

ŠKODA MOTORSPORT PRESS RELEASE

Page 1 of 5



Arctic Rally Finland: WRC2 leader Mikkelsen faces tough competition in his ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo

- › Norwegian crews Andreas Mikkelsen/Ola Fløene and Eyvind Brynildsen/Veronica Engan compete in the second round of FIA World Rally Championship for ŠKODA Motorsport supported team Toksport WRT
- › Record entries in the group of 39 Rally2 vehicles; with 22 entered cars ŠKODA is once again by far the most popular brand
- › Rovaniemi based Arctic Rally Finland is the latest newcomer to the world championship
- › ŠKODA is “Official Car of Arctic Rally Finland”

Mladá Boleslav, 25 February 2021 – Arctic Rally Finland (26– 28 February 2021) promises exciting battles on ice and snow at its premiere as part of the FIA World Rally Championship. Right in the middle of the 39 strong field of Rally2 cars: WRC2 overall leaders Andreas Mikkelsen and co-driver Ola Fløene. Entered by reigning WRC2 Team Champion Toksport WRT and supported by ŠKODA Motorsport, the Norwegians compete the entire season in the WRC2 category of the FIA World Rally Championship 2021. For the Arctic Rally Finland, the second ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo of Toksport WRT will be in the hands of fellow Norwegians Eyvind Brynildsen and co-driver Veronica Engan.

After the cancellation of Rally Sweden, Arctic Rally Finland jumped in. On national level, the pure winter event, based in Rovaniemi close to the Arctic Circle, is a drivers' favourite since years. In the group of Rally2 vehicles alone, a record number of 39 entries speaks for itself, making up well over half of the entire field. The venue again promises perfect winter conditions. The icy forest roads are lined with solid snow walls. Not unlike a bobsleigh, the drivers lean their cars against these banks to achieve even higher cornering speeds.

Andreas Mikkelsen leads the WRC2 championship standings after driving the Toksport WRT ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo to the category win at Rallye Monte-Carlo. The Norwegian is a master of this special cornering technique like many of the top drivers. “Drifting over ice and snow in an all-wheel-drive car is the dream of every rally driver. But I know exactly how tough it will be to win the WRC2 category in Rovaniemi. Lots of top drivers, especially Esapekka Lappi, will make my life really difficult,” Mikkelsen looks ahead. At that time driving a ŠKODA FABIA R5, Lappi was overall winner of the WRC2 category of the FIA World Rally Championship back in 2016.

Toksport WRT team boss Serkan Duru adds: “The season opener in Monte Carlo was very positive for us. We are leading the drivers' and team standings in the WRC2 category. Andreas is simply a world-class driver who, thanks to his experience and professionalism, brings our team really forward.” Replacing Toksport WRT's regular crew of Marco Bulacia/Marcelo Der Ohannesian (BOL/ARG), the team's second ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo this time will be shared by Norwegians Eyvind Brynildsen and co-driver Veronica Engan.

In the WRC3 category for private crews, in which Rally2 vehicles are used as well, the focus is on the duel between two FIA Rallycross World Champions. Driving his own ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo, 2016 title winner Mattias Ekström (SWE) together with co-driver Emil Bergkvist (SWE) faces

ŠKODA MOTORSPORT PRESS RELEASE



Page 2 of 5

reigning champion Johan Kristoffersson (SWE), who is supported by co-driver Patrick Barth (SWE). Ekström's team has entered a second ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo for the German-Austrian pairing of Albert von Thurn und Taxis/Bernhard Ettl. With the top Finnish crews Teemu Asunmaa/Marko Salminen, Emil Lindholm/Mikael Korhonen and Eerik Pietarinen/Antti Linnaketo, further favourites for the WRC3 victory are competing at the wheel of ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo.

The first leg of the Arctic Rally Finland starts on Friday (26 February) at 13h30 local in Rovaniemi. The first two special stages each run over more than 31 kilometres. Six more stages follow on Saturday (27 February). Sunday (28 February) features two more tests, adding up to a total of ten special stages covering around 251 kilometres. Due to the measures against the spread of the coronavirus, spectators are not allowed at the Arctic Rally Finland.

ŠKODA, which celebrates 120 years in motorsports in 2021, has a long and successful history in Scandinavian winter rallies. The 24th International Swedish Rally back in 1973 actually saw the debut of the Czech brand on world championship level. That year, the event counted as second round towards the newly founded World Rally Championship. On the entry list: John Haugland and co-driver Arild Antonsen in Haugland's own ŠKODA 110 L. The Norwegian crew won the class, impressively finishing eighth overall. Two years later, Haugland drove a ŠKODA 120 S to another class win and even seventh overall.

Also in the following years, ŠKODA celebrated numerous class victories at Rally Sweden. Successful models included the ŠKODA 130 RS (1978 with the crew Haugland/ Holmes and 1980 with Haugland/ Vogel), the ŠKODA FAVORIT 136 L (1993 with Sibera/ Gross and 1994 with Triner/ Klíma) and the ŠKODA FELICIA Kit Car (1995 with Triner/ Štanc, 1997 with Triner/Jirátko and 1998 with Rindeby/Ohlson). From 2010 to 2012, teams driving a ŠKODA FABIA S2000 took class victories three times in a row. After the Swedish crews Andersson/Fredriksson and Sandell/Parmander, the eventual FIA World Rally Champions Ogier/ Ingrassia also won with the Czech brand's four-wheel drive car.

