

## Škoda Fabia WRC (2003): Paving the way for future SUCCESS

- › Škoda Fabia WRC was the brand's second and last vehicle after Octavia WRC to compete in top rally category WRC
- › Compact racing car featured all-wheel drive and three active differentials
- › Czech car manufacturer built 2,500 units of Fabia RS for Fabia WRC homologation
- › Škoda Motorsport works driver Jan Kopecký makes a name for himself in international rallying with Škoda Fabia WRC

**Mladá Boleslav, 14 May 2026 – After the first-generation Fabia made its debut in 1999, the small car quickly became a mainstay of the model portfolio after the Octavia. As a rally derivative, it also celebrated international success and continued the Octavia WRC's impressive results in the World Rally Championship (WRC).**

The Škoda Motorsport works team had achieved numerous strong results on the international rally tracks with the Škoda Octavia WRC, giving them the expertise they needed to develop and field more vehicles in the top category. In the first half of 2002, rumours were circulating that the Škoda Motorsport works team was working on a new model – the Škoda Fabia WRC. The then Škoda Auto CEO Vratislav Kulhánek finally commented on these speculations at the Cyprus Rally. The question was no longer whether, but when and where the new rally vehicle would be making its debut.

At the press conference for the start of the Monte Carlo Rally 2003, the Škoda Motorsport works team also officially confirmed the development of the new vehicle, and the Škoda Fabia WRC was unveiled in Geneva in early March 2003. Extensive tests were carried out over the following months; the then number 1 and number 2 of the works team, Didier Auriol and Toni Gardemeister, as well as the test drivers Kenneth Eriksson and Matthias Kahle all took the wheel.

The Fabia WRC was based on the first-generation Škoda Fabia RS, a five-door hatchback with a 130 hp TDI engine. For the racing car's homologation, the Czech car manufacturer first had to build 2,500 units of the Fabia RS. After a three-day inspection by FIA officials in Mladá Boleslav, it was finally homologated on 1 July 2003 - now, nothing stood in the way of its first competitive appearance.

Due to the regulations in force at the time, the Škoda Fabia WRC – unlike its series-production counterpart – was powered by a turbocharged, water-cooled four-cylinder petrol engine with a displacement of two litres. Its output was 221 kW (300 hp), with a maximum torque of 600 Nm. The power was transmitted to all four wheels via a sequential six-speed gearbox and three active differentials. The McPherson suspension included wishbones at the front and two wishbones and one trailing arm at the rear, while disc brakes on every wheel

ensured reliable deceleration. Due to the regulations, Škoda also installed a modified front bumper in the series-production Fabia RS for homologation purposes, increasing the overall length of the vehicle beyond the four-metre mark as was required.

The Škoda Fabia WRC made its debut in the World Rally Championship at the Germany Rally in 2003, followed shortly afterwards by the demanding Finland Rally. Initially, some issues with the vehicle as well as bad luck on several special stages resulted in a disappointing start for the Fabia. The car went on to celebrate a number of major successes towards the end of its debut season. The drivers included Didier Auriol, Toni Gardemeister, Armin Schwarz, Jani Paasonen, Roman Kresta and Colin McRae. The Scottish rally legend had his sights set on second place at the 2005 Australia Rally before he was disqualified through no fault of his own.

At the beginning of November 2005, Škoda announced it would no longer be competing in the WRC. The factory team was then replaced by two private teams who would continue to receive support from the brand and be supplied with vehicles accordingly. In the fourth round of the series, a young Jan Kopecký clinched the best world championship result ever for the Škoda Fabia WRC, finishing a spectacular fifth at the Rally Catalunya – a success that he would later build on in Germany.

During the season, Kopecký gained experience in a total of ten WRC rounds, which he put to good use behind the wheel of other Škoda rally cars in subsequent seasons. In 2006, he achieved the fastest time in a World Championship special stage on three occasions. Kopecký also helped to raise the Škoda Fabia WRC's profile internationally, and Formula 1 driver and rally driver Robert Kubica also drove the car in numerous tests. Two-time rally world champion Carlos Sainz borrowed the Fabia WRC for the final round of the Spanish championship and left the competition far behind.

24 units of the Škoda Fabia WRC were produced in total. Its career ended with the introduction of the second-generation Fabia, which wrote another successful chapter in the Czech manufacturer's motorsport history.

