second in the WRC 2 category at RallyRACC Catalunya – Rally de España (25/10–28/10/2018), twelfth round of the FIA World Rally Championship. Newly crowned WRC 2 champions Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler start the Saturday in fourth place and as well in a good position to fight for the victory in the WRC 2 category (*title subject to official publication of the results by the FIA*).

The RallyRACC Catalunya started on Thursday evening in Barcelona with the fabulous street stage in the Montjuic district just in front of historic palaces and monuments. ŠKODA Motorsport's Jan Kopecký and co-driver Pavel Dresler, despite of knowing already before the start that they will be 2018 WRC 2 champions, spend no time to admire the beautiful scenery. They powered their ŠKODA FABIA R5 to third quickest time in the WRC 2 category, just 0.4 seconds behind teammates Kalle Rovanperä and navigator Jonne Halttunen. Meanwhile Volkswagen Motorsport made an impressive return to the world of rallying with Eric Camilli/Benjamin Veillas setting the first fastest time with their brand-new Volkswagen Polo GTI R5.

On Friday morning, the gravel loop with six special stages totalling around 144 kilometres had to be driven. They offered a special challenge to the crews, because some tarmac passages were included as well. After a warm up of seven kilometres, a 26 kilometres test and on top of that, the longest stage of the rally, the more than 38 kilometres of "La Fatarella-Vilalba", were waiting for the 20 crews of the WRC 2 category.

The category battle was tense during the first loop of the three gravel stages. Camilli (Volkswagen) set the first best time, while Huttunen (Hyundai) was quickest on the next stage. Rovanperä (ŠKODA) was second in the category after two stages, new WRC 2 champion Kopecký held sixth position in the interim category standings. On the more than 38 kilometres of the fourth special stage, Jan Kopecký set the second quickest time, which made him move up to third position, while teammate Kalle Rovanperä had a technical issue. "One kilometre after the start, the handling of the car was feeling a bit strange. First, we thought, we have a puncture and discussed whether to stop. Luckily, we carried on and later found out that there was something wrong with a shock absorber, which was changed at service. It was really a shame, this was a stage that could have made a difference," the Finnish Youngster commented. He dropped from second to fifth position, still with the podium in sight.

The afternoon loop saw the repetition of the morning stages. Rovanperä set the first fastest time, and with a third quickest stage time on the next one, he moved up to third position ahead of Kopecký. The fight for the lead and WRC 2 podium positions between the Volkswagen and ŠKODA



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Page 2 of 4

crews was getting more and more intense. On the repetition of the longest stage of the rally, Kalle Rovanperä set another best time and moved up to second position in the category. WRC 2 Champion Jan Kopecký reached the end of Friday in fourth position, looking forward to the tarmac stages of Saturday to fight for another win. Although the weather forecast promises colder temperatures and rain, the fight in the WRC 2 category for sure will be hot again!

All remaining stages of the rally will be entirely run on asphalt. The winner will reach the podium at the rally's host town Salou in the south of Catalunya's capital Barcelona at 14h01 on Sunday (local time).

Standings RallyRACC Catalunya – Rally de España after Day 2 (WRC 2)

1. Camilli/Veillas (FRA/FRA), Volkswagen Polo GTI R5, 1:38:23.9 h
2. Rovanperä/Halttunen (FIN/FIN), ŠKODA FABIA R5, +11.8 sec.
3. P. Solberg/Engan (NOR/NOR), Volkswagen Polo GTI R5, +20.4. sec.
4. Kopecký/Dresler (CZE/CZE), ŠKODA FABIA R5, +21.1 sec.
5. Solans/Marti (ESP/ESP), Ford Fiesta R5, +42.0 sec.

Number of the day: 20

20 WRC 2 competitors started RACC Rally Catalunya, which clearly proves the success of the category.

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

ŠKODA MOTORSPORT PRESS RELEASE



Page 3 of 4

Further information:

Zbyněk Straškraba, Communications Motorsport

P +420 605 293 168

zbynek.straskraba@skoda-auto.cz

<http://skoda-motorsport.com>

ŠKODA Motorsport:



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ŠKODA at RallyRACC Catalunya 2018

After the Friday leg ŠKODA youngster Kalle Rovanperä and co-driver Jonne Halttunen (ŠKODA FABIA R5) are second in the WRC 2 category at RallyRACC Catalunya

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ŠKODA at RallyRACC Catalunya 2018

WRC 2 champions to be Jan Kopecký and Pavel Dresler (ŠKODA FABIA R5) finished the Friday leg in fourth position and want to crown a successful season with another WRC 2 victory

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ŠKODA Media Services

media@skoda-auto.cz



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Page 4 of 4

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. In 2018 Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler (CZ/CZ) managed to win the Czech Rally Championship (MČR) for the fourth consecutive time.

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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.

ŠKODA Media Services
media@skoda-auto.cz



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