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Wales Rally GB: ŠKODA's Jan Kopecký leads WRC 2 Pro from teammate Kalle Rovanperä

- › ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo driver Jan Kopecký and navigator Jan Hloušek top WRC 2 Pro category after day two of Rally Wales GB
- › Kalle Rovanperä and co-driver Jonne Halttunen, also in a factory ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo, lost the WRC 2 Pro category lead after a puncture during the penultimate stage
- › ŠKODA crew Pierre-Louis Loubet/Vincent Landais heads WRC 2 category for private teams

Llandudno, 4 October 2019 – ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo crew Kalle Rovanperä/Jonne Halttunen (FIN/FIN) initially took command of the WRC 2 Pro category during the second day of Wales Rally GB (03/10–06/10/2019), until a puncture in the penultimate stage of the day made them drop to second. So, after a faultless drive, teammates Jan Kopecký (CZE) and co-driver Jan Hloušek (CZE) are the overnight category leaders at the twelfth round of the FIA World Rally Championship 2019.

On Thursday afternoon, the crews competing at Wales Rally GB, twelfth round of the FIA World Rally Championship, had to say goodbye to the sun, when the typically rainy Wales weather arrived just in time for the ceremonial start at the harbour side in Liverpool. Steady rainfalls turned the road conditions of the first special stage on Oulton Park race track into something, which most of the drivers explained as “driving on ice”. ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo crew Kalle Rovanperä/Jonne Halttunen set the third quickest time among the R5 competitors and were quickest in the WRC 2 Pro category, while teammates Jan Kopecký and co-driver Jan Hloušek opted for a cautious approach. “Our main target is to finish and to secure points for the manufacturers’ championship of the WRC 2 Pro category,” emphasized Kopecký.

On Friday (4 October), the crews had to face nine stages totalling 118.25 kilometres in the Welsh forests. Kalle Rovanperä set the first fastest time on the opening stage of the day, from there on fighting with Ford driver Gus Greensmith and Citroën’s Mads Østberg for the lead in the WRC 2 Pro category. Despite a half spin in the first run of the longest stage of the day, the 19.36 kilometres of Dyfnant, Rovanperä defended the lead in the WRC 2 Pro category up to the midday rest in Llandudno. Meanwhile teammate Jan Kopecký was in fourth position.

After the midday service, five more stages had to be driven. For Kalle Rovanperä the strategy was not easy. “I am trying to keep a good pace without taking any big risks. But you have to take some risks, if you want to be fast enough,” the young Finn confessed.

Kalle Rovanperä/Jonne Halttunen found the right speed and their ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo was reliable as usual. Nevertheless, due to a puncture in the second but last stage, they lost the lead of the WRC 2 Pro category to teammates Jan Kopecký and Jan Hloušek. Their competitor Mads Østberg had to retire for the Friday leg due to technical problems, while Gus Greensmith was delayed by a spin and had technical issues as well.

At the end of day two, French crew Pierre-Louis Loubet/Vincent Landais (ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo) is leading the WRC 2 category for private teams.



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At the finish of the Friday leg in Llandudno, ŠKODA Motorsport boss Michal Hrabánek was happy: "Both crews followed our strategy and delivered a great performance. But there is still a long way to go!"

The most challenging and longest leg of the rally with seven stages covering 152.50 kilometres is set for Saturday (5 October). Sunday (6 October) finally features five more stages over 38.42 kilometres. After a total of 312.75 kilometres in the race against the clock, the winner will reach the podium in the seaside village of Llandudno at around 13h33.

Standings Wales Rally GB after Day 2 (WRC 2 Pro/WRC 2)

1. Kopecký/Hloušek (CZE/CZE), ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo, 1:18:31.9 h*
2. Rovanperä/Halttunen (FIN/FIN), ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo, +7.5 sec.*
3. Loubet/Landais (FRA/FRA), ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo, +10.8 sec.
4. P. Solberg/Mills (NOR/GBR), VW Polo GTI R5, +46.5 sec.
5. Fourmaux/Jamoul (FRA/FRA), Ford Fiesta, +49.9 sec.

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

Number of the day: 5

Inside the top ten of the R5 competitors after the first two days of Wales Rally GB, ŠKODA is with five crews the strongest brand.

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 Wales Rally GB 2019

After day two of Wales Rally GB, twelfth round of the FIA World Rally Championship 2019, Jan Kopecký and co-driver Jan Hloušek (ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo) lead the WRC 2 Pro category

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



ŠKODA at Wales Rally GB 2019

ŠKODA works crew Kalle Rovannerä/Jonne Halttunen (ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo) are second of the WRC 2 Pro category after day two of Wales Rally GB

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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.

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