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## Škoda Motorsport:



**Media images:**



**Škoda Fabia WRC (2003)**

The Škoda Motorsport works team continued its involvement in the top category of the World Rally Championship with the Škoda Fabia WRC, which was unveiled in 2003.

Source: Škoda Auto



**Škoda Fabia WRC (2003)**

Its 300 hp engine, 600 Nm of torque and all-wheel drive made it a powerful competitor in the international rally scene. The power was transmitted to all four wheels via a sequential six-speed gearbox and three active differentials.

Source: Škoda Auto



**Škoda Fabia WRC (2003)**

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Source: Škoda Auto

**Škoda Motorsport**

- › Škoda celebrates 125 years of Motorsport since the first efforts in 1901, garnering success in rallies as well as in circuit racing.
- › Highlights include winning the 1981 European Touring Car Championship (ETCC) with the Škoda 130 RS.
- › Since 2009, the Škoda Fabia celebrated numerous successes for the Czech manufacturer on rally stages worldwide.
- › Until 2014, the Škoda Fabia S2000 (2.0 naturally aspirated engine, four-wheel drive) secured 50 international titles and national rally championships. The Škoda Fabia S2000 also helped to win the FIA European Rally Championship (ERC) and the Intercontinental Rally Challenge (IRC) three times each.
- › The successor model Škoda Fabia R5 (1.6 turbo engine, four-wheel drive) entered the scene in 2015. Later renamed to Škoda Fabia Rally2 and followed by the further developed Škoda Fabia Rally2 evo, the model collected nearly 2,000 victories in 68 countries until the end of the 2022 season.
- › During this period, Škoda Motorsport factory drivers Jan Kopecký (CZE), Esapekka Lappi (FIN), Pontus Tidemand (SWE) and Kalle Rovanperä (FIN) won the FIA World Rally Championship's support category WRC2/WRC2 Pro. Škoda Motorsport also took the WRC2/WRC2 Pro Manufacturers' title five times in a row from 2015 to 2019.
- › Beginning with the 2020 season, Škoda Motorsport changed its strategy to supporting private teams. The success story continued: Driving a Škoda Fabia Rally2 evo run by Toksport WRT, Andreas Mikkelsen (NOR) and Emil Lindholm (FIN) became WRC2 Champions in 2021 and 2022. Mikkelsen became WRC2 Champion again in 2023 with team Toksport WRT, when the all-new Škoda Fabia RS Rally2 entered the scene. The Škoda Motorsport supported team Toksport WRT also won the WRC2 Teams' title three times in 2020, 2022 and 2023. In 2025 Toksport WRT took another WRC2 Teams' title and Nikolay Gryazin/Konstantin Aleksandrov of Toksport WRT become WRC2 Challenger drivers' and co-drivers' champions respectively.
- › Škoda Motorsport customer teams have also won titles in the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC), FIA European Rally Championship (ERC), the FIA African Rally Championship (ARC), the FIA North American and Central American Rally Championship (NACAM), the FIA South American Rally Championship (CODASUR) and the FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC).

**Škoda Auto**

- › is successfully steering through the new decade with the Next Level Škoda Strategy;
- › aims to become one of the top three best-selling brands in Europe by the end of the decade by offering its customers the best of both worlds through a range of attractive BEV, hybrid & ICE products;
- › effectively exploits the potential in important growth markets such as India, Vietnam and the ASEAN region;
- › currently offers customers 12 passenger car model ranges: Fabia, Scala, Octavia, Superb, Kamiq, Karoq, Kodiaq, Elroq, Enyaq, Slavia, Kylaq and Kushaq;
- › delivered more than 1,040,000 vehicles to customers worldwide in 2025;
- › has been part of the Volkswagen Group, one of the world's most successful car manufacturers, for more than 30 years;
- › is part of Brand Group CORE, an organisational merger of the Volkswagen Group's volume brands, with the aim of achieving joint growth and significantly increasing the overall efficiency of all five volume brands;
- › independently develops and produces components such as MEB battery systems, engines and transmissions for other Volkswagen Group brands;
- › operates three production plants in the Czech Republic; has production capacities in Slovakia, Kazakhstan and India, mostly through group partnerships, as well as in Vietnam and Ukraine in cooperation with a local partner;
- › employs around 40,000 people worldwide and is active in almost 100 markets.