



ŠKODA Motorsport, Page 1 of 4

Dream start for ŠKODA at festival of top speed in Poland

- › Works drivers Esapekka Lappi and Pontus Tidemand lead the WRC 2 standings of the Rally Poland
- › Lappi shines with five stage best times: "Great feeling in the ŠKODA Fabia R5"
- › 158.49 kilometres remain at the weekend

Mikolajki, 3 July 2015 – ŠKODA got off to a dream start in the new Fabia R5 at the Rally Poland. European Champion Esapekka Lappi (FIN) in the clear lead and Pontus Tidemand (S) head into the decisive weekend with a one-two lead in the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2) event. Lappi and his co-driver Janne Ferm (FIN) shone at the festival of top speed with five best times on the nine stages so far in glorious sunshine.

"There were no dramas, no problems, everything went superbly. It feels great in the ŠKODA Fabia R5," enthused Esapekka Lappi. "The tracks in Poland are incredibly fast, it reminds me of my home country of Finland." Around two thirds of the gravel tracks with short sections of asphalt in the Masurian Lake District really are driven at top speed.

Perfect for Lappi: The 24-year-old seized the lead with the best time on the first special stage on Friday and consistently extended this lead. At the end of the day, Lappi/Ferm had built up an advantage of 50.1 seconds over their team-mates Pontus Tidemand/Emil Axelsson (S). The front-runners of the Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC) got their first two WRC 2 best times for ŠKODA Motorsport on special stages eight and nine.

"Naturally that rounds off a successful day. The roads are so fast, Emil's pace notes are perfect. It's just so much fun," said Tidemand. The reliable Fabia R5 was also fun on a day on which the cars had to survive more than 150 kilometres of special stages without a single service.

158.49 timed kilometres across ten special stages are scheduled for Saturday and Sunday. Then it will be confirmed whether after three podium finishes in two WRC starts to date, ŠKODA can celebrate their first win with the Fabia R5 in the WRC 2 category. Lappi/Ferm won the Rally Poland once before back in 2012.

The new turbo four-wheel drive Fabia R5 enjoys success around the world: ŠKODA works driver Jan Kopecký already has three wins to his name after just three events in the Czech Rally Championship (MČR). The ŠKODA Fabia R5 has also long been known as a winning car in customer sport competitions. "Fast" Freddy Loix was victorious on his debut in the new car in the FIA European Rally Championship (ERC) in his home country of Belgium. Raimund Baumschlager is unbeaten in the Austrian championship after two starts. In the German Rally Championship (DRM), Fabian Kreim (D) and Mark Wallenwein (D) recently celebrated a one-two win in the R5.



ŠKODA Motorsport, Page 2 of 4

Number of the day for the Rally Poland: 4 in the top 5

No less than four ŠKODA are in the top 5 of the WRC 2 interim standings in the Rally Poland. Alongside the two front-runners Esapekka Lappi and Pontus Tidemand of the ŠKODA works team, former European Champion Armin Kremer (D) in the third Fabia R5 was ranked fourth. Finland's Teemu Suninen in a Fabia Super 2000 is in fifth place.

Rally Poland –Intermediate standings WRC 2

1. Lappi/Ferm (FIN/FIN), ŠKODA Fabia R5	1:20:06.0 hrs.
2. Tidemand/Axelsson (S/S), ŠKODA Fabia R5	+ 0:50.1 min.
3. Kruuda/Jarveoja (EST/EST), Citroën DS3 R5	+ 1:47.1 min.
4. Kremer/Winklhofer (D/D), ŠKODA Fabia R5	+ 3:05.4 min.
5. Suninen/Markkula (FIN/FIN) ŠKODA Fabia Super 2000	+ 3:05.7 min.

FIA World Rally Championship 2 (WRC 2)

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date</u>
Rally Monte Carlo	22.01.–25.01.2015
Rally Sweden	12.02.–15.02.2015
Rally Mexico	05.03.–08.03.2015
Rally Argentina	23.04.–26.04.2015
Rally Portugal	21.05.–24.05.2015
Rally Italy	11.06.–14.06.2015
Rally Poland	02.07.–05.07.2015
Rally Finland	30.07.–02.08.2015
Rally Germany	20.08.–23.08.2015
Rally Australia	10.09.–13.09.2015
Rally France	01.10.–04.10.2015
Rally Spain	22.10.–25.10.2015
Rally Great Britain	12.11.–15.11.2015



ŠKODA Motorsport, Page 3 of 4

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ŠKODA at the Rally Poland

European Champions Esapekka Lappi (FIN) and Janne Ferm (FIN) have already picked up 17 stage best times in the WRC 2 this year.

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



ŠKODA at the Rally Poland

Pontus Tidemand (S) and Emil Axelsson (S), the front-runners in the Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC), got their first two WRC 2 stage best times for ŠKODA Motorsport on their second appearance in the Fabia R5.

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO

ŠKODA Motorsport Overview

ŠKODA has been involved in the world of motorsport since 1901. The brand has taken home many trophies from the Intercontinental Rally Challenge (IRC), FIA European Rally Championship (ERC), FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC) and several famous races, such as the oldest rally in the world – the Monte Carlo, which has taken place annually since 1911.

The Fabia Super 2000 rally car is the most successful model in ŠKODA's 114-year history in motorsport. In 2014, ŠKODA won a hat-trick of titles in the Manufacturers' and Drivers' competitions in the APRC. The new reigning champions Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler (CZ/CZ) achieved the momentous feat of becoming the first duo in history to win the Drivers' title in the ERC and then the APRC in consecutive years.

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ŠKODA Motorsport, Page 4 of 4

In the ERC, ŠKODA Motorsport took the title for the third time in a row in 2014, thanks to Esapekka Lappi/Janne Ferm (FIN/FIN) with the ŠKODA Fabia Super 2000. Before Lappi, the Finn Juho Hänninen (2012) and Jan Kopecký (2013) had won the European title with the ŠKODA Fabia Super 2000.

Between 2009 and 2014, ŠKODA Fabia Super 2000 drivers won nearly 50 national and international titles.

The International Automobile Federation FIA approved ŠKODA's new rally car - the Fabia R5 on 1 April, 2015. The new rally car was presented to the International Press in the Czech Republic on 15 April. The ŠKODA Fabia R5 celebrated its competitive début at the Šumava Rally, Czech Republic in 2015.

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, Roomster, Rapid, Octavia, Yeti and Superb.
- > in 2014 delivered more than 1 million vehicles to customers worldwide for the first time in a single year.
- > 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, engines and gear transmissions.
- > operates at three locations in the Czech Republic, produces in China, Russia, Slovakia and India mainly through Group partnerships, as well as in Ukraine and Kazakhstan through local partners.
- > employs over 25,900 people globally and is active in more than 100 markets.