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Rally Portugal: Andreas Mikkelsen in a class of his own, leading WRC 2 in a ŠKODA FABIA R5

- › Andreas Mikkelsen/Anders Jæger-Synnevaag with one minute advantage after leg 1
- › Teammates Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson third and fighting for second place
- › ŠKODA Motorsport boss Michal Hrabánek: "Finding the right pace on the rough gravel stages of Rally Portugal is key to success"
- › Saturday features the longest leg of the Rally Portugal 2017

Matosinhos/Portugal, 19 May 2017 – Andreas Mikkelsen/Anders Jæger-Synnevaag (NOR/NOR) are dominating the WRC 2 category at Rally Portugal driving a ŠKODA FABIA R5. After they set the fastest time on the Super Special Stage at the Lousada rallycross track on Thursday evening, they continued to build up a strong lead on the following eight stages of the Friday leg. Teammates Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson (SWE/SWE) fought a tense battle for second with Ford drivers Teemu Suninen (FIN) and Eric Camilli (FRA). On Friday evening, ŠKODA Motorsport boss Michal Hrabánek was very happy to see both ŠKODA factory teams on provisional podium positions in WRC 2 with Mikkelsen leading and Tidemand in third.

"I can't wait to drive the ŠKODA FABIA R5 on gravel", Andreas Mikkelsen said before the start of Rally Portugal in the medieval town of Guimarães in the north of Portugal. And from the first kilometres onwards, Mikkelsen and co-driver Anders Jæger-Synnevaag stormed into the lead of Rally Portugal. On all of the nine stages in the north of Porto near the Spanish border, they set the fastest times and led the rally on Friday evening by more than one minute. "The feeling in the car is very good, already quite early we managed to build up a good gap. But the rally is far from over, it is really easy to get a puncture on this rough stages. I want a comfortable lead to have a margin in case we need to change or drive for some kilometres on a flat tyre."

Pontus Tidemand and co-driver Jonas Andersson (ŠKODA FABIA R5) were facing attacks of the two M-Sport Ford Teams Teemu Suninen/Mikko Markkula (FIN/FIN) and Eric Camilli/Benjamin Veillas (FRA/FRA). While Camilli eventually could no longer match the speed, Tidemand and Suninen were fighting for second tooth and nails on each stage. "I did the recent Rally Argentina in safe mode, here I have to push right from the start", Tidemand commented.

After Tidemand made some changes to the set up of his ŠKODA FABIA R5 at midday service, the battle with Suninen continued. The Swedish ŠKODA Team finished the Friday leg on third only 2,3 seconds behind the Finn. "It was hard for me to find the right rhythm on this tough stages, I tried to avoid all the big rocks. But there is still a long way to go, we will keep this speed", Pontus Tidemand said.

In the WRC 2 category at Rally Portugal 2017, 20 teams and five brands are fighting for victory and championship points. In total, six ŠKODA FABIA R5 are registered to score in WRC 2 championship, three more ŠKODA FABIA were at the start in R2 class.

Saturday will feature the longest leg of the rally with a mixture of sandy roads, rocks and deep ruts especially on the second pass of the stages. Even more than it has been already on Friday, the





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right tyre choice between soft compounds for more traction and hard compound in order to manage tyre wear on the long stages will be crucial. During leg 2 the teams have to face six special stages totalling more than 150 kilometres. The longest test of the Rally Portugal will be the Amarante stage with 38 kilometres on gravel.

Standings Rally Portugal after leg 1 (WRC 2)

1. Mikkelsen/Jæger-Synnevaag (NOR/NOR), ŠKODA FABIA R5, 1:40.36,3 h
2. Suninen/Markkula (FIN/FIN), Ford Fiesta R5, +1.04,5 min.
3. Tidemand/Andersson (SWE/SWE) ŠKODA FABIA R5, 1:06,8 min.
4. Gilbert/Jamoul (FRA/BEL), ŠKODA FABIA R5, + 3:48,1 min.
5. Camilli/Veillas (FRA/FRA), Ford Fiesta R5, +4.18,8 min.

Number of the day: 56

This weekend a total of 56 ŠKODA FABIA R5 are competing around the world in all kind of rallies and championships. The ŠKODA factory team competes in Portugal and the Czech Republic, customer teams are rallying in South America, Finland, Belgium, Latvia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Great Britain, Italy, Sweden and France.

The 2017 calendar for the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2)

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date</u>
Rally Monte Carlo	19/01–22/01/2017
Rally Sweden	09/02–12/02/2017
Rally Mexico	09/03–12/03/2017
Rally France	06/04–09/04/2017
Rally Argentina	27/04–30/04/2017
Rally Portugal	18/05–21/05/2017
Rally Italy	08/06–11/06/2017
Rally Poland	29/06–02/07/2017
Rally Finland	27/07–30/07/2017
Rally Germany	17/08–20/08/2017
Rally Spain	05/10–08/10/2017
Rally Great Britain	26/10–29/10/2017
Rally Australia	16/11–19/11/2017

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ŠKODA at Rally de Portugal

Andreas Mikkelsen and co-driver Anders Jæger-Synnevaag (ŠKODA FABIA R5) are leading the WRC 2 category at Rally Portugal 2017

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



ŠKODA at Rally de Portugal

Pontus Tidemand and co-driver Jonas Andersson currently in third position in WRC 2 at Rally Portugal 2017 driving a ŠKODA FABIA R5

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO

ŠKODA Motorsport Overview

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.

2016 was one of the most successful years in the history of ŠKODA Motorsport. In the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2), Esapekka Lappi/Janne Ferm (FIN/FIN) won the title for the Czech car maker for the first time. In total, ten of the 2016 season's races in the World Rally Championship were won by a ŠKODA FABIA R5. ŠKODA drivers Gustavo Saba (PRY) and Gaurav Gill (IND) also won the continental championships in South America and the Asia-Pacific region at the wheel of the successful ŠKODA FABIA R5. Nasser Al-Attiyah (QAT) was unbeatable in the Middle East Rally Championship (MERC), while a further ten national titles also went the way of ŠKODA drivers.

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. In 2017, works duos Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson (SWE/SWE) and Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler (CZE/CZE) will contest selected races in the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2). Kopecký/Dresler will also compete in the Czech Rally Championship (MČR), where they will be looking to claim a third title in a row.

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- › 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 2016 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 30,000 people globally and is active in more than 100 markets.

