

# ŠKODA MOTORSPORT PRESS RELEASE



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## Rally Sweden: ŠKODA Motorsport's Kalle Rovannerä chases lead in WRC 2 Pro category

- › With a good result, Kalle Rovannerä and co-driver Jonne Halttunen (ŠKODA FABIA R5) from Finland want move up in the standings of the world championship's new category
- › Finnish Champion Eerik Pietarinen and co-driver Juhana Raitanen are also nominated by ŠKODA Motorsport as points scorer in WRC 2 Pro
- › With a total of 16 ŠKODA FABIA R5, the Czech brand represents more than half of the 30 crews strong entry list of R5 cars

Mladá Boleslav, 12 February 2019 – At the upcoming Rally Sweden (14/02–17/02/2019), second round of the FIA World Rally Championship, ŠKODA Motorsport has entered two teams into the WRC 2 Pro category. Finnish ŠKODA works crew Kalle Rovannerä and co-driver Jonne Halttunen as well as their compatriots Eerik Pietarinen/Juhana Raitanen are fighting for glory in the 30 crews strong field of R5 cars. In the new WRC 2 Pro category for works teams and drivers, five crews representing ŠKODA, Ford and Citroën are registered for the spectacular high-speed event on Swedish and Norwegian forest tracks.

During the first round of this year's FIA World Rally Championship, the Rally Monte-Carlo, Kalle Rovannerä and co-driver Jonne Halttunen showed great moral. After getting caught by an icy patch and putting their ŠKODA FABIA R5 off the road during the first special stage, they started an impressive race to catch up which finally brought them from last position exactly 66 places up. Already last year, fellow Finn Eerik Pietarinen delivered a stunning performance by powering his ŠKODA FABIA R5 to WRC 2 category victory at Rally Finland, later becoming Finnish Rally Champion. Pietarinen secured the support of the Finnish ŠKODA importer and is nominated by ŠKODA Motorsport as second official driver in the WRC 2 Pro category at Rally Sweden. Rovannerä/Halttunen and Pietarinen/Raitanen are two of in total 16 crews entered in a ŠKODA FABIA R5. The Czech brand represents more than the half on the 30 crews strong field of R5 cars.

Rally Sweden starts on Thursday (14 February) at 20h04 with a show stage on the spectacular trotting course of Karlstad in the south of Sweden. The 1.9 kilometres long spectacular test is only the opener for the real action, which will commence on Friday (15 February). The crews leave the service park in Torsby at 6h00 in the morning to head for three days of additional 18 special stages, which are covering in total nearly 320 kilometres on the remote forest tracks of Sweden and Norway. The rally finishes on Sunday (17 February) with the final Power Stage close to the service park in Torsby, the winners will be on the podium around 13h00.

### Ahead of Rally Sweden, we had the chance to talk to Kalle Rovannerä:

*Kalle, if you look back to the 2019 opening round at Rally Monte-Carlo, what are your feelings?*

**Kalle Rovannerä:** "Although I secured valuable championship points for my WRC 2 Pro tally, this was not exactly the result I was aiming for. After our mishap during the first special stage, when we went off the road, we could set some good stage times. Anyway, the experience I collected during this year's Rally Monte-Carlo will for sure help me in the future."



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*What are your expectations for Rally Sweden?*

**Kalle Rovannerä:** "It's my first time at Rally Sweden. But I love to drive on snow and ice and I am really looking forward to it. To be able to win in Sweden, you have to drive absolutely on the limit and you cannot afford to make one single mistake"

*You are now facing your second season for the ŠKODA Motorsport factory team. What are your targets for 2019?*

**Kalle Rovannerä:** "Last year, except for Wales Rally GB, every world championship event was totally new to me. This season, I can benefit from the experience I made during the seven events I competed in 2018. But I still have to learn a lot. As I said, Rally Sweden is new to me, but I cannot wait to start the competition together with my co-driver Jonne Halttunen. Our ŠKODA FABIA R5 is as well prepared as we are."

*ŠKODA Motorsport nominated you for WRC 2 Pro. What do you think about this new category?*

**Kalle Rovannerä:** "Everything, that brings our sport forward, is good. I love competition, and especially at Rally Sweden, we can expect a nice fight within the WRC 2 Pro category and among the huge field of R5 cars. With a good result, I can take the lead of the WRC 2 Pro classification. But my main target is to be fully concentrated in order to deliver a faultless performance and to be quick on the stages. I am really looking forward to drive."

