

ŠKODA MOTORSPORT PRESS RELEASE



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ŠKODA enters FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship Gill and youngster Veiby compete in MRF ŠKODA FABIA R5

- › **Double Act:** Two-time APRC champion Gaurav Gill is challenged by youngster Ole Christian Veiby in the second MRF team's ŠKODA FABIA R5
- › ŠKODA unbeaten in the Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC) since 2012
- › Michal Hrabánek: "APRC runs in important growth markets for ŠKODA"
- › A big challenge for rookies: ŠKODA drivers use demanding gravel rallies as boot camps

Mladá Boleslav, 12 April 2017 – ŠKODA driver pairing for the FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship has been decided. Reigning champs Gaurav Gill/Glen Macneall, which won the title in 2013 and 2016, will compete with Norwegian rookie team Ole Christian Veiby/Stig Rune Skjaermoen. Both teams enter the competition in ŠKODA FABIA R5 run by Australian team MRF. Gill won all last year's rallies in the APRC and had already secured the championship one round before the end of the season. In 2017, however, he's likely to face fierce opposition from promising Norwegian rookie Ole Christian Veiby.

"The FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship is of major strategic significance to ŠKODA as the rallies are run in extremely important growth markets like India and China. On top of that, the demanding gravel tracks are ideal for challenging talented young drivers," stresses ŠKODA motorsport boss Michal Hrabánek.

ŠKODA can look back on unparalleled success in the APRC. Every championship winner since 2012 has driven a ŠKODA, and current works drivers Jan Kopecký (champion 2014) and Pontus Tidemand (winner 2015) used the APRC to gain important experience on the demanding gravel tracks in Asia, Australia and New Zealand. "Ole Christian Veiby has impressed us with his powerful performance, and not just at the Rally Sweden. I'm really looking forward to seeing how he fairs on gravel up against our old hand Gaurav Gill," says Hrabánek.

Norwegian youngster Ole Christian Veiby is eager to make his APRC debut: "I'm so grateful to ŠKODA for putting so much faith in me and giving me this amazing opportunity." Veiby goes head to head with Gill on equal terms. The MRF team is running two identically prepared ŠKODA FABIA R5. Veiby proved his class with a third place at Rally Sweden and finished 5th at Rally Tour de Corse, both in category WRC 2. He is currently holding fifth position in the WRC 2 standings.

The 2017 calendar for the FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC)

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date</u>
Rally of Whangarei – New Zealand	28.04–30.04.2017
Rally Canberra - Australia	26.05–28.05.2017
China Rally	07.07–09.07.2017
Malaysian Rally	11.08–13.08.2017
Rally Hokkaido - Japan	15.09–17.09.2017
Rally of India	24.11–26.11.2017

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Gaurav Gill won the 2016 Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC) convincingly in the ŠKODA FABIA R5 run by the MRF team.

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Ole Christian Veiby (right) and co-driver Stig Rune Skjaermoen (left) will compete the first time in the APRC with the MRF ŠKODA FABIA R5.

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO

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.

2016 was one of the most successful years in the 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 (PRY) 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 (QAT) 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 (SWE/SWE) and Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler (CZE/CZE) 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.

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SIMPLY CLEVER

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 30,000 people globally and is active in more than 100 markets.