



ŠKODA Motorsport Press Release, Page 1 of 4

APRC: ŠKODA out to shine in Australia

- › Rally Queensland marks the second round of the FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC)
- › Fabian Kreim/Frank Christian and Gaurav Gill/Glenn Macneall fly the flag for the ŠKODA MRF team
- › Michal Hrabánek: "Talented young driver Fabien Kreim to gain more valuable experience on gravel"

Mladá Boleslav, 14 June 2016 – On top down under: ŠKODA is out to shine at round two of the FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC). On Saturday and Sunday, Fabian Kreim/Frank Christian (D/D) and Gaurav Gill/Glenn Macneall (IND/AUS) will contest the Rally Queensland in Australia for the ŠKODA MRF team. Drivers Gill and Kreim claimed a much-heralded one-two for the Czech car maker at the opening round of the 2016 APRC in New Zealand.

"We want to back up our strong start to the season. However, we face another very tough test at the iconic rally in Australia. Our talented young driver Fabian Kreim is developing all the time and will gain more valuable experience on gravel," said ŠKODA Motorsport Director Michal Hrabánek. 23-year-old Kreim, who has only been driving rallies since 2013, produced a strong display on his APRC debut in New Zealand. He actually led going into the final day, and ultimately ended the rally in second place.

"I learned an awful lot at my first major gravel rally. I am now looking to build on that in Australia. I want to make it onto the podium again, and give my team-mate Gaurav Gill a good fight," says Kreim. He has the form to do so: after his successful APRC debut, the youngster claimed a dominant victory at the Rally Saxony in the German Rally Championship (DRM). He is currently second overall in the strong national championship – a position he also occupies in the Asia-Pacific Rally Championship. His goal is to win the title in at least one of the two championships. After the opening race of the APRC, ŠKODA leads the Manufacturers' Championship with 39 points, ahead of Subaru (28).

Kreim has 31 points to his name in the Drivers' Championship after round one of the APRC, meaning he trails Gill – eleven years his senior – by seven points. The experienced Gill is obviously looking to extend his lead at the Rally Australia, and has the great advantage of knowing the majority of the 16 stages and 240 kilometres against the clock from previous years. Gill won the APRC class of the Rally Queensland, which takes competitors on fast roads through the woodland inland of the Sunshine Coach, in 2010. 42 teams line up at the Rally Queensland, which forms part of both the APRC and the Australian Rally Championship. ŠKODA has won the Manufacturer, Driver and Co-Driver titles in the APRC for the past four years in a row.

"Our goal, as it was at the season-opener, is obviously to win. I know the routes well, but Fabian Kreim learns very quickly. It is sure to be an exciting battle with my new team-



ŠKODA Motorsport Press Release, Page 2 of 4

mate," says Gill. "Hopefully we can all celebrate together in the ŠKODA family again come the end of the rally." At the same time as ŠKODA was winning the season-opener in New Zealand, 18,000 kilometres away it also claimed a one-two at the Rally Šumava Klatovy in the Czech Rally Championship (MČR). A similar feat is also possible this time: the Rally Hustopeče in the MČR takes place in ŠKODA's home market of the Czech Republic on the same weekend as the Rally Queensland in Australia.

FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC)

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date</u>
Rally Whangarei – New Zealand	29.04.–01.05.2016
Rally Queensland – Australia	18.06.–19.06.2016
Rally China – China	06.08.–07.08.2016
Rally Hokkaido – Japan	24.09.–25.09.2016
Rally Malaysia – Malaysia	29.10.–30.10.2016
Rally India – India	10.12.–11.12.2016

Did you know ...

... ŠKODA has won the APRC category at the Rally Queensland in Australia for the past four years in a row? In 2012, Australian Chris Atkinson won for the first time in a FABIA SUPER 2000. The same car proved to be unbeatable in subsequent years. Finland's Esapekka Lappi won in 2013, Jan Kopecký (CZ) was victorious in 2014, and Swede Pontus Tidemand took victory last year. As such, each of the three current ŠKODA Motorsport works drivers has tasted victory in Australia.

... ŠKODA has gone on to claim the APRC title each time it has won the iconic rally in Australia? Chris Atkinson was champion in 2012, while Gaurav Gill was crowned rally king of the Asia-Pacific region in 2013. He was succeeded on the throne by Jan Kopecký in 2014, before Pontus Tidemand won the prestigious title in 2015.

... the origins of the Rally Queensland date back to 1968? That was when the rally's predecessor was held for the first time. The race has belonged to the Australian Rally championship since then, making it the longest-standing round of the championship.

... the Rally Queensland in Australia first formed part of the FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC) in 2009?

... the Rally Queensland was originally held near Brisbane? Since 1997, it has taken place inland of the Sunshine Coast, a good 150 kilometres north of the city. The service park is located in Imbil.



ŠKODA Motorsport Press Release, Page 3 of 4

... the rally is the only international motorsport event in the Australian state of Queensland? The event has a new promoter this year, in the form of Rallycorp.

... Australia, with an area of roughly 7.7 million square kilometres, is the sixth largest country in the world? The coast alone is 35.876 kilometres long. The Great Barrier Reef, off the coast of Queensland, is 2,300 kilometres long and the largest structure on the planet created by living creatures.

For more information:

David Haidinger, Communications Motorsport

Ph. +420 604 292 188

david.haidinger@skoda-auto.cz

<http://skoda-motorsport.com>

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ŠKODA at the APRC rally in Australia

German duo Fabian Kreim and Frank Christian (D/D) are looking to do even better in the ŠKODA FABIA R5, following their successful debut in the FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC).

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



ŠKODA at the APRC rally in Australia

Gaurav Gill/Glenn Macneall (IND/AUS) top the overall APRC standings with the ŠKODA MRF team after the opening round in New Zealand.

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO





ŠKODA Motorsport Press Release, Page 4 of 4

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 Tidem and/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).

ŠKODA AUTO

- > is one of the longest-established vehicle manufacturers in the world. The company was founded in 1895 – during the pioneering days of the automobile. Today, the company's headquarters remain in Mladá Boleslav.
- > currently offers the following models in the range: CITIGO, FABIA, RAPID, OCTAVIA, YETI and SUPERB.
- > in 2015 delivered more than 1 million vehicles to customers worldwide.
- > 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 26,600 people globally and is active in more than 100 markets.