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Rally Portugal: ŠKODA's Kalle Rovanperä wins WRC 2 Pro and takes championship lead

- › Kalle Rovanperä/Jonne Halttunen drove the new ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo to WRC 2 Pro victory on its FIA World Rally Championship debut, now topping the overall standings
- › Jan Kopecký and co-driver Pavel Dresler secured a double WRC 2 Pro win for ŠKODA Motorsport at Rally Portugal, seventh round of the FIA World Rally Championship 2019
- › ŠKODA Motorsport boss Michal Hrabánek: "On its world championship debut, the new ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo proved speed and reliability."

Matosinhos, 2 June 2019 – The new ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo trouble-free won its WRC 2 Pro debut at Rally Portugal (30/05–02/06/2019). During the seventh round of the FIA World Rally Championship 2019, the new Czech rally car was unbeatable in the hands of Kalle Rovanperä/Jonne Halttunen (FIN/FIN). While Rovanperä also took the lead in the WRC 2 Pro championship standings with this victory, teammates Jan Kopecký and co-driver Pavel Dresler (CZE/CZE) secured a double win for ŠKODA. Thanks to French privateers Pierre-Louis Loubet/Vincent Landais, ŠKODA teams conquered the top three positions among the initially 32 entries strong field of R5 cars.

History repeated at Rally Portugal: In 2015, the first generation ŠKODA FABIA R5 celebrated a successful debut at the Portuguese round of the FIA World Rally Championship. Exactly four years later at the same event, the successor ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo was unbeatable among the initially 32 entries strong field of R5 cars. Only a puncture during the fourth special stage prevented Kalle Rovanperä and co-driver Jonne Halttunen from leading the WRC 2 Pro category from start to finish. Only four stages later, he regained the top position, which he eventually defended until the finish line in Matosinhos close to Porto.

"The car felt really great, it was such a pleasure to drive it. The most important thing on the final day was not to lose the concentration and to control the lead," Rovanperä confessed and added: "Honestly, it's not so much fun to drive with a one minute lead – it's harder than to drive flat out. But today, we could enjoy the stages."

Rovanperä's teammates Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler had given the new ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo its maiden win on tarmac in the Czech Rally Championship two weeks ago. Having not driven competitively on gravel roads since last year's Rally Spain, the two Czechs in Portugal also delivered a great performance by finishing second of the WRC 2 Pro category: "Having done the majority of the tests with our new rally car, I am delighted to see how well it works on tarmac and gravel. I know that today we just had to get to the finish, but we did our best to have fun in the car," said reigning WRC 2 champion Jan Kopecký.

In the overall result, Rovanperä even climbed to sixth among the much more powerful World Rally Cars, again followed by teammate Kopecký in eighth. ŠKODA Motorsport boss Michal Hrabánek was delighted. "What a great debut of our new ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo," he said. "All the development and testing paid off. I am very proud of Kalle, Jan and the whole ŠKODA Motorsport team."

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Driving the predecessor ŠKODA FABIA R5, but not nominated in WRC 2 Pro category, French privateers Pierre-Louis Loubet/Vincent Landais were third fastest among the initially 32 entries strong field of R5 cars.

Final Results Rally Portugal (WRC 2 Pro)

1. Rovannerä/Halttunen (FIN/FIN), ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo, 3:30:57.0 h
2. Kopecký/Dresler (CZE/CZE), ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo, +1:07.7 min.
3. Østberg/Eriksen (NOR/NOR), Citroën C3 R5, +19:08.6 min.
4. Pieniazek/Gerber (POL/POL), Ford Fiesta R5, +30:55.1 min.

Current championship standings WRC 2 Pro/Drivers (after seven of 14 rounds)

1. Kalle Rovannerä (FIN), ŠKODA, 86 points
2. Mads Østberg (NOR), Citroën, 83 points
3. Lukasz Pieniazek (POL), Ford, 74 points
4. Gus Greensmith (GBR), Ford, 73 points
5. Jan Kopecký (CZE), ŠKODA, 18 points
6. Marco Bulacia (BOL), ŠKODA, 12 points

Current championship standings WRC 2 Pro/Manufacturers (after seven of 14 rounds)

1. Ford, 147 points
2. ŠKODA, 116 points
3. Citroën, 83 points

Number of the day: 3

Three ŠKODA crews were overall best placed competitors among the initially 32 entries strong field of R5 cars.

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
Sweden	14/02–17/02/2019
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

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Australia

14/11–17/11/2019

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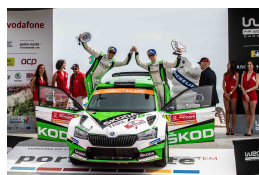


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ŠKODA at Rally Portugal

ŠKODA works crew Kalle Rovanperä/Jonne Halttunen won the WRC 2 Pro category with the new ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo, also taking the lead in the interim championship standings

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



ŠKODA at Rally Portugal

Driving a ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo, Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler finished second in the WRC 2 Pro category at Rally Portugal

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



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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 39,000 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.