



ŠKODA Motorsport Press Release, Page 1 of 4

Mikkelsen ahead of Kopecký: One-two lead for ŠKODA ahead of the Rally Monte Carlo finale

- › On the penultimate day of the rally, **Andreas Mikkelsen/Anders Jæger** extend their lead over team-mates **Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler**
- › **53.72 kilometres** are scheduled for Sunday, including the legendary climb on the **Col de Turini**
- › **Andreas Mikkelsen: "It's all about avoiding unnecessary risks"**

Gap/France, 21st January 2017 – Andreas Mikkelsen ahead of Jan Kopecký: ŠKODA is approaching the Rally Monte Carlo finale with a one-two lead. Norwegian driver Mikkelsen and his co-driver Anders Jæger (N) are just 53.72 kilometres away from triumphing at the most famous rally on the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2) calendar, but the last stages include the legendary climb on the Col de Turini. On Saturday, the new successful duo in the ŠKODA FABIA R5 extended their lead over team-mates Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler (CZ/CZ) to 3:19.2 minutes. The second ŠKODA works duo of Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson (S/S) recorded one best time on Saturday.

"We have a decent lead, so we will be driving cautiously. It's all about avoiding unnecessary risks. Our ŠKODA FABIA R5 is working perfectly and we are improving our feel for the car all the time. We have to remain focused so that we can claim victory for ŠKODA," said Mikkelsen. The 27-year-old Norwegian drove in challenging conditions once again - clean asphalt road surfaces disappeared in the mountains around the service park in Gap, France, to be replaced by snow-covered stages - but he never lost control of his high-tech 4x4. Thousands of fans came out to cheer Mikkelsen on.

In the first two morning stages, he let his team-mate Kopecký and Bryan Bouffier move ahead but then showed just how fast he can be with outstanding best times on special stages eleven and 13. Mikkelsen has dominated the first two days of the rally, recording the best time on six stages.

On Saturday, Jan Kopecký won his second special stage at this year's Monte and was never in danger of losing second place. "The conditions were challenging once again, but we didn't have any problems. We now have to focus on not making mistakes and bring this result home," commented the experienced Czech driver. The ŠKODA works duo of Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson (S/S), who are not competing for WRC 2 points at this rally, did not have such a smooth ride on Saturday. The duo suffered two punctures on this sunny day, but recorded an impressive best time in the penultimate special stage to announce their return.



ŠKODA Motorsport Press Release, Page 2 of 4

"This is our first Monte and it's all about getting experience, which is sure to help us as we battle for the WRC 2 title this season," commented Tidemand. Last year, Esapekka Lappi/Janne Ferm (FIN/FIN) won the WRC 2 title in the drivers' and co-drivers' competitions for the first time for the ŠKODA Motorsport works team.

The teams have already raced along more than 300 kilometres at this opening round of the 2017 World Rally Championship but the real high point of the oldest rally in the world is yet to come for the three ŠKODA works team drivers. The rally cars have to deal with a difference in elevation of over 1100 metres on their way to the Col de Turini (1607 metres). This is followed by the last four special stages in the Principality of Monaco and the awards ceremony at the "Place du Palais Princier". 40 years ago, Václav Blahna (CZ) and his co-driver Lubislav Hlávka (CZ) claimed victory with their ŠKODA 130 RS in the 1,300cc class. The three ŠKODA FABIA R5s from the works teams are commemorating this triumph with a special livery. On Sunday at the Rally Monte Carlo, ŠKODA Motorsport could set another milestone in its 116-year history of success.

Standings at the Rallye 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	+ 3:19.2 min
3. Bouffier/Giraudet (F/F)	Ford Fiesta R5	+ 5:26.7 min
4. Camilli/Veillas (F/F)	Ford Fiesta R5	+ 8:42.7 min
5. Gilbert/Jamoul (F/B)	Ford Fiesta R5	+ 9:48.4 min

The number of the day: 4

Thousands of fans were entertained on Saturday, on and off the track. At the service park in Gap, France, the spectators were able to watch the mechanics at work on the rally cars no less than four times. However, there is no service on Sunday. On Saturday evening, all the cars were transported to the parc fermé in Monaco, where the winner of the Rally Monte Carlo will be crowned on the final day.

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



ŠKODA Motorsport Press Release, Page 3 of 4

Rally Italy	08.06.–11.06.2017
Rally Poland	29.06.–02.07.2017
Rally Finland	27.07.–30.07.2017
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

On Saturday, Andreas Mikkelsen showed his class at his first rally in the ŠKODA FABIA R5, building a commanding lead in the overall WRC 2 standings.

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



ŠKODA Motorsport at the Rally Monte Carlo

The ŠKODA works duo of Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler goes into the final day of the legendary rally in second place.

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



ŠKODA Motorsport Press Release, Page 4 of 4



ŠKODA Motorsport at the Rally Monte Carlo

Works driver Pontus Tidemand and co-driver Jonas Andersson recorded a convincing best time after two punctures.

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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.