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Rally Italia Sardegna: ŠKODA's Jan Kopecký second – teammate O.C. Veiby eighth after suspension issues

- › Jan Kopecký and co-driver Pavel Dresler (ŠKODA FABIA R5) finish day two of the FIA World Rally Championship round on Sardinia in second place of the WRC 2 category
- › ŠKODA juniors Ole Christian Veiby and Stig Rune Skjaermoen led the WRC 2 category after five stages, before suspension issues relegated them to eighth position
- › ŠKODA Motorsport boss Michal Hrabánek: "I feel sorry for O.C., he delivered a strong performance. Jan now is in a good position for a possible win in the WRC 2 category."

Alghero, 8 June 2018 – Mixed emotions for the factory team of ŠKODA Motorsport at Rally Italia Sardegna, seventh round of the FIA World Rally Championship 2018. ŠKODA juniors Ole Christian "O.C." Veiby and Stig Rune Skjaermoen (NOR/NOR) led the WRC 2 category after the first five stages, before a suspension issue and a significant time loss made them drop down to eighth place at the finish of the Friday leg. After a cautious start, Jan Kopecký (CZE) and Pavel Dresler (CZE) in the second official ŠKODA FABIA R5 moved up to second place and are in a good position to fight for the victory.

The right tyre choice is always one key to success at Rally Italia Sardegna. For the 20 special stages, totalling 314.36 kilometres, the crews of the WRC 2 category have the maximum allowance of 20 tyres only. They can choose between a soft compound, which offers more grip on sandy passages and on loose gravel, and a harder tyre, which is more robust on rocky surfaces. The weather made the right tyre choice even harder. Temporary rainfalls on Thursday and Friday made some passages muddy and slippery.

On top of that, the second special stage "Tula" was partially new to the competitors. The more than 22 kilometres test offered a lot of stones and rocks during the first part and finished on a sandier surface. "It is very important to avoid any risk of collecting a puncture there, because another three stages have to be driven before the cars will return to the service in Alghero. Therefore, the crews need a clever approach to this special challenge," underlined ŠKODA Motorsport boss Michal Hrabánek before the start of the Friday leg.

The rally had already started on Thursday evening with the show stage on the rallycross track of Ittiri, where in the rain O.C. Veiby set the fastest WRC 2 time ahead of teammate Jan Kopecký. The rain did not stop on Friday morning, so the crews had to face very slippery and partially muddy tracks in the forests. For the second stage, ŠKODA factory team Jan Kopecký and Pavel Dresler took a very careful approach and dropped to eighth place in the interim standings while their young teammates Ole Christian Veiby and Stig Rune Skjaermoen managed to gain third position with just a one second gap to the category leader. On the next stage, reigning Czech Champion Kopecký fought back with a second quickest time and moved up to fifth, while O.C. moved up to the second place. Setting a fastest time on the next one, Veiby moved into the lead of the WRC 2 standings, which he defended until the Alghero midday service after five stages.

"It was partially raining in the stages. I couldn't read the road properly and did not know where to attack or better to step back. Under these conditions you can easily lose control of the car,"



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admitted Jan Kopecký. Teammate O.C. Veiby added: "The grip level was changing all the time, it is really difficult. But I managed to get through the stages without any big moments."

The afternoon leg saw the repetition of the morning stages. The loose gravel on the surface was gone, instead heavy rainfalls made the tracks even muddier, and on some places, even rocks had been dragged out by the first passage of nearly one hundred competitors. On the second passage through the notorious "Pula" stage, Jan Kopecký regained his confidence under the most difficult conditions and set the fastest time. Meanwhile teammate O.C. Veiby dropped down from the lead to third position, after he damaged the front right suspension. In order to continue, he had to carry out improvised repairs including the disconnection of the front right driveshaft. From there onwards, he had only a three-wheel-driven ŠKODA FABIA R5 to finish the three remaining Friday stages. Vigorously fighting with the handling of his car, he nevertheless managed to reach the end of the Friday leg in Alghero, finally holding eighth position in the WRC 2 category standings.

ŠKODA Motorsport boss Michal Hrabánek said: "I feel sorry for O.C.; he was delivering a strong performance in the morning. Jan now is in a good position for a possible win in the WRC 2 category." Saturday holds the longest leg of the rally with seven special stages covering more than 146 kilometres. Sunday will bring the final decision with four stages close to the coast north of the host town of Alghero.

Standings Rally Italia Sardegna after Day 2 (WRC 2)

1. Lefebvre/Moreau, (FRA/FRA), Citroën C3 R5, 1:39:59.8 h
2. Kopecký/Dresler (CZE/CZE), ŠKODA FABIA R5, +14.0 sec.
3. Ciamin/de la Haye (FRA/FRA), Hyundai i20, +1:17.8 min.
4. Andolfi/Scattolin (ITA/ITA), ŠKODA FABIA R5, +2:18.0 min.
5. Katsuta/Salminen (JPN/FIN), Ford Fiesta R5, +2:56.5 min.
6. Guerra/Rozada (MEX/ESP), ŠKODA FABIA R5, +3:16.9 min.

Number of the day: 20

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The calendar of the 2018 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 Italia Sardegna 2018

Reigning Czech Champions Jan Kopecký and Pavel Dresler (CZE/CZE), driving a ŠKODA FABIA R5, are holding second position of the WRC 2 category after day two of Rally Italia Sardegna

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



ŠKODA at Rally Italia Sardegna 2018

Norwegian ŠKODA juniors Ole Christian Veiby/Stig Rune Skjaermoen dropped from the lead in the WRC 2 category down to eight position due to suspension issues

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO





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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.

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, KAROQ, KODIAQ and SUPERB.
- › in 2017 delivered more than 1.2 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 35,000 people globally and is active in more than 100 markets.