The latest Rally Sweden class victory for ŠKODA came in 2017, when factory driver Pontus Tidemand (ŠKODA FABIA R5) finished first in WRC2. When a shorter national edition of the Arctic Rally Finland was run as first round of the 2021 Finnish Championship in January, Teemu Asunmaa/Marko Salminen drove customer team TGS Worldwide's ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo to second overall, securing class victory by a narrow margin of 0.9 seconds.

ŠKODA is also the official car supplier to Arctic Rally Finland. Helkama-Auto, ŠKODA's importer for Finland, is providing organizer AKK Sports with a fleet of SUPERB, KODIAQ, KAROQ, OCTAVIA and SCALA models. ŠKODA is the third best-selling automobile brand on the Finnish market.

ŠKODA MOTORSPORT PRESS RELEASE



Page 3 of 5

Did you know, that...

...Rovaniemi is the capital of Lapland and is located in northern Finland close to the Arctic Circle?

...Rovaniemi calls itself "Official Home of Santa Claus" and is famous for Northern Lights, scientifically called Aurora Borealis?

...the region around Rovaniemi is commonly used by car manufacturers like ŠKODA AUTO to test vehicle prototypes under arctic conditions?

...on the snow-covered forest roads of Arctic Rally Finland, the ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo reaches speeds of up to 200 km/h thanks to special studded tires?

2021 FIA World Rally Championship

Rallye Monte-Carlo	21 – 24 January
Arctic Rally Finland	26 – 28 February
Rally Croatia	22 – 25 April
Rally Portugal	20 – 23 May
Rally Italia Sardegna	3 – 6 June
Safari Rally Kenya	24 – 27 June
Rally Estonia	15 – 18 July
Rally Finland	29 July – 1 August
Renties Ypres Rally Belgium	13 – 15 August
COPEC Rally Chile	9 – 12 September
RallyRACC Rally de España	14 – 17 October
Rally Japan	11 –14 November

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Page 4 of 5

Media images:



ŠKODA Motorsport at Arctic Rally Finland

Supported by ŠKODA Motorsport, Norwegians Andreas Mikkelsen and Ola Fløene in the privately entered ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo from Team Toksport WRT are among the top favourites in WRC2 category

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



ŠKODA Motorsport at Arctic Rally Finland

Former FIA World Rallycross Champion Mattias Ekström (SWE) competes together with co-driver Emil Bergkvist (SWE) in Ekström's own ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO

ŠKODA Motorsport Overview

ŠKODA has been successful in motorsports since 1901. Be it on the circuit or in rallies, ŠKODA has celebrated victories and won titles all around the world. Historical highlights include victory in the European Touring Car Championship 1981 as well as multiple titles in the FIA World Rally Championship's WRC2 category. Over the years, ŠKODA customer teams also won numerous national championships as well as titles in the FIA European Rally Championship (ERC), the der Intercontinental Rally Challenge (IRC), the FIA African Rally Championship (ARC), the FIA North American and Central American Rally Championship (NACAM), the FIA South American Rally Championship (CODASUR) and the FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC). ŠKODA teams have also triumphed in the world's oldest and most famous rally, taking several class victories in the legendary Rallye Monte-Carlo, which was first held in 1911.

In 2009, the ŠKODA FABIA SUPER 2000 took the rally scene by storm. The following seasons, the all-wheel-drive rally car with a 2.0 litres normally aspirated engine won 50 national and international titles worldwide. It then wrote the most successful chapter in ŠKODA's motorsport history – until its successor surpassed it. The ŠKODA FABIA R5, a production-based rally car with four-wheel drive and 1.6 litres turbo engine, was homologated in its original form by the International Automobile Federation FIA on 1 April 2015. Further developed to ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo (homologated on 1 April 2019), the high-tech car successfully continues the long tradition of ŠKODA Motorsport. Due to changes in regulations, the car was re-named ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo in 2020.

The success story of the ŠKODA FABIA R5 took off in 2016, when Esapekka Lappi (FIN) won the WRC2 drivers' title of the FIA World Rally Championship. The following year, Pontus Tidemand (SWE) won the WRC2 drivers' category, while ŠKODA Motorsport took the WRC2 manufacturers' title. In 2018, ŠKODA factory driver Jan Kopecký was crowned WRC 2 drivers' champion. 2019 was the most successful year in the history of ŠKODA Motorsport. Kalle Rovanperä and Jonne Halttunen (FIN/FIN) won the WRC2 Pro drivers' and co-drivers' title as well as substantially supporting ŠKODA Motorsport to win the WRC2 Pro manufacturers' title. In 2020 ŠKODA customer team Toksport WRT became Team Champion of the WRC2 category.

ŠKODA MOTORSPORT PRESS RELEASE

Page 5 of 5



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- › is focusing on three priorities with the “NEXT LEVEL ŠKODA” program for the future: expanding the model portfolio in the direction of entry-level segments, opening up new markets for further growth in the volume segment, and making concrete progress in sustainability and diversity.
- › currently offers its customers ten passenger-car series: the CITIGO® iV, FABIA, RAPID, SCALA, OCTAVIA and SUPERB as well as the KAMIQ, KAROQ, KODIAQ and ENYAQ iV.
- › delivered more than one million vehicles to customers around the world in 2020.
- › is part of Volkswagen Group since 30 years. 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 and India mainly through Group partnerships as well as in Ukraine with a local partner.
- › employs approximately 42,000 people globally and is active in more than 100 markets.