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WRC 2: ŠKODA looks to continue winning ways at full-throttle show in Poland

- › Previous year's winners Esapekka Lappi/Janne Ferm and Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson competing for ŠKODA Motorsport works team
- › Total of eight ŠKODA FABIA R5s involved in seventh race of the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2) season – Poland's Hubert Ptaszek out to thrill fans
- › Four wins in a row for ŠKODA in the WRC 2
- › Michal Hrabánek: "The Rally Poland is a special event for us"

Mladá Boleslav, 27 June 2016 – ŠKODA is out to continue its winning run in the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2) at the full-throttle show in Poland. One year ago, Esapekka Lappi/Janne Ferm claimed the historic first WRC 2 win for the ŠKODA FABIA R5 at the Rally Poland – and the "flying Finns" would like to repeat that success this year. Sweden's Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson are the second ŠKODA works duo in one of the fastest rallies of the year, which runs from Thursday to Sunday. Polish driver Hubert Ptaszek, also behind the wheel of a ŠKODA FABIA R5, will be the centre of attention for tens of thousands of fans.

"The Rally Poland is a special event for us. One year ago, we celebrated the first win here for our new ŠKODA FABIA R5 in the World Rally Championship. Of course we would like to continue that trend this year," says ŠKODA Motorsport Director Michal Hrabánek. The Rally Poland marks the start of some high-speed weeks in the WRC 2. The long-standing event among the Masurian Lakes, and the Rally Finland that follows it, rank as the two world championship events with the highest average speed.

"You need to be brave on the ultra-fast tracks, but you have to use your head as well. Last year, Esapekka Lappi and Pontus Tidemand got the balance just right to claim a one-two. However, the competition is stronger than in 2015 and we can look forward to an exciting Rally Poland," continues Hrabánek. The top six in the overall WRC 2 standings – all of whom are driving a ŠKODA FABIA R5, with the exception of leader Elfyn Evans (GB) – will be battling to record the best times over 306.10 kilometres of stages, through thick forests and around beautiful lakes.

The last four WRC 2 rallies have been won by drivers of the high-tech four-wheel-drive FABIA R5. Two weeks ago, at the Rally Italy, victory went to the 22-year-old Finnish driver Teemu Suninen, who had started the sequence of wins at the Rally Mexico. Nicolás Fuchs (PE) won the Rally Argentina in the fast and reliable four-wheel drive powerhouse from Mladá Boleslav. At the Rally Portugal, it was works driver Pontus Tidemand who climbed onto the top step of the podium.



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The Swedish driver is looking forward to returning to Poland: "I like the fast roads at the Rally Poland, and my second-place finish last year showed that. Jonas and I want to record another top result to improve our chances in the WRC 2 title race. To do that, we need to hold our nerve." After finishing ninth at the Rally Italy, team-mate Esapekka Lappi wants to go on the attack: "We showed our potential in Sardinia with some stage wins, but we didn't get the overall result to match. The mega-fast tracks in Poland remind me of Finland and it feels almost like home for me. We definitely want to be challenging for the win."

It will certainly not be an easy task – in addition to Lappi and Tidemand, there will be six more drivers competing in the ŠKODA FABIA R5. These include Teemu Suninen and Nicolás Fuchs, both of whom have already won in the WRC 2 this year. At his home event, local hero Hubert Ptaszek wants to impress in the fast and reliable turbo car from the Czech Republic. His co-driver Maciej Szczepaniak (PL) has recovered from the injury he sustained at the Rally Portugal and is looking forward to his comeback in the WRC 2. "The Rally Poland is a highlight of the season for me. I am really looking forward to plenty of fans at our home rally and want to put on a good show," says Ptaszek. He may even be able to give himself an early birthday present: the ŠKODA youngster will turn 23 just two days after the grand finale of the Rally Poland.

The Rally Bohemia will be taking place in the Czech Rally Championship (MČR) at the same time as the Rally Poland. The championship leaders Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler (CZ/CZ) will be competing for the works team, having recently finished runner-up in WRC 2 at the Rally Italy.

FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2)

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date</u>
Rally Monte Carlo	21.01.-24.01.2016
Rally Sweden	11.02.-14.02.2016
Rally Mexico	03.03.-06.03.2016
Rally Argentina	21.04.-24.04.2016
Rally Portugal	19.05.-22.05.2016
Rally Italy	09.06.-12.06.2016
Rally Poland	30.06.-03.07.2016
Rally Finland	28.07.-31.07.2016
Rally Germany	18.08.-21.08.2016
Rally China	08.09.-11.09.2016
Rally Corsica	29.09.-02.10.2016
Rally Spain	13.10.-16.10.2016
Rally Great Britain	27.10.-30.10.2016
Rally Australia	17.11.-20.11.2016



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Did you know ...

... the ŠKODA works drivers Esapekka Lappi and Janne Ferm have already won the Rally Poland twice? Exactly one year ago, the "flying Finns" claimed the historic first win for the ŠKODA FABIA R5 in the WRC 2. Lappi had celebrated his first win in October 2012. He had just joined ŠKODA Motorsport and triumphed in the FABIA SUPER 2000 at his first rally in Poland. At that time, the event was part of the FIA European Rally Championship (ERC).

... alongside the Rally Monte Carlo, the Rally Poland is the oldest event in the rally world, but has only featured on the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC) calendar five times? The Rally Poland took place for the first time in 1921, when Polish driver Tadeusz Heyne claimed victory. In 1973, the event was part of the inaugural World Rally Championship season, after which it was taken out of the WRC calendar and moved to the European Rally Championship. The event appeared once in the WRC, in 2009. The Rally Poland returned to the pinnacle of rallying in 2014, and remains there three years later.

... ŠKODA is represented by five of the top six drivers in the overall WRC 2 standings? After six out of fourteen races, British driver Elfyn Evans (62 points from four starts) is followed by Nicolás Fuchs (55/four starts), Teemu Suninen (50/three starts), works driver Pontus Tidemand (43/two starts), Hubert Ptaszek (42/five starts) and the experienced German driver Armin Kremer (40/three starts), all of whom are behind the wheel of a ŠKODA FABIA R5. The other two ŠKODA works drivers are also in the top ten: Jan Kopecký (19/two starts) is in eighth and Esapekka Lappi (17/two starts) is in tenth place. Each driver can select seven rallies from the season to score points in the WRC 2 overall standings.

... ŠKODA Motorsport is also challenging for the title in the WRC 2 team championship? Although the team from Mladá Boleslav has only started in three world championship rallies so far, it already has 61 points to its name. First place is currently held by M-Sport, with 73 points from four rallies.

... eight ŠKODA FABIA R5s will be starting in the WRC 2 category of the rally, as was also the case at the Rally Italy? In addition to the works drivers Pontus Tidemand and Esapekka Lappi, ŠKODA customers Hubert Ptaszek, Teemu Suninen, Nicolás Fuchs, Armin Kremer, Julien Maurin (F) and Scott Pedder (AUS) will be competing for valuable points in the WRC 2 title race, in the turbo all-wheel drive car from ŠKODA.

... the "flying Finn" Esapekka Lappi was the fastest man in the WRC 2 class on the second stage of last year's rally "Gorklo" – recording a spectacular average speed of 126.45 km/h on the second special stage "Gorklo"? The Rally Poland, and the Rally Finland that follows it, are the fastest rallies on the world championship calendar. Drivers need to be at full throttle, but must also drive carefully: they can cut a lot of corners but the high grass often conceals dangerous stones.



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... only four special stages will be exactly the same as last year: Mikołajki Arena, Gołdap, Świętajno and Wieliczki? All other stages have had at least some modification and 33 percent are new, compared to last year. The changes were made with the goal of making the rally safer and more attractive for drivers and fans. Overall, the drivers have to complete 306.10 kilometres across 21 stages.

... the rally takes place among the Masurian Lakes? There are thousands of lakes in Masuria, and the undisturbed landscape of Poland's largest lake district has made it one of the top tourist attractions in the whole country. The service area for the Rally Poland is in Mikołajki, which has around 4,000 inhabitants and is the best-known town in the region.

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ŠKODA at the World Championship rally in Poland

The Swedish ŠKODA works duo Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson thrilled their fans as they triumphed at the Rally Portugal in May.

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



ŠKODA at the World Championship rally in Poland

One year ago, the second ŠKODA works team Esapekka Lappi/Janne Ferm (FIN/FIN) celebrated the historic first win in Poland with the ŠKODA FABIA R5 in the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2).

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO





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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.