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ACI Rally Monza: Clever tactics pays off as ŠKODA crews lead WRC2 and WRC3 after first leg

- › After Friday stages of the FIA World Rally Championship finale, Swedish crew Pontus Tidemand/Patrik Barth (ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo) is on course to WRC2 title
- › Driving a privately entered ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo, Norwegian pairing Andreas Mikkelsen/Anders Jæger heads WRC3 category and holds seventh overall
- › ŠKODA Motorsport supported Oliver Solberg from Sweden and co-driver Aaron Johnston from Ireland hold third in WRC3 interim classification
- › First leg of second 2020 WRC round in Italy was run completely on the grounds of the iconic Autodromo Nazionale di Monza

Monza, 4 December 2020 – ŠKODA crews dominated WRC2 and WRC3 during the opening leg of ACI Rally Monza (3-6 December 2020), final round of the FIA World Rally Championship. After six stages, Swedish crew Pontus Tidemand/Patrik Barth leads WRC2 category in a privately entered ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo. In WRC3 it's even a ŠKODA one-two-three: Andreas Mikkelsen/Anders Jæger from Norway lead Emil Lindholm/Mikael Korhonen (FIN/FIN) with ŠKODA Motorsport supported Oliver Solberg (SWE) and co-driver Aaron Johnston (IRL) taking third spot on the interim podium.

The first leg of ACI Rally Monza was completely run inside the boundaries of – and mostly on – Autodromo Nazionale di Monza. The rally crews even had to tackle the iconic banking, last used by F1 cars back in 1961. The second 2020 WRC event on Italian soil started with a single stage on Thursday evening in most treacherous weather conditions. Temperatures just above zero and heavy rain transformed the former Royal Park virtually into a mud bath. Standing water and even some patches of snow made tyre choice also for Friday's five mixed tarmac and gravel stages kind of a lottery.

Andreas Mikkelsen opted for snow rubber for his Eurosol Racing Team Hungary run ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo, a bold choice considering he might need his allocation of only eight such tyres on Saturday's mountain stages. But the gamble paid off. The experienced Norwegian scored category wins on four of Friday's five stages, extending his WRC3 lead in the process to nearly a minute. After the first leg, Mikkelsen and co-driver Anders Jæger not only head RC2 class. They also hold seventh position overall, blatantly mixing with the much more powerful World Rally Cars.

Another ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo inside top 10 overall is shared by Emil Lindholm and Mikael Korhonen from Finland. The privateers occupy ninth place on the leader board, in WRC3 trailing category leaders Mikkelsen/ Jæger by 52.5 seconds. Hot on their heels are ŠKODA Motorsport supported Oliver Solberg and co-driver Aaron Johnston. "I stalled the engine in stage 2, losing roughly 20 seconds," the 19 years old Swede reported. "We experienced some crazy conditions – so wet and slippery. It's been a rally of survival so far." Solberg made up time during the day, reaching the overnight halt in tenth overall only 1.2 seconds from Emil Lindholm.

In WRC2, ŠKODA privateer Pontus Tidemand chose a cautious approach to the muddy conditions. "I took it quite safe, maybe braking a little bit too early some times," the WRC2 champion from 2017 explained his strategy. When early leader Adrien Fourmaux collected a puncture in stage 5,



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Tidemand and co-driver Patrik Barth in the Toksport WRT Team entered ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo took the category lead. 2018 WRC2 champion Jan Kopecký and co-driver Jan Hloušek enjoy their first world championship outing this season. The Czech ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo crew lies fourth in WRC2 after leg 1, trailing team mate Tidemand by less than 20 seconds.

Polish privateer Kajetan Kajetanowicz and co-driver Maciej Szczepaniak, who are fighting for WRC3 title, brought their ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo to the day's finish in fifth place of the category. German racing driver Maro Engel, third overall in ADAC GT Masters 2020, on his WRC debut survived one of the season's most challenging days. Sharing a Toksport WRT Team entered ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo with Austrian co-driver Ilka Minor he ended the first leg on 18th in WRC3.

On Saturday, ACI Rally Monza leaves the Autodromo and heads to the mountains. There's a good chance of some snow on the six stages, before one more test in Monza rounds up leg 2. Total stage distance on Saturday is 126.95 kms.

