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Mikkelsen dominates opening day of an icy Rally Monte Carlo in the ŠKODA FABIA R5

- › **Andreas Mikkelsen/Anders Jæger impress on guest appearance in the ŠKODA FABIA R5 and take a lead of 2:47.4 minutes over team-mates Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler into the final two days of the rally**
- › **40 years after historic triumph: spectators enjoy special livery on the works team's three FABIA R5s**
- › **Mikkelsen: "I am very happy with the ŠKODA FABIA R5!"**

Gap/France, 20 January 2017 – Andreas Mikkelsen (N) dominated the early stages of the 85th Rally Monte Carlo on his guest appearance with the ŠKODA Motorsport works team. A lot of snow and ice are making the opening round of the 2017 FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2) far from easy, but Mikkelsen and his co-driver Anders Jæger (N) passed every test with flying colours in the ŠKODA FABIA R5. The successful duo lead the WRC 2 class and head into the final two days of the most famous and oldest rally in the world with a lead of 2:47.4 minutes over ŠKODA team-mates Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler (CZ/CZ).

"I am very happy with the ŠKODA FABIA R5! It goes without saying that it was a big adjustment at first, but we started cautiously and then gradually upped the tempo. We now feel right at home in the car, although they were really extremely difficult conditions," said Mikkelsen. The 27-year-old Norwegian was part of the Volkswagen Motorsport team that won the World Rally Championship in each of the past four years. However, Mikkelsen's route to becoming one of the top rally drivers in the world started with titles in the Intercontinental Rally Challenge in 2011 and 2012 with ŠKODA.

Returning to his roots, the fan favourite won his first special stage in the ŠKODA FABIA R5 shortly after the official start in glamorous Monte Carlo on Thursday. On Friday, ŠKODA works driver Kopecký was the fastest man at first, but Mikkelsen then upped the pace on the narrow, winding roads. The Norwegian was a full 46.5 seconds faster than second-placed Frenchman Bryan Bouffier the first time the drivers tackled "Aspres les Corps – Chaillol" – at 38.94 kilometres the longest stage on the Monte. Mikkelsen has won six of the seven special stages so far. Jan Kopecký lost a lot of time due to a puncture on Friday morning, but fought his way back to end the opening day in second place in WRC 2.

"I hope we can defend this position. There is still a long way to go, and we will continue to fight hard," said Czech champion Kopecký. ŠKODA works duo Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson (S/S), who are not eligible to score world championship points at this rally, also impressed. Tidemand showed his potential with a number of top-three times on his first outing at the Monte. His goal is to present ŠKODA Motorsport with another world



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championship title this year. In 2016, the works team from Mladá Boleslav won the Drivers' and Co-Drivers' Championship in WRC 2 for the first time, courtesy of Esapekka Lappi/Janne Ferm (FIN/FIN) in the ŠKODA FABIA R5.

The thousands of fans lining the route were treated to a special livery on the works team's three ŠKODA FABIA R5s. The blue and red stripes on the rally cars are a nod to the manufacturer's legendary victory at this very event 40 years ago. Four decades ago, Václav Blahna (CZ) and his co-driver Lubislav Hlávka (CZ) triumphed in the 1,300 cc class in their ŠKODA 130 RS. The works team is now well on track to repeat this feat in 2017. However, they have yet to complete half of the kilometres against the clock: another 175 kilometres await Mikkelsen and Co. on Saturday and Sunday.

Standings at the Rally Monte Carlo (WRC 2):

1. Mikkelsen/Jæger (N/N)	ŠKODA FABIA R5	2:11:15.4 hrs
2. Kopecký/Dresler (CZ/CZ)	ŠKODA FABIA R5	+ 2:47.4 min
3. Bouffier/Giraudet (F/F)	Ford Fiesta R5	+ 4:55.0 min
4. Camilli/Veillas (F/F)	Ford Fiesta R5	+ 7:44.6 min
5. Gilbert/Jamoul (F/B)	Ford Fiesta R5	+ 7:58.5 min

Number of the day: 1574

Friday's special stages at the Rally Monte Carlo saw the competitors climb to 1574 metres above sea level in the French Alps. The highest point of the day came on the Col de Moissière. However, this is set to be topped by the iconic Col de Turini pass (1607 metres) on Sunday. This year, particularly large quantities of snow and ice on the winding roads are making life difficult for the drivers.

2017 FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2)

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date</u>
Rally Monte Carlo	19.01.–22.01.2017
Rally Sweden	09.02.–12.02.2017
Rally Mexico	09.03.–12.03.2017
Rally France	06.04.–09.04.2017
Rally Argentina	27.04.–30.04.2017
Rally Portugal	18.05.–21.05.2017
Rally Italy	08.06.–11.06.2017
Rally Poland	29.06.–02.07.2017
Rally Finland	27.07.–30.07.2017



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Rally Germany	17.08.–20.08.2017
Rally Spain	05.10.–08.10.2017
Rally Great Britain	26.10.–29.10.2017
Rally Australia	16.11.–19.11.2017

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ŠKODA Motorsport at the Rally Monte Carlo

Boasting a wealth of WRC experience, Andreas Mikkelsen/Anders Jæger impressed with a series of stunning stage wins on their guest appearance for the works team. They take a comfortable lead into the final two days.

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



ŠKODA Motorsport at the Rally Monte Carlo

Despite suffering a puncture, ŠKODA works duo Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler fought their way back into second place ahead of the final weekend.

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO





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ŠKODA Motorsport at the Rally Monte Carlo

The three ŠKODA FABIA R5s of Andreas Mikkelsen, Jan Kopecký and Pontus Tidemand are sporting a special livery – a throwback to the legendary Monte triumph of Václav Blahna/Lubislav Hlávka 40 years ago in the ŠKODA 130 RS.

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO

ŠKODA Motorsport Overview:

ŠKODA has been successful 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 winning the title in the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2) for the first time in 2016, 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.

2016 was one of the most successful years in the 116-year history of ŠKODA Motorsport. In the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2), Esapekka Lappi/Janne Ferm (FIN/FIN) won the title for the Czech car maker for the first time. In total, ten of the 2016 season's races in the World Rally Championship were won by a ŠKODA FABIA R5. ŠKODA drivers Gustavo Saba (PY) and Gaurav Gill (IND) also won the continental championships in South America and the Asia-Pacific region at the wheel of the successful ŠKODA FABIA R5. Nasser Al-Attiyah (Q) was unbeatable in the Middle East Rally Championship (MERC), while a further ten national titles also went the way of ŠKODA drivers.

The ŠKODA FABIA R5, a high-tech 4x4, was homologated by the International Automobile Federation FIA on 1 April 2015. ŠKODA's new FABIA R5 is successfully continuing the long tradition of ŠKODA Motorsport. Its predecessor, the FABIA SUPER 2000, won 50 national and international titles around the world. In 2017, works duos Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson (S/S) and Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler (CZ/CZ) will contest selected races in the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2). Kopecký/Dresler will also compete in the Czech Rally Championship (MČR), where they will be looking to claim a third title in a row.

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 Group since 1991. The Volkswagen Group is one of the most successful vehicle manufacturers 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.