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Rally Italia Sardegna: ŠKODA's Kalle Rovannerä and Jan Kopecký fighting for WRC 2 Pro glory

- › Driving the new ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo, Kalle Rovannerä/Jonne Halttunen want to defend the WRC 2 Pro overall lead at the FIA World Rally Championship's eighth round
- › Reigning WRC 2 Champions Jan Kopecký and co-driver Pavel Dresler aim to repeat their last year's victory on the Mediterranean island
- › Record number: 37 R5 cars on the entry list, ŠKODA with 21 competitors strongest brand

Mladá Boleslav, 12 June 2019 – After the stunning debut of the new ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo with a double victory in the WRC 2 Pro category at Rally Portugal, the Czech brand is travelling with high hopes to the next round of the FIA World Rally Championship 2019, the Rally Italia Sardegna (13/06–16/06/2019). While Rally Portugal WRC 2 Pro winners Kalle Rovannerä/Jonne Halttunen (FIN/FIN) make their first trip to the Mediterranean island ever, runner-up duo Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler (CZE/CZE) won their category the last two years.

At the recent Rally Portugal, the new ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo celebrated a successful WRC debut with a double victory by Kalle Rovannerä/Jonne Halttunen and Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler. The further developed rally car from Mladá Boleslav proved speed and reliability on Portuguese gravel, now the sandy and rocky roads of Sardinia wait for the ŠKODA works crews. For the reigning WRC 2 and Czech Rally Champion Jan Kopecký the Italian round of the FIA World Rally Championship is one of his favourite events. "With my local victories in the WRC 2 category in 2017 and 2018 I have been able already to prove, that I am not only a tarmac specialist. I really like the gravel stages of Sardinia, it is all about finding the right pace in order to avoid punctures," says Jan Kopecký.

With victories in Chile and Portugal under his belt, Kalle Rovannerä is currently leading the WRC 2 Pro category and is praised by ŠKODA Motorsport boss Michal Hrabánek. "By winning in Chile and Portugal, Kalle not only proved his pure speed. He is as well able to control a lead by avoiding unnecessary risks. In Sardinia, his challenge will be special, however. To win there, you need experience. But Kalle is on the island for the very first time. Just about 20 kilometres of the special stages are new compared to last year's edition. So most of Kalle's competitors can very much rely on their previous experience," comments Hrabánek. Nevertheless, Rovannerä looks forward to the trip to Sardinia. "Yes, it is true that the stages are totally new to me. But I had to handle this disadvantage already for many of the world championship events this season. So I am quite confident, especially because our ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo demonstrated recently in Portugal how well it works on tough gravel roads," says the 18 years old Finn.

In 2018, 19 R5 cars were on the entry list of the Italian round of the FIA World Rally Championship. This year, the number of entries increased to a new WRC record level: A total of 37 R5 cars is entered, ŠKODA with 21 participants by far being the strongest brand of the category.

At Rally Italia Sardegna – so the event's official name –, not only the tough gravel roads, but as well the temperatures are a big challenge for the crews. For example, while the ambient temperature ranges at 30 degrees Celsius, the heat inside the rally cars can easily raise up to 70 degrees. The rally offers 19 special stages totalling more than 310 kilometres on rugged and sun-baked gravel

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roads. After the spectacular Super Special Stage "Ittiri Arena Show" on Thursday, Friday features eight stages covering around 124 kilometres. Like last year, Saturday is the longest day of the rally with six special stages totalling more than 142 kilometres. Sunday will bring the final decision with four stages close to the coast north of the host town of Alghero.

Did you know,

... the event today known as Rally Italia first took place in 1928 under the name "Rally of the Flowers" and was (except 2010 when it was counting for the IRC/Intercontinental Rally Championship) a part of the FIA World Rally Championship ever since its inauguration in 1973?

...that the Italian round of the FIA World Rally Championship until 2003 was held on the mainland, based in Sanremo, before it moved to the island of Sardinia?

...Michèle Mouton became the first – and until today only – woman to win a WRC round when she finished first at the 1981 Sanremo Rally?

...that the iconic stage "Monte Lerno" of Rally Italia Sardegna features the spectacular "Micky's jump", comparable only to the famous Fafe jump of Rally Portugal.

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
Australia	14/11–17/11/2019

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ŠKODA at Rally Italia Sardegna

ŠKODA works crew Kalle Rovannerä/Jonne Halttunen (ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo) wants to defend the overall lead in the WRC 2 Pro category at Rally Italia Sardegna.

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



ŠKODA at Rally Italia Sardegna

After winning the category last year on the island, ŠKODA's Jan Kopecký and co-driver Pavel Dresler are aiming for another top result at Rally Italia Sardegna, eighth round of the FIA World Rally Championship.

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO

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 Rovannerä/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.

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- › 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.

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