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WRC 2: Suninen gives ŠKODA its fifth consecutive win

- › **FABIA R5 drivers Teemu Suninen/Mikko Markkula win dramatic three-way battle**
- › **Win slips through fingers of works duo Esapekka Lappi/Janne Ferm due to flat tyre in penultimate stage, putting them in third place in high-octane show in the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2)**
- › **Michal Hrabánek: „Rally Poland was excellent advertising for WRC 2“**

Mikołajki, 3 July 2016 – Intense heat and dust followed by rain and mud, with plenty of drama throughout: the FABIA R5 duo Teemu Suninen/Mikko Markkula overcame all these challenges to reap ŠKODA its fifth consecutive win in the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2). The two Finns benefited from a puncture suffered by ŠKODA works duo Esapekka Lappi/Janne Ferm (FIN/FIN), who were engaged in a three-way battle for victory and were in the lead until the penultimate stage. Last year's winners ultimately finished in third place in the high-octane show over a distance of 306.10 kilometres. The second ŠKODA Motorsport duo Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson (S/S) made good a number of positions to finish in seventh place.

„Changeable weather and track conditions, high speed and a thrilling three-way battle for the win – Rally Poland really was excellent advertising for WRC 2. Esapekka Lappi and Janne Ferm were on course for victory until they ran into some tyre trouble. Congratulations to Teemu Suninen and Mikko Markkula, who have extended ŠKODA's string of successes in WRC 2,“ commented ŠKODA Motorsport Director Michal Hrabánek. „We scored our historic first win in WRC 2 with our FABIA R5 here in Poland exactly a year ago. This year, no less than eight drivers placed their trust in our four-wheel drive vehicles, four of whom finished among the top eight. This demonstrates that we are on the right track, and we must systematically continue to pursue this course,“ he added.

The rally proceedings on gravel tracks in the picturesque Masurian Lake District were hard to beat in terms of excitement. On Friday, the ŠKODA works duo Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson initially took the lead, but were temporarily stopped in their tracks by a problem. A three-way battle for the rally win then developed among the two ŠKODA FABIA R5 drivers Esapekka Lappi and Teemu Suninen and Elfyn Evans (GB/Ford). Suninen was out in front on Friday evening, but Lappi mastered Saturday's intense temperatures and dusty tracks to go into the lead.

The outdoor conditions had then changed completely on the final day as he tackled the final four special stages with a lead of 10.8 seconds over Suninen. After heavy rainfall, the routes were muddy and the temperature had dropped by almost 15 degrees. Lappi initially defended his lead over Evans and Suninen during the first two stages of the final



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day. However, like Evans, Lappi then experienced a puncture during the penultimate stage, Baranowo 2, and subsequently lost almost two minutes – clearing the way for Suninen to score his third win of the season.

„I tried to keep going at first, but we did then have to stop and change a tyre. The change went very quickly thanks to our ŠKODA training. It’s still frustrating to be brought to a standstill when you’re so close to potentially winning – but that’s part and parcel of rally driving. Congratulations to Teemu Suninen, who was really fast and who is a worthy winner,“ commented Lappi.

Suninen achieved the fifth consecutive WRC 2 win for a ŠKODA FABIA R5. The talented 22-year-old rally driver initiated the string of successes in Rally Mexico. This was followed by Nicolás Fuchs of Peru being unbeatable in the fast and reliable four-wheel drive vehicle from Mladá Boleslav during Rally Argentina. Works driver Pontus Tidemand won Rally Portugal, before Suninen clinched his second win in Rally Italy.

After seven out of 14 season events, the overall WRC 2 rankings are about as exciting as Rally Poland proved to be. With half of the season completed, Elfyn Evans is in the lead (80 points/five appearances), but there are several ŠKODA FABIA R5 drivers hot on his heels who are still in with a strong chance of clinching the title. Teemu Suninen is in second place (75 points/four appearances), ahead of Nicolás Fuchs (59 points/five appearances). ŠKODA works driver Pontus Tidemand then follows in fourth place (49 points/three appearances). Esapekka Lappi has made three appearances and has picked up 32 points in total. In 2016, each of the drivers can pick up points towards winning the WRC 2 title in seven events, with their top six results then counting.

The two ŠKODA works drivers Lappi and Tidemand will have the opportunity to score some more points at the next WRC event in Finland from 28 to 31 July. And Esapekka Lappi hopes to then repeat his 2015 performance by winning his home rally.

Final result of the Rally Poland (WRC 2):

1. Suninen/Markkula (FIN/FIN)	ŠKODA FABIA R5	2:43:27.7 hrs
2. Evans/Parry (GB/GB)	Ford Fiesta R5	+ 0:49.6 min
3. Lappi/Ferm (FIN/FIN)	ŠKODA FABIA	+ 2:32.7 min
4. Kajetanowicz/Baran (PL/PL)	Ford Fiesta R5	+ 6:32.8 min
5. Koltun/Pleskot (PL/PL)	Ford Fiesta R5	+ 10:36.4 min



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The number for the Rally Poland: 20

A ŠKODA FABIA R5 driver was on the top of the WRC 2 rankings after 20 of the 21 stages in Rally Poland. Karl Kruuda (EST/Ford) was in the lead after the opening stage, but it was subsequently the high-tech four-wheel drive vehicles from the Czech Republic that took control. ŠKODA works driver Pontus Tidemand was the WRC 2 front-runner from stage two to stage eight, but was replaced by Teemu Suninen over stages nine to 13. From stage 14, Stanczyki 2, it was the second ŠKODA works driver Esapekka Lappi who was at the top of the leader board – but he suffered a setback in the penultimate stage due to a flat tyre. This allowed Teemu Suninen to reclaim the top spot during stage 20, Baranowo 2, and to win the rally for ŠKODA.

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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Media images:



ŠKODA at the World Championship rally in Poland

The factory-backed duo Esapekka Lappi/Janne Ferm (FIN/FIN) finished in third place this time, a year after scoring a historic win for the ŠKODA FABIA R5 in WRC 2.

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



ŠKODA at the World Championship rally in Poland

Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson (S/S) demonstrated true fighting spirit in the second ŠKODA FABIA R5, finishing in seventh place and scoring six points that go towards the WRC 2 overall rankings.

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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).

ŠKODA AUTO



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- > 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.