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Rally Poland: Double lead for ŠKODA in WRC 2 O.C. Veiby ahead of Pontus Tidemand

- › ŠKODA factory team Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson lying second in WRC 2 category after leg 1 of Rally Poland
- › Norwegian youngster team Ole Christian Veiby/Stig Rune Skjaermoen (ŠKODA FABIA R5) leading the eighth round of the world championship by 5.1 seconds
- › ŠKODA Motorsport boss Michal Hrabánek: "Pontus and Jonas are clearly focused and have to avoid risks in order to get valuable points for the championship."
- › ŠKODA Teams in top four positions after a stormy and rainy opening day of Rally Poland

Mikolajki/Poland, 30 June 2017 – The ŠKODA FABIA R5 proved again to be the benchmark in WRC 2 category at the eighth round of the World Rally Championship (WRC) in Poland. Norwegian youngster team Ole Christian Veiby/Stig Rune Skjaermoen in the private Printsport ŠKODA FABIA R5 are leading with 5.1 seconds ahead of the factory team Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson. The talented Veiby currently is leading the Asia Pacific Rally Championship (APRC) for MRF ŠKODA. With a win at Rallye Poland he could move into second overall of the WRC 2 championship standings. Tidemand on the other hand could gain valuable points in his pursuit to win the World Rally Championship (WRC 2) in 2017.

"Feel the Gravel" is the slogan of the 74th Rally Poland 2017. But on the opening Friday leg of the eighth round of World Rally Championship it was more about: "Feel the Mud." Heavy rain falls in the area of the Masurian Lake District in the north of Poland turned the fast and sandy stages into a mix of mud and water. The grip level changed all the time. "It was all about 'reading' the road to find the right speed for the various conditions and grip level, and where to take a risk or not," described WRC 2 championship leader Pontus Tidemand.

Right from the start the WRC 2 competition was a tough fight between the ŠKODA works team Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson (SWE/SWE), the private Printsport youngster team Ole Christian Veiby/Stig Rune Skjaermoen (both ŠKODA FABIA R5) and the Ford pairing Gus Greensmith/Craig Parry (GBR/GBR).

On the first special stage on Thursday evening, the rather short show stage close to the service park in Mikolajki, Tidemand scored the first fastest time. On Friday morning heavy rainfalls turned the special stages into a mud bath. On stage 2 Norwegian youngster O.C. Veiby was fastest ahead of stablemate Pontus Tidemand and moved into the lead. On the next stage Gus Greensmith took the second position. But two stages later Pontus Tidemand fought back into second place again, trailing leader Veiby by just around seven seconds. "It is very difficult in these conditions, we have struggled to find a good rhythm. There is so much rain that the wipers could not go fast enough, there was aquaplaning everywhere. The last time I drove in conditions like this was in Wales," said Pontus Tidemand after five stages.



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After the regrouping in Mikolajki the teams were heading for the repetition of the four stages of the morning plus another run of the show stage. For the second run the road conditions promised to be even tougher. With the deep ruts of the gravel roads are now filled with water, on some places there was even aquaplaning waiting for the drivers. Stage 6 was cancelled due to spectator safety reasons, only four were left. While O.C. Veiby could maintain his lead, Pontus Tidemand was reducing the gap up to 5.1 seconds behind his young stablemate. Ford driver Greensmith had to retire on special stage 8 after he went off the road and damaged the suspension of his car.

"It was a good fight with Ole Christian. For me, it was all about finding the right balance between fighting and safety," said Pontus Tidemand at the finish of leg 1 in Mikolajki. Saturday will feature the longest leg of the rally covering around 150 Kilometres on sandy, fast and narrow roads. The weather forecast promises a partially sunny day.

Standings Rally Poland after leg 1 (WRC 2)

1. Veiby/Skjaermoen (NOR/NOR), ŠKODA FABIA R5, 1:00.41.7 h
2. Tidemand/Andersson (SWE/SWE) ŠKODA FABIA R5, + 5.1 sec.
3. Gilbert/Jamoul (FRA/BEL), ŠKODA FABIA R5, + 2:09.5 min.
4. Guerra/Cué (MEX/ESP), ŠKODA FABIA R5, + 3:04.1 min.
5. Bonato/Boulloud (FRA/FRA), Citroën DS3 R5, +3:25.5 min.
6. Chuchala/Rozwadowski (POL/POL), Ford Fiesta R5, + 3:37.7 min.

Number of the day: 5.1

After 109,64 kilometres and nine stages (one stage was cancelled) under challenging conditions, the ŠKODA drivers Ole Christian Veiby and Pontus Tidemand are separated by just 5.1 seconds.

The 2017 calendar of 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 Sardinia	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 at Rally Poland

Pontus Tidemand and co-driver Jonas Andersson (ŠKODA FABIA R5) are holding second position in WRC 2 category at Rally Poland just 5.1 seconds behind the leader

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



ŠKODA at Rally Poland

Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson are fighting for valuable championship points in WRC 2 at Rally Poland 2017 driving a ŠKODA FABIA R5

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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 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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- › 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.

