

## Škoda Octavia WRC (1999): Entering the highest class of international rallying

- › **After the successful era of the front-wheel drive Favorit and Felicia, the Škoda Octavia WRC was the first rally car from Mladá Boleslav with two driven axles**
- › **The Octavia WRC was fast, robust and reliable – characteristics that helped it achieve numerous successes**
- › **Engine output of 300 hp with a torque of up to 600 Nm**
- › **Armin Schwarz's third place in the 2001 Safari Rally and victories in three seasons of the domestic rally championship are among the Octavia WRC's greatest achievements**

**Mladá Boleslav, 14 May 2026 – Škoda presented the first generation of the modern Octavia in 1996. The new series marked another important step for the Czech car manufacturer after the Felicia in 1994 and established the brand's current bestseller as a benchmark in the compact segment. Škoda also underlined its high ambitions for the Octavia in international rallying by introducing the Octavia WRC.**

Following the great successes of the Škoda Favorit in the World Cup for vehicles with one driven axle, naturally aspirated engine and displacement of less than two litres (the so-called F2 class) and the numerous victories of the Škoda Felicia Kit Car, the Škoda Motorsport works team sought to demonstrate its skills in the highest class of international rallying.

The International Automobile Federation's (FIA) decision to open the WRC (World Rally Car) category in 1997 came at just the right time for Škoda, who had launched the first generation of the modern Škoda Octavia the year before. In contrast to the previous Group A regulations, manufacturers could now also compete without needing to build supercharged special vehicles with four-wheel drive. In addition, limited road versions of the respective vehicle were no longer required for a successful homologation; the racing car simply needed to be based on a series-production model.

The Škoda Motorsport team faced a number of challenges in building the Octavia WRC. The only experience of modifying the new compact model had been from developing the Škoda Octavia Kit Car with front-wheel drive. For the team, being able to use components from the company's shelves and fall back on proven, high-quality components to build the racing car proved to be a great advantage, especially under these circumstances.

The Škoda Octavia WRC was powered by a turbocharged two-litre engine with five-valve technology. It produced 221 kW (300 hp); the torque was initially 500 Nm at 3,250 rpm, subsequently rising to 600 Nm. The car's kerb weight was 1,230 kg, which was the minimum specified in the regulations. In combination with all-wheel drive, this made the Octavia WRC the most dynamic racing car up to that point in Škoda's motorsport history. The technicians

began testing the first copies as early as 1998, struggling with the scheduling of the new car's first official entry in the World Rally Championship.

The number one driver of the new Škoda Octavia WRC was the experienced German racer Armin Schwarz, who was considered the best test driver in the rally scene at the time. His experience and intuition proved decisive in fine-tuning the Octavia WRC. The second driver was one of the two proven Czech drivers Pavel Sibera or Emil Triner, depending on which track the respective rally was held at.

The Škoda Octavia WRC made its debut at the legendary Monte Carlo Rally in 1999. The car manufacturer used the first season to make further adjustments to the vehicle's set-up and gain valuable experience. At the last race of the season, the famous British RAC Rally, the Belgian Bruno Thiry almost achieved a podium finish, placing fourth overall. Within just one season, the Octavia WRC had progressed from being an absolute newcomer on the grid to a formidable contender.

Several drivers from the international rally elite have driven the Škoda Octavia WRC over the years. In addition to Armin Schwarz and the Czech stars Pavel Sibera and Emil Triner, the line-up also includes Bruno Thiry, Luis Climent, Roman Kresta, Jan Kopecký, Gabriel Pozzo, Toni Gardemeister, Kenneth Eriksson, Didier Auriol, Mattias Kahle and Stig Blomqvist.

The Škoda Octavia WRC has secured a firm place in the history of Škoda Motorsport as well as enhancing the brand's image: it achieved victories in special stages, clinched podium finishes (Armin Schwarz, 3rd place overall in the 2001 Safari Rally) and proved its reliability countless times on the international rally tracks. This strengthened Škoda Motorsport's position on the WRC circuits and prepared the ground for the development of the next racing car in the WRC, the highest class of rallying.

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### **Škoda Octavia WRC**

The factory team competed in the top category of the FIA World Rally Championship for the first time with the Škoda Octavia WRC, unveiled in 1999. With an output of 300 hp, it was the first Škoda to be officially designated a World Rally Car.

Source: Škoda Auto



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### 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) und 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.