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Neste Rally Finland: ŠKODA's local hero Kalle Rovannerä leads WRC 2 Pro category

- › Driving a ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo, Kalle Rovannerä and co-driver Jonne Halttunen as well head the originally 25 cars strong R5 field after day two of the Finnish WRC round
- › Last year's WRC 2 winners Eerik Pietarinen/Juhana Raitanen, this time nominated to score points in the WRC 2 Pro category by ŠKODA Motorsport, had to retire after an accident
- › On its first rally with the new ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo, French crew Pierre-Louis Loubet/Vincent Landais are on top of the WRC 2 field for private drivers

Jyväskylä, 2 August 2019 – During day two of Neste Rally Finland, 18 years young Kalle Rovannerä, co-driver Jonne Halttunen (FIN/FIN) and the ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo were unbeatable in the WRC 2 Pro category as well as among the originally 25 entries strong field of R5 cars. While their compatriots Eerik Pietarinen/Juhana Raitanen, nominated by ŠKODA Motorsport to score points in the WRC 2 Pro category, had to retire after an early accident, French pairing Pierre-Louis Loubet and co-driver Vincent Landais are leading the WRC 2 category for private teams on their first rally with the new ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo.

Kalle Rovannerä and Jonne Halttunen had a good start into Neste Rally Finland, ninth round of the FIA World Rally Championship 2019. With their ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo, they set the fastest time among the R5 competitors on the short first stage in the streets of Jyväskylä on Thursday evening. The real action started on Friday morning on the fast gravel stages, and Rovannerä had a lot of luck to be still in competition after having slightly damaged the left rear wheel of his FABIA. "We had a big moment at the beginning of the first stage. I misheard a pace note and approached a corner flat out – but it turned out to be a tight one," he confessed. After some lightning fast counteraction, the young Finn still set the second quickest time among the R5 competitors.

Eerik Pietarinen/Juhana Raitanen, for the second time this season nominated to score points in the WRC 2 Pro category by ŠKODA Motorsport, had less luck. They went off, damaged radiator and front end of their ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo and had to retire. They won't restart, because the car suffered too much damage. Rovannerä meanwhile had an incident free run over the next stages, but complained about a lack of traction and an oversteering car. Nevertheless, he continued to set fastest times in the category. In the WRC 2 category for private teams, French ŠKODA crew Pierre-Louis Loubet/Vincent Landais, already twice class winners this season, continued to impress by taking the WRC 2 lead.

During the midday service, the ŠKODA Motorsport engineers and mechanics modified the setup of Kalle Rovannerä's ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo. So, the young Finn could restart even more confident into the afternoon leg. And it worked well for the local hero. "On the second loop, it is much better. We made big changes to the suspension and now the car behaves as I like it," commented Kalle Rovannerä and further increased his category lead during the afternoon stages, reaching the day's finish with a comfortable gap to stablemate Loubet.

The longest day of the rally will be Saturday with eight special stages totalling nearly 133 kilometres. Like last year, Sunday will bring the final decision with four stages. The winners will reach the podium in Jyväskylä around 16h00 local time.

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Standings Neste Rally Finland after Day 2 (WRC 2 Pro/WRC 2)

1. Rovannerä/Halttunen (FIN/FIN), ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo, 1:07:09.7 h*
2. Loubet/Landais (FRA/FRA), ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo, +31.6 sec.
3. Gryazin/Fedorov (RUS/RUS), ŠKODA FABIA R5, +1:21.2 min.
4. Katsuta/Barrit (JPN/GBR), Ford Fiesta R5 MKII, +1:21.3 min.
5. Huttunen/Linnaketo (FIN/FIN), Hyundai i20 R5, +1:48.6 min.
6. Camilli/Veillas (FRA/FRA), Ford Fiesta R5 MKII, +2:15.1 min.*

**Factory nominated crews eligible to score points in the WRC 2 Pro category*

Number of the day: 9

Among the originally 25 entries strong field of R5 cars, ŠKODA factory crew Kalle Rovannerä/Jonne Halttunen set 9 fastest times on the 11 special stages of days one and two.

The calendar of the 2019 FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2 Pro)

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date</u>
Monte-Carlo	24/01–27/01/2019
Sweden	14/02–17/02/2019
Mexico	07/03–10/03/2019
France	28/03–31/03/2019
Argentina	25/04–28/04/2019
Chile	09/05–12/05/2019
Portugal	30/05–02/06/2019
Italy	13/06–16/06/2019
Finland	01/08–04/08/2019
Germany	22/08–25/08/2019
Turkey	12/09–15/09/2019
Great Britain	03/10–06/10/2019
Spain	24/10–27/10/2019
Australia	14/11–17/11/2019

Further information:

Zbyněk Straškraba, Communications Motorsport

P +420 605 293 168

zbynek.straskraba@skoda-auto.cz

<http://skoda-motorsport.com>

ŠKODA Motorsport:



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ŠKODA Media Services

media@skoda-auto.cz



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ŠKODA at Neste Rally Finland

After day two of Neste Rally Finland, ŠKODA works crew Kalle Rovannerä/Jonne Halttunen (ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo) are leading the WRC 2 Pro category

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



ŠKODA at Neste Rally Finland

Driving a ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo, Kalle Rovannerä and Jonne Halttunen (FIN/FIN) are the fastest crew among the R5 competition at Neste Rally Finland, ninth round of the 2019 FIA World Rally Championship

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ŠKODA Motorsport Overview

2018 was the most successful year in the history of ŠKODA Motorsport so far. Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler (CZE/CZE) became WRC 2 champions and managed to win the Czech Rally Championship (MČR) for the fourth consecutive time. 2017 WRC 2 winners Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson finished second overall, and youngsters Kalle Rovanperä/Jonne Halttunen (FIN/FIN) completed a pure ŠKODA podium in the final standings of the 2018 FIA World Rally Championship's WRC 2 category. For the fourth time in a row ŠKODA Motorsport won the WRC 2 Championship for Teams.

The success story of the Czech brand took place worldwide. The private ŠKODA driver Yuya Sumiyama and navigator Takahiro Yasui from Japan won the 2018 FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC), Manvir Singh Baryan/Drew Sturrock (KEN/GBR) took the title win in the FIA African Rally Championship (ARC). After winning the FIA South American Rally Championship (CODASUR) in 2013, 2016 and 2017, ŠKODA crew Gustavo Saba/Fernando Mussano (PRY/ARG) again were successful. On top of that, ŠKODA crews won 17 national championships.

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.

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.

ŠKODA AUTO

- › was founded during the pioneering days of the automobile in 1895, making it one of the longest-established automobile companies in the world.
- › currently offers its customers nine passenger-car series: the CITIGO, FABIA, RAPID, SCALA, OCTAVIA, KAROQ, KODIAQ, as well as the KAMIQ and the SUPERB.
- › delivered more than 1.25 million vehicles to customers around the world in 2018.
- › has belonged to Volkswagen Group since 1991. The Volkswagen Group is one of the most successful vehicle manufacturers in the world. In association with the Group, ŠKODA AUTO independently develops and manufactures vehicles, as well as components such as engines and transmissions.
- › operates at three locations in the Czech Republic; manufactures in China, Russia, Slovakia, Algeria and India mainly through Group partnerships, as well as in Ukraine and Kazakhstan with local partners.
- › employs over 39,000 people globally and is active in more than 100 markets.
- › is pressing ahead with the transformation from a traditional car manufacturer to the 'Simply Clever company for the best mobility solutions' as part of the ŠKODA 2025 Strategy.

ŠKODA Media Services

media@skoda-auto.cz



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