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Asphalt expert Kopecký takes the top position in ŠKODA duel

- › **Despite tyre damage, Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler go into the final 62.80 kilometres of the Rally Spain with a 14.3-second lead over team-mates Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson**
- › **Works driver Kopecký takes best time in seven of the eight stages on Saturday in the ŠKODA FABIA R5**

Salou, 15 October 2016 – Asphalt expert Jan Kopecký (CZ) has taken the lead in the thrilling ŠKODA duel at the Rally Spain. Together with his co-driver Pavel Dresler (CZ), the Czech champion built a 14.3-second lead over the second works duo, Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson (S/S), despite tyre damage. The last 62.80 kilometres of this leg of the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2) on Sunday will decide whether ŠKODA Motorsport can celebrate a one-two victory on the Costa Daurada like it did in 2015.

“Sunshine instead of rain, and on top of that first and second place for ŠKODA – you can’t help but beam after a day like today. We pushed a bit more on the asphalt and that gave us the top position. The puncture shaved some time off our lead though,” commented Kopecký. For that reason, the 34-year-old is by no means confident of winning as he looks towards the last four special stages: “The duel with Pontus has not been decided yet. Anyway, what matters for the team is that we celebrate a one-two victory here in Spain.”

Saturday was all about switching from rain to sunshine and from gravel to asphalt. Pontus Tidemand had a 3.0-second lead going into the two-way battle with his team-mate Kopecký. However, this slim cushion had been whittled away after the very first stage of the day and the Czech then took the lead over the course the following stage kilometres on his favourite surface, asphalt, bagging a total of seven best times. In “Querol 2”, the third to last stage on Saturday, a slow puncture cost him more than 20 seconds against Tidemand, however. “That makes the whole thing more exciting,” said Kopecký. Thousands of spectators lined the courses and relished the ŠKODA duel for top position in the WRC 2.

“Jan is quite simply really good on asphalt. And I didn’t take too many risks: after all, I want to get the car over the finishing line,” explained Tidemand. He hasn’t yet given up hope of repeating last year’s victory, when he triumphed ahead of Jan Kopecký: “Anything can happen in rallying, especially at the Rally Spain.” This was also illustrated by WRC 2 title contender Teemu Suninen (FIN), who managed to make a comeback by working his way into fifth place for a privateer team after his ŠKODA FABIA R5 suffered a defect the previous day.



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The rally on the Costa Daurada is the only "hybrid rally" on the WRC calendar, at which the tracks switch between gravel and asphalt. It is considered particularly challenging as a result. The rally ends on Sunday with what must be the most spectacular roundabout in the WRC. The rally drivers have to complete a full "donut" of a roundabout as part of the final stage, "Duesaigües". If they fail to do this, they are awarded a 30-second penalty. Thousands of fans will travel to see the spectacle, when the ŠKODA duel will also be decided.

Interim standings Rally Spain (WRC 2):

1. Kopecký/Dresler (CZ/CZ)	ŠKODA FABIA R5	2:42:54.4 hrs
2. Tidemand/Andersson (S/S)	ŠKODA FABIA R5	+ 0:14.3 min.
3. Turan/Zsiris (H/H)	Peugeot 208 R5	+ 12:20.2 min.
4. van den Heuvel/Dockx (NL/NL)	Mitsubishi Lancer Evo X	+ 21:13.5 min.
5. Suninen/Markkula (FIN/FIN)	ŠKODA FABIA R5	+ 28:29.0 min.

The number of the day: 0.0

It may be almost unbelievable, but it's true: after stage 8 of the Rally Spain, the two ŠKODA works drivers, Pontus Tidemand and Jan Kopecký, had exactly the same time, down to a tenth of a second. The two drivers covered the 125.38 stage kilometres up to that point in exactly 1:27:10.4 hours, putting them jointly in the lead.

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 (cancelled)
Rally France	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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ŠKODA at the World Championship rally in Spain

The thrilling two-way battle between the ŠKODA works duos continued on Saturday. Pictured here: Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson (S/S) completing a jump.

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



ŠKODA at the World Championship rally in Spain

ŠKODA Motorsport is immensely popular with fans too at this leg of the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2). Here, spectators watch the FABIA R5 driven by Jan Kopecký (CZ) and Pavel Dresler (CZ) being serviced.

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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 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

- > 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, KODIAQ 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.