

ŠKODA MOTORSPORT PRESS RELEASE

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ŠKODA driver Tidemand leads the way: spectacular start to the Rally Mexico

- › Thousands of fans cheer on ŠKODA works driver Pontus Tidemand and his co-driver Jonas Andersson on the street stage in Mexico City
- › Highlights of the Mexican round of the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2) to follow: El Chocolate and driving underground
- › Pontus Tidemand: "A perfect evening in a fantastic atmosphere"

Mexico City, 10 March 2017 – Thousands of fans cheered on ŠKODA works driver Pontus Tidemand (S) and his co-driver Jonas Andersson (S) as the Rally Mexico opened in spectacular style. The successful duo took an early lead in the dark at round three of the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2) courtesy of two outstanding stage wins on a 1.57-kilometre route around Zócalo square, in the heart of the metropolis that is Mexico City. The brief outing on asphalt will be followed by just short of 370 kilometres of special stage on gravel over the next three days.

"A perfect evening in a fantastic atmosphere. The route was extremely difficult and very slippery. However, the real challenges will come over the next few days," said Tidemand after the opening two stages. Sweden's Motorsport Athlete of the Year in 2016 opened a 12.7-second lead over second-placed Mexican Benito Guerra, also at the wheel of a ŠKODA FABIA R5.

Rally fans flocked to Zócalo square, which will be familiar to many from a James Bond film as it provided the backdrop to the opening helicopter scene in "Spectre". The opening leg of the Rally Mexico in one of the biggest cities in the world – undoubtedly one of the highlights of the World Rally Championship – was no less spectacular, with rain causing wet roads and tricky conditions.

Before demonstrating their extraordinary driving skills, the drivers had thrilled their many fans with an autograph session in the capital city. Once the opening stages were complete, they then set off on the 400-kilometre drive to Leon, where the service park is traditionally located. Some true highlights of the WRC calendar await Tidemand and Co. on Friday.

On the one hand, they must tackle the famous "El Chocolate" special stage – at 54.90 kilometres one of the longest in the world championship season - twice. They will also head underground: the route through the city of Guanajuato, which is a UNESCO world heritage site, takes the drivers through old mining tunnels. The engines will also be put to the test at the Rally Mexico: the route reaches the highest point in this year's World Rally Championship at 2737 metres above sea level, where the thin air can result in the power units losing up to 20 per cent of their power.

Pontus Tidemand had made the perfect start to the WRC 2 title race with victory at his home rally in Sweden in February. He tops the overall standings, level on points with Andreas Mikkelsen (N), who won the opening Rally Monte Carlo in a ŠKODA FABIA R5. Starting last season, the high-tech, four-wheel drive powerhouse from the Czech Republic has won 12 of the last 13 races in WRC 2.



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Rally Mexico standings (WRC 2):

| | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------|---------------|
| 1. Tidemand/Andersson (S/S) | ŠKODA FABIA R5 | 0:03:43.9 hrs |
| 2. Guerra/Cue (MEX/E) | ŠKODA FABIA R5 | + 0:12.7 min |
| 3. Camilli/Veillas (F/F) | Ford Fiesta R5 | + 0:13.6 min |
| 4. Ptaszek/Szczepaniak (PL/PL) | ŠKODA FABIA R5 | + 0:15.3 min |
| 5. Heller/Olmos (RCH/RA) | Ford Fiesta R5 | + 0:29.9 min |

Number of the day: 3

The ŠKODA FABIA R5 was once again the best car in its class on the opening leg of the Rally Mexico. Three of the top four drivers are at the wheel of the high-tech, four-wheel drive powerhouse from the Czech Republic: leader Pontus Tidemand, Mexican Benito Guerra in second place and Poland's Hubert Ptaszek in fourth.

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 |

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Media images:



ŠKODA Motorsport at the Rally Mexico
Works driver Pontus Tidemand and his co-driver Jonas Andersson thrilled fans at the start of the world championship rally.

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ŠKODA Motorsport at the Rally Mexico
Pontus Tidemand was once again the focus of media attention in Mexico.

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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).

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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.

