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ŠKODA to defend APRC title with talented youngster Fabian Kreim

- > German duo Fabian Kreim/Frank Christian lines up in the ŠKODA Fabia R5 at the six rounds of the 2016 FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC)
- > ŠKODA goes into prestigious continental championship on the back of four titles in a row
- > Michal Hrabánek: "We want to continue our winning run in the APRC"

Mladá Boleslav, 31 March 2016 – ŠKODA Motorsport goes in search of its next title in the FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC) with talented young German driver Fabian Kreim. The 23-year-old will start the six rounds of the prestigious continental championship alongside his experienced co-driver Frank Christian in the ŠKODA Fabia R5. ŠKODA has won the APRC title for the last four years running.

"We want to continue our winning run in the APRC and are delighted to have a talented young driver at the wheel of the Fabia R5, in the form of Fabian Kreim," said ŠKODA Motorsport Director Michal Hrabánek. "We are giving him a great chance to continue his development and gain valuable experience on gravel. The APRC is ideal for this. The rallies in the populous Asia-Pacific region, with our core market of China, are particularly important to ŠKODA. For this reason, we want to be at our best again with the experienced and successful ŠKODA MRF team."

Recent years have been nothing short of impressive. In 2015, ŠKODA followed works driver Pontus Tidemand's (S) victory at the Rally China with the manufacturer's fourth title treble in a row in the APRC. The Czech car maker has been unstoppable since 2012 in the Driver, Co-Driver and Manufacturer competitions. Indian rally hero Gaurav Gill also lines up for the ŠKODA MRF team again. The 2013 APRC champion is at the wheel of the team's second car, and will be on hand to offer valuable advice to his new team-mate Fabian Kreim.

"I am absolutely delighted to be able to take on the challenge of the APRC with ŠKODA," said Kreim. "All the rallies are obviously completely new to me, and I will have a lot to learn. However, I hope I can establish myself among the front-runners and challenge for race wins as quickly as possible at these international events."

The 23-year-old only switched to rallying in 2013, since when he has developed rapidly. Since 2015 he has driven for the ŠKODA AUTO Deutschland team in the German Rally Championship (DRM), where he promptly won five races and finished second in the championship. Kreim finished eighth in the WRC 2 class on his World Rally Championship debut at last year's Rally Germany.



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Kreim's 31-year-old co-driver, Frank Christian, already boasts an impressive record on the international stage. In 2014, alongside Sepp Wiegand, he finished runner-up in the European Championship for ŠKODA. Christian won the WRC 2 class on his debut for the Czech car maker at the iconic Rally Monte Carlo in 2013. As well as their first season in the APRC, Kreim and Christian will also compete at selected rounds of the German Rally Championship, as well as the Rally Germany in the WRC.

As is tradition, the 2016 APRC season kicks off with the Rally Whangarei in New Zealand on 30th April. New to the calendar is the Rally India, which forms the final round of the season on 10th and 11th December.

FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC)*

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date</u>
Rally Whangarei – New Zealand	30.04.–01.05.2016
Rally Queensland – Australia	17.06.–19.06.2016
Rally China – China	06.08.–07.08.2016
Rally Hokkaido – Japan	24.09.–25.09.2015
Rally Malaysia – Malaysia	29.10.–30.10.2016
Rally India – India	10.12.–11.12.2016

* subject to confirmation by motorsport's governing body, the FIA.

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Media images:



ŠKODA in the APRC

Germans Fabian Kreim (right) and Frank Christian (left) step up to the international stage on the back of five victories in last year's German Rally Championship (DRM).

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



ŠKODA in the APRC

Sweden's Pontus Tidemand claimed the fourth APRC title in a row for ŠKODA in 2015. In 2013, the title went to Gaurav Gill (IND), who is back behind the wheel for the ŠKODA MRF team this year.

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO

ŠKODA Motorsport Overview:

ŠKODA has been 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 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.

In 2015, ŠKODA celebrated four victories in the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2) with their new ŠKODA Fabia R5 rally car. The high-tech 4x4 was homologated by the International Automobile Federation FIA on 1 April 2015. In the ŠKODA Fabia R5's very first season, factory duo Pontus Tidemand/Emil Axelsson (S/S) secured the fourth APRC title in a row for ŠKODA. In addition, the brand claimed five national titles with their new winning model.

ŠKODA's new Fabia R5 proudly continues the brand's long tradition in motorsport. Its predecessor, the Fabia Super 2000, was the most successful model in ŠKODA's 115-year motorsport history. With the 4x4 from Mladá Boleslav, factory duo Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler (CZ/CZ) achieved the historic feat of becoming the first duo in history to win the drivers' title in the ERC and the APRC in consecutive years. Between 2009 and 2014, ŠKODA Fabia Super 2000 drivers won a total of 50 national and international titles around the world.

In 2016, the factory teams Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson (S/S), Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler and Esapekka Lappi/Janne Ferm (F/F) are competing with the ŠKODA Fabia R5 in the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2).



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ŠKODA AUTO

- > is one of the longest-established vehicle production companies in the world. In 1895, the Czech headquarters in Mladá Boleslav began producing bicycles, followed by the production of motorbikes and cars.
- > currently offers the following models in the range: Citigo, Fabia, Rapid, Octavia, Yeti and Superb.
- > delivered more than 1 million vehicles to customers worldwide in 2015.
- > has belonged to Volkswagen since 1991. The Volkswagen Group is one of the most successful automotive groups in the world. ŠKODA, in association with the Group, independently manufactures and develops vehicles, as well as components such as engines and gear transmissions.
- > operates at three locations in the Czech Republic. It also produces in China, Russia, Slovakia and India, mainly through Group partnerships, as well as in Ukraine and Kazakhstan through local partners.
- > employs more than 26,600 people globally and is active in more than 100 markets.