Standings ACI Rally Monza after Leg 1 (WRC2)

1. Tidemand/Barth (SWE/SWE), ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo, 55:43.1 min.
2. Fourmaux/Jamoul (FRA/BEL), Ford Fiesta Rally2, + 6.8 sec.
3. Østberg/Eriksen (NOR/NOR), Citroën C3 Rally2, + 12.4 sec.
4. Kopecký/Hloušek (CZE/CZE), ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo, + 19.9 sec.

Standings ACI Rally Monza after Leg 1 (WRC3)

1. Mikkelsen/Jæger (NOR/NOR), ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo, 54:33.5 min.
2. Lindholm/Korhonen (FIN/FIN), ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo, + 52.5 sec.
3. Solberg/Johnston (SWE/IRL), ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo, + 53.7 sec.
4. Huttunen/Lukka (FIN/FIN), Hyundai i20 Rally2, + 1:06.8 min.
5. Kajetan Kajetanowicz/Maciej Szczepaniak (POL/POL), ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo, + 1:29.7 min.
6. Bulacia Wilkinson/Der Ohannesian (BOL/ARG), Citroën C3 Rally2, + 208.1 Min.

Number of the day: 3

After the first leg of ACI Rally Monza, three ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo crews are inside the top 10 overall: Andreas Mikkelsen/Anders Jæger in 7th, Emil Lindholm/Mikael Korhonen in 9th and Oliver Solberg/Aaron Johnston in 10th.

The calendar of the 2020 FIA World Rally Championship

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date</u>
Monte-Carlo	23/01–26/01/2020
Sweden	13/02–16/02/2020
Mexico	12/03–15/03/2020
Estonia	04/09–06/09/2020
Turkey	18/09–20/09/2020
Italia Sardegna	08/10–11/10/2020
Monza/Italy	03/12–06/12/2020

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ŠKODA Motorsport at ACI Rally Monza

After leg one, Andreas Mikkelsen (NOR) and co-driver Anders Jæger (NOR) hold the WRC3 lead in a ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



ŠKODA Motorsport at ACI Rally Monza

After leg one, ŠKODA Motorsport supported Oliver Solberg (SWE) and co-driver Aaron Johnston (IRL) placed their ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo on third spot in WRC3

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



ŠKODA Motorsport at ACI Rally Monza

Driving a privately entered ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo, Swedish pairing Pontus Tidemand/Patrik Barth go into the second leg as leaders of the WRC2 category

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



ŠKODA Motorsport at ACI Rally Monza

Czech crew Jan Kopecký/Jan Hloušek (ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo) fight for a WRC2 podium position on its comeback to the FIA World Rally Championship

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ŠKODA Motorsport Overview

2019 was the most successful year in the history of ŠKODA Motorsport so far. Kalle Rovanperä and Jonne Halttunen (FIN/FIN) won the WRC 2 Pro drivers' and co-drivers' title of the FIA World Rally Championship 2019 as well as substantially supporting ŠKODA Motorsport to win the WRC 2 Pro manufacturers' title. Also in 2019, ŠKODA customer teams conquered five FIA championships and took additional 23 national titles around the world.

Driving a ŠKODA FABIA R5, Chris Ingram/Ross Whittock (GBR/GBR) won FIA European Rally Championship (ERC). Filip Mareš/Jan Hloušek (CZE/CZE) took the FIA European Rally Championship/ERC1 Junior title. Manvir Singh Baryan/Drew Sturrock (KEN/GBR) powered a ŠKODA FABIA R5 to the FIA African Rally Championship (ARC), while Ricardo Triviño/Marc Martí (MEX/ESP) won the FIA North American and Central American Rally Championship (NACAM).

The ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo, a high-tech 4x4, was homologated by the International Automobile Federation FIA on 1 April 2019 and is successfully continuing the long tradition of ŠKODA Motorsport.
In total, both generations of the Czech rally car have been sold more than 320 times worldwide.

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

- › is this year celebrating 125 years since the company was founded during the pioneering era of the automobile in 1895, making it one of the longest-established car manufacturers in the world.
- › currently offers its customers ten passenger-car series: the CITIGO® iV, FABIA, RAPID, SCALA, OCTAVIA and SUPERB as well as the KAMIQ, KAROQ, KODIAQ and ENYAQ iV.
- › delivered 1.24 million vehicles to customers around the world in 2019.
- › 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 and India mainly through Group partnerships, as well as in Ukraine and Kazakhstan with local partners.
- › employs approximately 42,000 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.