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Neste Rally Finland: Rovannerä keeps everything under control for ŠKODA in WRC 2 Pro category

- › Kalle Rovannerä and co-driver Jonne Halttunen increased their category lead on day three of Neste Rally Finland, ninth round of the FIA World Rally Championship
- › Only the four Sunday stages separate Finnish ŠKODA FABIA evo crew from home victory
- › ŠKODA Motorsport boss Michal Hrabánek: "For Kalle and Jonne, it's all about not losing concentration on the way to a possible victory on their home game."

Jyväskylä, 3 August 2019 – During day three of Neste Rally Finland, ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo crew Kalle Rovannerä and co-driver Jonne Halttunen (FIN/FIN) continued to control the WRC 2 Pro category as well as the originally 25 entries strong field of R5 cars. Only the four stages of Sunday separate the local heroes from their fourth category win in a row. The part-time leaders of the WRC 2 category for private teams, ŠKODA crew Pierre-Louis Loubet and co-driver Vincent Landais from France, went off during the last stage of Saturday, losing more than seven minutes and eventually handing over the lead to another private ŠKODA team, Nicolay Gryazin/Yaroslav Fedorov from Russia.

During the third day of Neste Rally Finland, ninth round of the FIA World Rally Championship 2019, Kalle Rovannerä and co-driver Jonne Halttunen powered their ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo to an even bigger lead in the WRC 2 Pro category and among the R5 competitors. "We're trying to drive risk-free and enjoy the ride as much as possible. Our choice for a harder tyre compound caused a certain loss of grip, but yesterday's setup changes really work," said 18 years old Rovannerä after the four stages of the Saturday morning loop. By then, he was leading the WRC 2 Pro competition, followed by the WRC 2 leaders, ŠKODA privateer Pierre-Louis Loubet and co-driver Vincent Landais. The closest competitor in the WRC 2 Pro category, M-Sport Ford-Driver Eric Camilli, was already more than three minutes adrift.

On Saturday again, the weather conditions were untypical cold. Temperatures, which hardly touched 12 degrees Celsius, and temporary showers made the ten thousands of rally fans along the gravel tracks think that they are in autumn in Wales rather than in August in the middle of Finland.

After a night's rest, the longest leg of the rally on Saturday offered in total nearly 133 kilometres. Four stages had to be driven in the morning and the afternoon respectively. Wherever local hero Kalle Rovannerä appeared, he was cheered by his fans. He disappointed neither them nor the team of ŠKODA Motorsport, which was counting on him. After stablemate Eerik Pietarinen had crashed out in the second stage on Friday morning, all of ŠKODA's hope to collect manufacturers' points in the WRC 2 Pro category lay on Rovannerä. So, the young Finn drove fast but cautious especially on the rough passages, nursing his ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo carefully over the rutted passages. He nevertheless constantly increased his comfortable lead. "I am basically having fun behind the wheel," confessed a happy Kalle Rovannerä at the finish of the Saturday leg in Jyväskylä.



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On the very last stage of the day, the interim leaders of the WRC 2 category, French pairing Pierre-Louis Loubet and co-driver Vincent Landais, put their ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo off the road. They eventually lost more than seven minutes and had to hand over the lead to ŠKODA privateers Nicolay Gryazin/Yaroslav Fedorov from Russia.

Like last year, Sunday will bring the final decision with four stages. The winners will reach the podium in Jyväskylä around 16h00 local time.

Standings Neste Rally Finland after day 3 (WRC 2 Pro/WRC 2)

1. Rovannerä/Halttunen (FIN/FIN), ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo, 2:15:22.9 h*
2. Gryazin/Fedorov (RUS/RUS), ŠKODA FABIA R5, +2:27.9 min.
3. Huttunen/Lukka (FIN/FIN), Hyundai i20 R5, +2:40.0 min.
4. Camilli/Veillas (FRA/FRA), Ford Fiesta R5 MKII, +4:14.2 min.*
5. Kristoffersson/Skjaermoen (SWE/NOR), VW Polo GTI R5, +4:31.1 min.

**Factory nominated crews eligible to score points in the WRC 2 Pro category*

Number of the day: 4:14.2

With a margin of 4:14.2 minutes, ŠKODA works crew Kalle Rovannerä/Jonne Halttunen are leading the WRC 2 Pro category after the third day of Neste Rally Finland.

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 Neste Rally Finland

On day three, ŠKODA works crew Kalle Rovannerä/Jonne Halttunen increased the lead in the WRC 2 Pro category with their ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



ŠKODA at Neste Rally Finland

Driving a ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo, Kalle Rovannerä and co-driver Jonne Halttunen (FIN/FIN) are targeting their season's fourth WRC 2 Pro category win in the 2019 FIA World Rally Championship

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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.