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Tidemand ahead of Kopecký: One-two lead for ŠKODA Motorsport at the Rally Spain

- › **At the front: Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson 3.0 seconds ahead of the second ŠKODA works duo Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler**
- › **Mud and rain: A total of three ŠKODA FABIA R5 at the front in difficult conditions in the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2) – title contender Teemu Suninen unlucky**
- › **Top performance by ŠKODA Motorsport's team of mechanics: Set-up changed from gravel to asphalt in 75 minutes**

Salou, 14 October 2016 – Mud, rain and aquaplaning: Despite difficult conditions, ŠKODA Motorsport has taken a one-two lead at the start of the Rally Spain. Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson (S/S) head into the final weekend of the third from last round of the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2) season with a lead of only 3.0 seconds over the second works duo Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler (CZ/CZ). ŠKODA's team of mechanics also delivered a brilliant performance: The two FABIA R5 of Kopecký and Tidemand were converted from gravel to asphalt set-up in an extended 75-minute service on Friday.

"Switching between asphalt and gravel, the Rally Spain demands everything from everyone – the mechanics, drivers and the rally car. The extreme track conditions after the stormy rainfall made everything even more complicated. Which is why we are really pleased with the interim result," said Pontus Tidemand. Last year's winner snatched the lead from his team-mate Kopecký in a dramatic ŠKODA duel on the final special stage on Friday. However, Tidemand's lead is minimal after 119.10 kilometres mainly on gravel. A total of three FABIA R5 lead the standings in the WRC 2 – further proof of the class of ŠKODA's rally car.

There are a good 200 kilometres to go around the Costa Daurada on Saturday and Sunday, which will mainly be on asphalt. The Rally Spain is the only "hybrid rally" on the WRC calendar, at which the tracks switch between gravel and asphalt. The rally got underway with a stage on the streets of Barcelona on Thursday evening, which Kopecký won. Then on Friday morning the anticipated three-way battle of the ŠKODA title contenders developed on the softened tracks saturated with deep puddles.

Teemu Suninen (FIN) temporarily took the lead in his FABIA R5 in action for a privateer team. However, the Finn was forced to retire his car on the longest special stage of 38.95 kilometres, "Terra Alta 1", after suffering a defect. This dealt a bitter blow to his ambitions of winning the WRC 2 title. After his retirement, the afternoon's stages on drying tracks became a battle of the best times between the two works drivers Tidemand and Kopecký.



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"The three-way battle became a duel with Pontus. No doubt it will be an extremely thrilling weekend. Anything is possible in Spain, especially since we will now be on my favourite surface of asphalt," said the Czech champion. Last year, Tidemand and his team-mate Kopecký celebrated a one-two result at the Rally Spain. A repeat doesn't seem out of the question after the successful start.

Interim standings Rally Spain (WRC 2):

1. Tidemand/Andersson (S/S)	ŠKODA FABIA R5	1:22:53.7 hrs
2. Kopecký/Dresler (CZ/CZ)	ŠKODA FABIA R5	+ 0:03.0 min.
3. Maurin/Sarreaud (F/F)	ŠKODA FABIA R5	+ 1:23.6 min.
4. Aasen/Engan (N/N)	Ford Fiesta R5	+ 2:45.1 min.
5. Ten Brinke/Thierie (NL/NL)	ŠKODA FABIA R5	+ 6:07.3 min.

The number of the day: 38.95

The longest special stage of the Rally Spain is 38.95 kilometres and called "Terra Alta". Works driver Jan Kopecký (CZ) and third-placed driver in the overall standings, ŠKODA customer Julien Maurin (F), managed to complete the first pass of this stage in exactly the same time. Both mastered the distance in their FABIA R5 in 27:20.2 minutes and in doing so shared the best time in the WRC 2. Incidentally, a ŠKODA FABIA R5 topped the timesheet on all seven special stages on Thursday and Friday.

FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2)

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date</u>
Rally Monte Carlo	21.01.-24.01.2016
Rally Sweden	11.02.-14.02.2016
Rally Mexico	03.03.-06.03.2016
Rally Argentina	21.04.-24.04.2016
Rally Portugal	19.05.-22.05.2016
Rally Italy	09.06.-12.06.2016
Rally Poland	30.06.-03.07.2016
Rally Finland	28.07.-31.07.2016
Rally Germany	18.08.-21.08.2016
Rally China	08.09.-11.09.2016 (cancelled)
Rally France	29.09.-02.10.2016
Rally Spain	13.10.-16.10.2016
Rally Great Britain	27.10.-30.10.2016
Rally Australia	17.11.-20.11.2016



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ŠKODA at the World Championship rally in Spain

Jan Kopecký (CZ) and Pavel Dresler (CZ) were convincing on the first two days with spectacular jumps and three stage best times in their ŠKODA FABIA R5.

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



ŠKODA at the World Championship rally in Spain

The second ŠKODA works duo Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson (S/S) is in the lead in the WRC 2 going into the final weekend, which gives them a good chance of repeating last year's win.

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO





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ŠKODA Motorsport Overview:

ŠKODA has been 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 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.

In 2015, ŠKODA celebrated four victories in the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2) with their new ŠKODA FABIA R5 rally car. The high-tech 4x4 was homologated by the International Automobile Federation FIA on 1 April 2015. In the ŠKODA FABIA R5's very first season, factory duo Pontus Tidemand/Emil Axelsson (S/S) secured the fourth APRC title in a row for ŠKODA. In addition, the brand claimed five national titles with their new winning model.

ŠKODA's new FABIA R5 proudly continues the brand's long tradition in motorsport. Its predecessor, the FABIA Super 2000, was the most successful model in ŠKODA's 115-year motorsport history. With the 4x4 from Mladá Boleslav, factory duo Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler (CZ/CZ) achieved the historic feat of becoming the first duo in history to win the drivers' title in the ERC and the APRC in consecutive years. Between 2009 and 2014, ŠKODA FABIA Super 2000 drivers won a total of 50 national and international titles around the world.

In 2016, the factory teams Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson (S/S), Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler and Esapekka Lappi/Janne Ferm (F/F) are competing with the ŠKODA FABIA R5 in the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2).

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, YETI, KODIAQ and SUPERB.
- > in 2015 delivered more than 1 million vehicles to customers worldwide.
- > has belonged to Volkswagen since 1991. The Volkswagen Group is one of the most successful automotive groups 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 and India mainly through Group partnerships, as well as in Ukraine and Kazakhstan through local partners.
- > employs over 26,600 people globally and is active in more than 100 markets.