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Rallye Monte-Carlo: Defending WRC2-Champion Andreas Mikkelsen leads ŠKODA squad after first leg

- › Driving for ŠKODA Motorsport backed team Toksport WRT, Norwegians Andreas Mikkelsen and co-driver Torstein Eriksen hold second overall in WRC2
- › South-American crew Marco Bulacia/ Marcelo Der Ohannesian (ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo) leads WRC2 Junior premiere
- › Legendary FIA World Rally Championship season opener continues on Saturday with another five stages

Monte-Carlo, 21 January 2022 – An unusually dry Rallye Monte-Carlo (20 – 23 January 2022) kicked off the FIA World Rally Championship. After eight of the scheduled 17 stages, Andreas Mikkelsen and co-driver Torstein Eriksen (ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo) from Norway hold second overall in category WRC2. Marco Bulacia/Marcelo Der Ohannesian (BOL/ARG), their teammates at ŠKODA Motorsport supported team Toksport WRT, hold first place in the newly created WRC2 Junior class. Also driving a ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo, Mauro Miele and Luca Beltrame from Italy are fastest of the WRC2 Masters competitors.

With the past years' overnight halt in the winter sport town Gap out of the itinerary and the rally based in Monte-Carlo for the whole four days of competition, most of the 17 stages are further south than usual. As a result, snow and ice was covering only short stretches of the competitive sections. For the time being, snow and studded tyres stayed in the trucks. Slicks were the weapon of choice for the top WRC2 competitors for all eight stages of the Thursday/Friday leg.

From the word go, ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo driver Andreas Mikkelsen was fighting with Eric Camilli and Stéphane Lefebvre for the WRC2 lead. During the night stages on Thursday and early Friday morning, Camilli just kept the upper hand. "There is more speed to come," Mikkelsen promised early on. And he stayed true to his words. Under increasing pressure from Mikkelsen, Camilli damaged the suspension (stage 6) and had to retire. Mikkelsen took over the category lead. However, during Friday's last stage he drove too cautiously and had to give away the top spot to Lefebvre. At the leg's finish, only 1.4 seconds separate ŠKODA's reigning WRC2 Champion and his French opponent.

Mikkelsen's teammates at Toksport WRT, Marco Bulacia from Bolivia and Argentine co-driver Marcelo Der Ohannesian, finished the Friday fourth overall in WRC2. "In the beginning, we struggled a bit with oversteer. But we could sort this out and now the handling is more to my liking," Bulacia said on Friday morning. Being 21 years old, he is also eligible for the newly created WRC2 Junior class – which he leads after nearly half of the 'Monte' stages.

On the other end of the age scale, WRC2 Masters is hotly contested by drivers of 50 years and older. After leg 1, Italian ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo crew Mauro Miele/Luca Beltrame hold position one.

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Rallye Monte-Carlo continues on Saturday with five special stages covering 92.46 kilometres. Again, the teams have to tackle the leg without midday service. Only one tyre change is scheduled after three stages.

Standings Rallye Monte-Carlo after Leg 1 (WRC2)

1. Lefebvre/Malfoy (FRA/FRA), Citroën C3 Rally2, 1:27:18.7 hrs.
2. **Mikkelsen/Eriksen (NOR/NOR), ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo, +1.4 sec.**
3. Rossel/Boulloud (FRA/FRA), Citroën C3 Rally2, +19.1 sec.
4. **Bulacia/Der Ohannesian (BOL/ARG), ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo, +1:08.9 min.**
5. Cais/Těšínský (CZE/CZE), Ford Fiesta Rally2, +1:41.8 min.
6. Munster/Louka (LUX/BEL), Hyundai i20 N Rally2, +2:13.0 min.

Number of the day: 0.5

Special stage 4, Gauillumes-Péone-Valberg, was 13.49 kilometres long. Andreas Mikkelsen and co-driver Torstein Eriksen won it by a whisker: The two Norwegians in Toksport WRT's ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo finished a mere 0.5 seconds faster than local heroes Eric Camilli/Yannick Roche.

