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Rally Mexico: ŠKODA Motorsport's Pontus Tidemand chasing WRC 2 Championship lead

- › ŠKODA competes with WRC 2 Champions Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson and Kalle Rovannerä/Jonne Halttunen at the third round of the FIA World Rally Championship 2018
- › Pontus Tidemand wants to take the WRC 2 championship lead by repeating last year's victory, 17 years old Kalle Rovannerä youngest competitor at Rally Mexico
- › ŠKODA Motorsport boss Michal Hrabánek: "After winning WRC 2 at Monte Carlo and taking second place in Sweden, we want to continue our successful 2018 season."

Mladá Boleslav, 5 March 2018 – After ice and snow on the opening rounds of the 2018 FIA World Rally Championship (WRC) in Monte Carlo and Sweden, the tough gravel roads of Rally Guanajuato Mexico (8 – 11 March 2018) are a different challenge. ŠKODA Motorsport has entered reigning WRC 2 Champions Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson (SWE/SWE) and 17 years old Kalle Rovannerä with co-driver Jonne Halttunen (FIN/FIN) into the season's third WRC round. While Pontus Tidemand wants to move into the WRC 2 championship lead by repeating his victory from last year, Kalle Rovannerä is the very first time nominated for WRC 2 being an official ŠKODA Motorsport driver.

"In Mexico, we will field a unique combination of experience and speed. Pontus won the WRC 2 category in Mexico last year and will again be the man to beat. Kalle already proved his speed on loose surface. Our ŠKODA FABIA R5 are well prepared for the challenge on the tough gravel roads of Rally Mexico," emphasizes ŠKODA Motorsport boss Michal Hrabánek and adds: "After temperatures below zero in Monte Carlo and Sweden, in Mexico the engines not only have to face 30 degrees Celsius and more. The stages also reach extreme altitudes, the highest point at 2,737 metres. The correct engine mapping is crucial, because the thin air causes a power loss of up to 20 per cent."

Pontus Tidemand has good memories of Rally Mexico. "Last year, I could win after a tense fight. With another good result, I could take the lead of 2018 WRC 2 championship standings. But I am pretty sure, my competitors, including my young and fast teammate Kalle, will give me a hard time," confesses the reigning WRC 2 champion. Kalle Rovannerä on the other hand is starting the first time in Mexico. "I am here to learn. I love to drive on gravel – and my ŠKODA FABIA R5 is perfectly prepared for the extreme conditions of Mexico," says the young Finn. Incidentally Kalle Rovannerä will be accompanied by his father Harri, who won Rally Mexico in 2002, when it was a candidate event for the FIA World Rally Championship.

Rally Mexico will start with the spectacular street stage in Guanajuato on Thursday (8 March, 20h08 local time) which features an underground road through a former mining tunnel. On Friday (9 March), the longest day of the rally, the crews are facing nine special stages covering 155 kilometres on rough gravel. The longest stage of the rally, the 31.44 kilometres long "El Chocolate", will climb up to an altitude of more than 2,700 metres. On Saturday and Sunday (10/11 March), the rally features twelve more stages covering additional 186.81 kilometres, including the Powerstage "Las Minas", before the winner will be on the podium at 14h30. Rally Guanajuato Mexico is based in León, the country's fifth largest city some 400 kms north-west of Mexico City.





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Did you know, that...

...Rally Mexico was first run in 1979, before it became part of the FIA World Rally Championship in 2004?

...on stages reaching altitudes of up to 2,737 metres the engines lose around 20 percent of their power?

... with a mix of tarmac and gravel roads the stage on the "Autódromo de León" is regarded as one of the best show stages of the FIA World Rally Championship?

...the father of ŠKODA junior Kalle Rovanperä, Harri, won Rally Mexico 2002 with a lead of nearly one hour when it was a candidate event for the World Rally Championship?

... up to now ŠKODA sold almost 180 ŠKODA FABIA R5 to customers worldwide?

The 2018 calendar of the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2)

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date</u>
Monte-Carlo	24/01–28/01/2018
Sweden	15/02–18/02/2018
Mexico	08/03–11/03/2018
France	05/04–08/04/2018
Argentina	26/04–29/04/2018
Portugal	17/05–20/05/2018
Italy	07/06–10/06/2018
Finland	26/07–29/07/2018
Germany	16/08–19/08/2018
Turkey	13/09–16/09/2018
Great Britain	04/10–07/10/2018
Spain	25/10–28/10/2018
Australia	15/11–18/11/2018

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ŠKODA at Rally Mexico 2018

Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson (SWE/SWE), driving a ŠKODA FABIA R5, want to repeat their WRC 2 victory from last year to take the lead in the WRC 2 standings

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



ŠKODA at Rally Mexico 2018

At Rally Mexico, third round of 2018 FIA World Rally Championship (WRC), Kalle Rovanperä (right) and co-driver Jonne Halttunen (FIN/FIN) are starting their 2018 WRC 2 campaign with 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.

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 the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2) 2016, Esapekka Lappi/Janne Ferm (FIN/FIN) won the title for the Czech car maker. 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.

2017 was the most successful year in the history of ŠKODA Motorsport. Works duo Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson (S/S) became WRC 2 Champions, ŠKODA Motorsport won the Team Championship. Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler (CZ/CZ) won the Czech Rally Championship (MČR) for the third time in a row and are the spearhead of in total 14 crews winning their country's national titles. Furthermore the FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC), the FIA South American Rally Championship (CODASUR) and the FIA African Rally Championship (ARC) have been won by teams competing in a ŠKODA FABIA R5.



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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, KAROQ, KODIAQ and SUPERB.
- › in 2017 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, Algeria 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.

