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RallyRACC Catalunya: ŠKODA youngster Rovanperä leads WRC 2 ahead of Kopecký

- › 18 years old ŠKODA junior Kalle Rovanperä and his co-driver Jonne Halttunen top WRC 2 category going into the final leg of FIA World Rally Championship's penultimate round
- › After Saturday's rainy tarmac stages WRC 2 champions Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler (ŠKODA FABIA R5) hold second position
- › ŠKODA Motorsport boss Michal Hrabánek: "Kalle and Jan drove fast and clever. But there're still 61,7 kms to go under inestimable weather conditions yet."

Salou, 27 October 2018 – After the end of Saturday's leg ŠKODA junior Kalle Rovanperä and his co-driver Jonne Halttunen (FIN/FIN) are leading the WRC 2 category at RallyRACC Catalunya – Rally de España (25/10–28/10/2018), twelfth round of the FIA World Rally Championship. Newly crowned WRC 2 champions Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler moved up top second place, giving ŠKODA Motorsport the opportunity to aim for the fourth double win in the WRC 2 category of the 2018 season (title subject to official publication of the results by the FIA).

Right from the start, RallyRACC Catalunya saw a tense battle between the factory crews of Volkswagen and ŠKODA. After the gravel leg of Friday, Eric Camilli/Benjamin Veillas were leading the WRC 2 category with their brand-new Volkswagen Polo GTI R5. ŠKODA youngster Kalle Rovanperä and navigator Jonne Halttunen followed 11.8 seconds adrift. Petter Solberg and Veronika Gulbæk-Engan in the second factory entered Polo held third position. The second ŠKODA FABIA R5 with newly crowned WRC 2 champions Jan Kopecký and co-driver Pavel Dresler onboard was fourth another 0.7 behind.

On Friday evening at the service park in Salou, the rally cars were converted from gravel into tarmac specification, because all remaining stages of the rally were entirely on asphalt. Early Saturday morning, the crews were departing from Salou in the south of Barcelona to tackle seven special stages covering more than 121 kilometres. Rain during the night before made the tarmac stages wet, damp and slippery – conditions, the newly crowned Czech and WRC 2 champion to be Jan Kopecký was looking for. For his young teammate Kalle Rovanperä, these conditions were offering a very special challenge – he had never before driven his ŠKODA FABIA R5 on wet tarmac. The unpredictable weather made the tyre choice crucial. The crews had to choose between wet tyres for rainy conditions or soft slicks, which work better on partially wet, partially dry tarmac.

The day's opening stage, the 14.12 kilometres of "Savallà", had to be cancelled due to safety reasons. Simply too many spectators wanted to witness the action. So, the tarmac leg started with the 21.25 kilometres long "Querol" stage. Jan Kopecký opted for soft slick tyres, while Kalle Rovanperä, also because of his little experience with such conditions, took the more conservative option of rain tyres. As the showers were getting stronger, Kalle's choice actually proved to be the right one. He set the second fastest time, which made him move into the category lead. Teammate Jan Kopecký meanwhile seemed to be not so happy with his tyre choice. Nevertheless, he managed to be third quickest, which made him move to third place in the WRC 2 classification. One stage later, Kopecký's soft slicks worked better and he set the fastest time, while Rovanperä still defended the category lead.

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After the service halt in Salou, four more stages had to be driven. Both ŠKODA crews opted for the same tyre choice as during the morning loop. While Volkswagen driver Eric Camilli had to retire, Kopecký was quickest by just half a second ahead of category leader Rovannerä. The gap now was only three seconds between both ŠKODA drivers. On the remaining two stages of the day, Kalle Rovannerä and Jan Kopecký defended their respective positions. "Kalle and Jan drove fast and clever under difficult conditions. Now we are aiming for another win of the 2018 season. But there are still four stages to go," said ŠKODA Motorsport boss Michal Hrabánek.

On Sunday's final leg of the rally, four more stages covering 61.70 kilometres are waiting for the crews. The winner will reach the podium at the rally's host town Salou in the south of Catalunya's capital Barcelona at 14h01 on Sunday (local time).

Standings RallyRACC Catalunya – Rally de España after Day 3 (WRC 2)

1. Rovannerä/Halttunen (FIN/FIN), ŠKODA FABIA R5, 2:41:51.1 h
2. Kopecký/Dresler (CZE/CZE), ŠKODA FABIA R5, +22.0 sec.
3. Solans/Marti (ESP/ESP), Ford Fiesta R5, +22.3 sec.
4. P. Solberg/Engan (NOR/NOR), Volkswagen Polo GTI R5, +1.26.6 min.
5. Kajetanovicz/Szczepaniak (POL/POL), Ford Fiesta R5, +1.31.5 min.

Number of the day: 4

After Saturday's leg of RACC Rally Catalunya, ŠKODA Motorsport is closing in to the fourth double WRC 2 win of the 2018 season.

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 RallyRACC Catalunya 2018

ŠKODA youngster Kalle Rovanperä and co-driver Jonne Halttunen (ŠKODA FABIA R5) from Finland go into the final day of RallyRACC Catalunya as leaders of the WRC 2 category

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



ŠKODA at RallyRACC Catalunya 2018

During the tarmac leg of Saturday WRC 2 champions to be Jan Kopecký and Pavel Dresler (ŠKODA FABIA R5) moved up into second in WRC 2

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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. In 2018 Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler (CZ/CZ) managed to win the Czech Rally Championship (MČR) for the fourth consecutive time.

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.