Further information:

Zbyněk Straškraba, Communications Motorsport

P +420 605 293 168

zbynek.straskraba@skoda-auto.cz

<http://skoda-motorsport.com>

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Media images:



ŠKODA Motorsport at the Rallye Monte-Carlo

Reigning WRC2 champion Andreas Mikkelsen (NOR) and co-driver Torstein Eriksen (NOR), sharing a Toksport WRT run ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo, are second overall in category WRC2 after the first leg.

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ŠKODA Motorsport at the Rallye Monte-Carlo

Driving a ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo from ŠKODA Motorsport backed team Toksport WRT, Marco Bulacia (BOL) and co-driver Marcelo Der Ohannesian (ARG) lead the new class WRC2 Junior.

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ŠKODA Motorsport at the Rallye Monte-Carlo

Russians Nikolay Gryazin/Konstantin Aleksandrov (ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo) are among the fastest in WRC2.

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ŠKODA Motorsport

- › ŠKODA has been active in motorsport since 1901, garnering success in rallies as well as circuit racing.
- › Highlights include winning the 1981 European Touring Car Championship (ETCC) with the ŠKODA 130 RS.
- › In recent years, the ŠKODA FABIA celebrated numerous successes for the Czech manufacturer on rally stages worldwide. From 2009 to 2014, the ŠKODA FABIA S2000 (2.0 naturally aspirated engine, four-wheel drive) secured 50 international titles and national rally championships. The ŠKODA FABIA S2000 also helped to win the FIA European Rally Championship (ERC) and the Intercontinental Rally Challenge (IRC) three times each.
- › The ŠKODA FABIA R5 (1.6 turbo engine, four-wheel drive) continued the S2000's success story in 2015. In the following years, ŠKODA Motorsport factory drivers took multiple titles in the FIA World Rally Championship's support category WRC2/WRC2 Pro with the models ŠKODA FABIA R5 (Rally2) and ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo. Titles went to Jan Kopecký (CZE), Esapekka Lappi (FIN), Pontus Tidemand (SWE), Kalle Rovanperä (FIN) and Andreas Mikkelsen (NOR). Supported by ŠKODA Motorsport, Toksport WRT became Team Champion of the WRC2 category in 2020.
- › ŠKODA Motorsport customer teams have also won titles in the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC), FIA European Rally Championship (ERC), 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).
- › In 2021, Andreas Mikkelsen (NOR, Toksport WRT) took the WRC2 Drivers' Championship and the FIA European Rally Championship overall at the wheel of a ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo.
- › By the end of the 2021 season, the ŠKODA FABIA R5 (Rally2) and ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo had secured over 1,500 victories and more than 3,700 podium positions in 65 countries.

ŠKODA AUTO

- › is successfully steering through the new decade with the NEXT LEVEL – ŠKODA STRATEGY 2030.
- › aims to be one of the five best-selling brands in Europe by 2030 with an attractive line-up in the entry-level segments and additional e-models.
- › is emerging as the leading European brand in India, Russia and North Africa.
- › currently offers its customers ten passenger-car series: the FABIA, RAPID, SCALA, OCTAVIA and SUPERB as well as the KAMIQ, KAROQ, KODIAQ, ENYAQ iV and KUSHAQ.
- › delivered over 870,000 vehicles to customers around the world in 2021.
- › has been a member of the Volkswagen Group for 30 years. The Volkswagen Group is one of the most successful vehicle manufacturers in the world.
- › independently manufactures and develops not only vehicles but also components such as engines and transmissions in association with the Group.
- › operates at three sites in the Czech Republic; manufactures in China, Russia, Slovakia and India primarily through Group partnerships, as well as in Ukraine with a local partner.
- › employs around 43,000 people globally and is active in over 100 markets.

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