



ŠKODA Motorsport Press Release, Page 1 of 5

Home race for Tidemand: ŠKODA out to stay on the road to success in Sweden

- › After second place in 2016, ŠKODA works driver Pontus Tidemand and co-driver Jonas Andersson have sights set on the top step of the podium at their home rally
- › Tough opposition for Sweden's motorsport athlete of the year at round two of the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2)
- › ŠKODA FABIA R5 features new 2017 look for first time
- › Michal Hrabánek: "The perfect start to the season is motivation for the entire team at the Rally Sweden"

Mladá Boleslav, 6 February 2017 – ŠKODA works duo Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson go in search of victory at their home round of the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2) with the distinction of being named Sweden's motorsport athlete of the year. The duo will be out to continue ŠKODA's successful start to the 2017 rally year when they line up in a new-look ŠKODA FABIA R5 at the Rally Sweden from Thursday to Sunday. Andreas Mikkelsen (N) and Jan Kopecký (CZ) presented the works team with a one-two in the ŠKODA FABIA R5 at the iconic Rally Monte Carlo.

"The perfect start to the season is motivation for the entire team at the Rally Sweden," said ŠKODA Motorsport Director Michal Hrabánek. „We will do everything in our power to allow Pontus Tidemand and Jonas Andersson to challenge for victory on home soil.“. The routes around the service park in Torsby demand the utmost concentration and intelligent driving: "Pontus and Jonas showed at the Rally Monte Carlo that they are very well equipped to cope with these difficult conditions. However, it will certainly be hard work – we are up against some very strong opposition."

Among those in action in Sweden will be Finland's Teemu Suninen, who finished second overall in the WRC 2 last year at the wheel of a private ŠKODA FABIA R5. The runner-up in last year's European Championship, Alexey Lukyanuk (RUS), will also be among those to look out for. However, ŠKODA's main hope, Tidemand, is not worried: "Last year, we missed out on victory at our home rally by just 14.7 seconds. This time we want to finish on the top step of the podium. We want to put on a good show for our many fans back home." The Rally Sweden will also witness a first: the works team's ŠKODA FABIA R5 will sport the new 2017 livery for the first time. The green, white and black design has been made even more attractive.

Being voted Sweden's motorsport athletes of the year will have given Tidemand and Andersson even more confidence. The ŠKODA duo were recognised at a celebratory gala at the end of January. After an outing in suits, they are now back in their trusty racing



ŠKODA Motorsport Press Release, Page 2 of 5

overalls. The winter rally on the WRC calendar features a good 330 kilometres against the clock, spread over 18 special stages, often in icy temperatures. Spikes on the tyres help to provide as much grip as possible on the slippery surfaces. Tidemand/Andersson cope well with these complicated conditions: despite two punctures, they impressed en route to eleventh place overall at the recent Rally Monte Carlo.

"We are ready for the Rally Sweden. It is no secret that we want to challenge for the WRC 2 title," said Tidemand. The statistics speak in favour of the successful ŠKODA FABIA R5: eleven of the last twelve rallies in the WRC 2 championship have been won by the high-tech four-wheel drive powerhouse from the Czech Republic. The ŠKODA Motorsport works team also won the world title in the Drivers' and Co-Drivers' Championship for the first time in 2016, courtesy of Esapekka Lappi/Janne Ferm (FIN/FIN). Pontus Tidemand and Jonas Andersson have their sights set firmly on repeating this success for ŠKODA.

The 2017 calendar for the 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
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

Did you know ...

... a total of six ŠKODA FABIA R5s will start at the 2017 Rally Sweden? As well as ŠKODA works driver Pontus Tidemand, a further two Swedes – Johan Kristoffersson and Kjell Sandberg – will be in action at the wheel of the Czech turbo four-wheel drive car. Also in the FABIA R5: Ole Christian Veiby (N), Jukka Ketomäki (FIN) and Federico Della Casa (CH).



ŠKODA Motorsport Press Release, Page 3 of 5

... the Rally Sweden was initially held in the summer? The inaugural rally in 1950 was known as the "Rally of the Midnight Sun". Since 1965, the rally has regularly been held in the winter. It was included in the FIA World Rally Championship in 1973, since when the Rally Sweden has been virtually a permanent fixture in the world championship. The only exceptions: it was cancelled due to the oil crisis in 1974 and due to adverse weather in 1990. It did not feature on the WRC calendar in 2009, as a result of the FIA's rotation system.

... the "Sweden Spikes" provide more grip on ice and snow than gravel tyres do on standard gravel? Every tyre is equipped with 380 steel studs, each of which is 20 millimetres long and weighs four grams.

... the Rally Sweden is a real home race for the drivers from Nordic countries? In 64 previous races, the only rally on the WRC calendar that is always held on ice and snow has been won by drivers from Sweden, Norway or Finland on all but four occasions. Sébastien Loeb (F) won in 2004, while Sébastien Ogier (F) was victorious in 2013, 2015 and 2016.

... the organisers of the Rally Sweden present the "Colin's Crest Award" for the longest jump over a crest on the Vargåsen stage, in memory of Colin McRae? Previous winners since 2008: Khalid Al Qassimi (UAE, 36 Meter), Marius Aasen (N, 37 m), Ken Block (USA, 37 m), Ott Tänak (EST, 32 m), Thierry Neuville (B, 35 m), Juho Hänninen (FIN, 36 m), Thierry Neuville (B, 44 m) and record holder Eyvind Brynildsen (N, 45 m).

... a snow shovel must be carried in every rally car? They are on board in case the car should require digging out of the snow if it strays from the road.

... last year's Rally Sweden was the shortest WRC rally ever? Mild, spring temperatures meant the organisers were ultimately only able to stage nine of the 21 scheduled special stages. The rally route was reduced from 331.21 to 226.48 kilometres against the clock.

... drivers can only score world championship points if they are registered in the WRC 2 class? Each driver can score points towards the overall WRC 2 standings at seven selected rallies, with the best six results counting. ŠKODA drivers Andreas Mikkelsen (N) and Jan Kopecký (CZ) currently top the WRC 2 standings thanks to their one-two at the Rally Monte Carlo.



ŠKODA Motorsport Press Release, Page 4 of 5

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Media images:**ŠKODA Motorsport at the Rally Sweden**

The FABIA R5 of the ŠKODA Motorsport works team will sport the new design for the first time in Sweden.

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO

**ŠKODA Motorsport at the Rally Sweden**

Last year, Tidemand/Andersson finished second in the WRC 2 class in Sweden.

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ŠKODA Motorsport Press Release, Page 5 of 5

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 2016 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.