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Cool in the heat: Lappi extends lead at the Rally Australia

- › ŠKODA works driver Esapekka Lappi and co-driver Janne Ferm dominant on all stages at the season finale of the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2) on Saturday
- › Dust and heat: Difficult conditions on the toughest day of rallying Down Under
- › A good 60 kilometres stand between Lappi and championship victory

Coffs Harbour, 19 November 2016 – Esapekka Lappi (FIN) kept his cool in the heat and extended his lead at the 25th Rally Australia. Together with his co-driver Janne Ferm (FIN), the dominant ŠKODA works driver won all seven stages at the season finale of the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2) on Saturday. Lappi heads into the final day with a lead of 3:59.3 minutes over brand colleague Nicolás Fuchs (PE). Only around 60 kilometres stand between 25-year-old Lappi and a historic championship victory in the WRC 2 drivers' standings.

"Everything is going according to plan! My ŠKODA FABIA R5 is working perfectly – as are the crew. I'm trying to keep a cool head," summed up Lappi. Which he managed brilliantly on the longest day of the Rally Australia, on which more than 135 classified kilometres had to be mastered. Although it was far from easy with temperatures of more than 30 degrees in the shade. "It was really hot in the car, and on top of that there were so many clouds of dust from the dry tracks. But we found a really good rhythm."

The 2014 European Champion demonstrated that on the longest special stage, Nambucca at 50.80 kilometres, in particular, where he really outclassed his WRC 2 rivals on both passes. Lappi started the second day of the Rally Australia with a substantial lead of two minutes, and had almost doubled his buffer by the end of the day. And the FABIA R5 driver was the perfect advertisement for the ŠKODA brand, with two best times on the city stage around the port of Coffs Harbour in the early evening.

Another five stages await the "Flying Finns" on Sunday, finishing with the Power Stage "Wedding Bells". Second place in the overall standings at the Rally Australia would be enough to clinch the biggest success of his career and a historic championship victory for ŠKODA Motorsport. "I'm not thinking about that yet. Anything is possible at any time in rallying. Which is why we need to remain focussed down to the final metre," said Lappi.

The ŠKODA brand has already secured victory in the overall standings of the WRC 2: Finn Teemu Suninen, who is not competing in Australia, is currently at the top of the standings. Works driver Esapekka Lappi could overtake him on Sunday.



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Interim standings at the Rally Australia (WRC 2):

1. Lappi/Ferm (FIN/FIN)	ŠKODA FABIA R5	2:20:28.9 hrs
2. Fuchs/Mussano (PE/ARG)	ŠKODA FABIA R5	+ 3:59.3 min.
3. Ptaszek/Szczepaniak (PL/PL)	Ford Fiesta R5	+ 5:26.4 min.

The number of the day: 50.80

50.80 kilometres is the length of the longest stage at the Rally Australia, which had to be mastered twice on Saturday. This makes "Nambucca" one of the longest stages in the entire FIA World Rally Championship season. And ŠKODA driver Esapekka Lappi set an outstanding best time in the WRC 2 twice in the FABIA R5. On the second pass, he was an impressive 44.1 seconds faster than second-placed Nicolás Fuchs in a privateer ŠKODA FABIA R5.

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 Australia

Esapekka Lappi/Janne Ferm (FIN/FIN) dominant over their rivals in the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2) again on the second day of the final WRC rally of 2016.

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



ŠKODA at the World Championship rally in Australia

The ŠKODA FABIA R5 of Lappi/Ferm was the fastest car in its class again on Saturday in glorious weather.

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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 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 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.