## Did you know...

...that Rally Sweden was first run in 1950 and for years was held in summer under the name of "Rally to the Midnight Sun", before it became a winter event in 1965?

...that during the event the temperature can fall below -25 degrees Celsius?

...that the drivers sometimes use a special cornering style, leaning their car on the snow banks lining the tracks in order to achieve higher speeds?

...that each rally crew has to carry a shovel on board in order to be able to dig the car out of the snow in case of an off-road excursion?

...that the special snow tyres are fitted with 384 studs, which are 20 millimetres long each?

...that in 1973 only tyres without studs were allowed and Swedish hero Stig Blomqvist won the event despite having lost ten minutes with a fuel pump issue early on?

...that in 1993 Pavel Sibera/Petr Gross won the A5 driving a ŠKODA FAVORIT 136L?

...that the famous "Colin's Crest" – named after former World Champion Colin McRae – provides spectacular jumps and is visited by thousands of spectators?



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## The calendar of the 2019 FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2 Pro)

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date</u>
Monte-Carlo	24/01–27/01/2019
<b>Sweden</b>	<b>14/02–17/02/2019</b>
Mexico	07/03–10/03/2019
France	28/03–31/03/2019
Argentina	25/04–28/04/2019
Chile	09/05–12/05/2019
Portugal	30/05–02/06/2019
Italy	13/06–16/06/2019
Finland	01/08–04/08/2019
Germany	22/08–25/08/2019
Turkey	12/09–15/09/2019
Great Britain	03/10–06/10/2019
Spain	24/10–27/10/2019
Australia	14/11–17/11/2019

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#### ŠKODA at Rally Sweden

With a good result, Kalle Rovander and co-driver Jonne Halttunen (ŠKODA FABIA R5) want to conquer the lead in the WRC 2 Pro category standings

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



#### ŠKODA at Rally Sweden

Eerik Pietarinen won the WRC 2 category at Rally Finland in 2018 and, together with co-driver Juhana Raitanen, is nominated by ŠKODA Motorsport for the WRC 2 Pro category at Rally Sweden

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## ŠKODA Motorsport Overview

2018 was the most successful year in the history of ŠKODA Motorsport so far. Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler (CZE/CZE) became WRC 2 champions and managed to win the Czech Rally Championship (MČR) for the fourth consecutive time. 2017 WRC 2 winners Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson finished second overall, and youngsters Kalle Rovanperä/Jonne Halttunen (FIN/FIN) completed a pure ŠKODA podium in the final standings of the 2018 FIA World Rally Championship's WRC 2 category. For the fourth time in a row ŠKODA Motorsport won the WRC 2 Championship for Teams.

The success story of the Czech brand took place worldwide. The private ŠKODA driver Yuya Sumiyama and navigator Takahiro Yasui from Japan won the 2018 FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC), Manvir Singh Baryan/Drew Sturrock (KEN/GBR) took the title win in the FIA African Rally Championship (ARC). After winning the FIA South American Rally Championship (CODASUR) in 2013, 2016 and 2017, ŠKODA crew Gustavo Saba/Fernando Mussano (PRY/ARG) again were successful. On top of that, ŠKODA crews won 17 national championships.

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.

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.

## ŠKODA AUTO

- › was founded during the pioneering days of the automobile in 1895, making it one of the longest-established automobile companies in the world.
- › currently offers its customers nine passenger-car series: the CITIGO, FABIA, RAPID, SCALA, OCTAVIA, KAROQ, KODIAQ, as well as the KAMIQ and the SUPERB.
- › delivered more than 1.25 million vehicles to customers around the world in 2018.
- › has belonged to Volkswagen Group since 1991. The Volkswagen Group is one of the most successful vehicle manufacturers in the world. In association with the Group, ŠKODA AUTO independently develops and manufactures vehicles, as well as components such as engines and transmissions.
- › operates at three locations in the Czech Republic; manufactures in China, Russia, Slovakia, Algeria and India mainly through Group partnerships, as well as in Ukraine and Kazakhstan with local partners.
- › employs over 35,000 people globally and is active in more than 100 markets.
- › is pressing ahead with the transformation from a traditional car manufacturer to the 'Simply Clever company for the best mobility solutions' as part of the ŠKODA 2025 Strategy.