

ŠKODA MOTORSPORT PRESS RELEASE

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Double victory for Team MRF ŠKODA: Gaurav Gill wins APRC Rally of Whangarei ahead of Ole Christian Veiby

- › MRF ŠKODA Team unbeatable at opener of 2017 FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC) in Whangarei/New Zealand
- › Two-time APRC champion Gaurav Gill beats ŠKODA junior Ole Christian Veiby
- › ŠKODA FABIA R5 fastest car on each special stage
- › Heavy rainfall and treacherous conditions didn't prevent Veiby and Gill to fight for victory

Whangarei/New Zealand, 30 April 2017 – ŠKODA MRF Teams Ole Christian Veiby/Stig Rune Skjaermoen (NOR/NOR) and Gaurav Gill/Stéphane Prévot (IND/BEL) were engaged in a fierce battle right from the start of the Rally of Whangarei. Reigning champion Gaurav Gill, this time paired with co-driver Stéphane Prévot, was fastest on the opening short “Super Stage”. During the first leg the Norwegian rookie team Ole Christian Veiby/Stig Rune Skjaermoen took the lead. On the third but last stage, Veiby had a technical issue, after a roadside repair incurred a time penalty and dropped to second place behind teammate Gill. The two-time champion finally secured victory on the opening round of the APRC 2017.

The opening round of the 2017 FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC) took place around the host city of Whangarei on New Zealand's Northland. Heavy rainfall in the forests in the north of Auckland made the special stages on the first leg of the rally very slippery. “It was raining cats and dogs. The changing conditions of mud and rain made it slippery in places, when others were really grippy. Sometimes it was raining so heavily the wipers couldn't clear all the water away – it was hard to see at all,” commented Ole Christian Veiby, who took the lead after the first leg of the rally with more than a half minute gap.

Teammate Gaurav Gill meanwhile was struggling with the setup of his ŠKODA FABIA R5. By the end of the first day, he changed the shock absorbers, modified the differential settings and was ready to fight back for the lead. The weather improved on the final day of the rally and a thrilling and close battle for the victory evolved. On Sunday morning Gill was fastest on two stages, Veiby fought back with one scratch time. With three more stages to go, Veiby was still 23 seconds ahead of Gill. In SS 14 Veiby had a brake issue and lost a lot of time in the stage. After a roadside repair, he checked in late on the time control for the next stage, got a time penalty and dropped to second place behind teammate Gill.

At the finish in Whangarei, Ole Christian Veiby was already looking forward to the next rally: “What an experience. I never thought I would be leading most of the rally, can't wait for the rest of the APRC season!” Gaurav Gill and Stéphane Prévot celebrated their win on the podium in Whangarei after a tense and thrilling battle with their young Norwegian teammates.

ŠKODA Motorsport Boss Michal Hrabanek was delighted: “Congratulations to Gaurav and Ole Christian for their stunning performance. There is no better way to start the APRC season but with a double victory!”



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Final Results APRC Rally of Whangarei, 1st round of FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC)

1. Gill/Prévot (IND/BEL), ŠKODA FABIA R5, 2:35:06.8 h
2. Veiby/ Skjarmoen (NOR/NOR), ŠKODA FABIA R5, + 2:02.8 min
3. Blomberg/Andersson (SWE/SWE), Mitsubishi Mirage, + 17:45.5 min
4. Takahashi/Nakamura (JPN/JPN), Subaru Impreza WRX STi, + 28:17.3 min
5. Abhilash/Gowda (IND/IND), Subaru Impreza WRX STi, + 37:42.9 min

Calendar of the 2017 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

Further information:

Zbyněk Straškraba, Communications Motorsport

P +420 605 293 168

zbynek.straskraba@skoda-auto.cz

<http://skoda-motorsport.com>

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Media images:



ŠKODA at the Rally of Whangarei 2017

Gaurav Gill (right) and co-driver Stéphane Prévot won the first round of the Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC) with their ŠKODA FABIA R5 run by the Team MRF.

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



ŠKODA at the Rally of Whangarei 2017

Ole Christian Veiby (right) and co-driver Stig Rune Skjaermoen finished second with their 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.

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.

