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APRC in Malaysia: Second win for Ole Christian Veiby ahead of MRF ŠKODA teammate Gaurav Gill

- › At the International Rally of Johor Team MRF ŠKODA scores third double win in a row in the 2017 FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC)
- › Both MRF ŠKODA teams dominating the third round of the APRC season in Malaysia up to frantic Gaurav Gills battle for second place
- › Norwegian youngster Ole Christian Veiby increases his championship lead over reigning APRC champion Gaurav Gill from India
- › ŠKODA Motorsport boss Michal Hrabánek: “Congratulations to O.C. and Gaurav. I am happy that ŠKODA increases the lead in the APRC manufacturers standings.”

Johor Bahru, 13 August 2017 – The third round of the 2017 FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC), International Rally of Johor in Malaysia (11–13/08/2017), was more or less decided on the second special stage. Reigning APRC champion Gaurav Gill and co-driver Stéphane Prévot (IND/BEL) of Team MRF ŠKODA hit a tree stump and bent the steering of their ŠKODA FABIA R5, losing considerable time and the chance to win. Despite sliding off twice in unpredictable road conditions as well, teammates Ole Christian Veiby and Stig Rune Skjaermoen (NOR/NOR) achieved the fastest stage time and took the lead from there up to the finish line. With their second win of the year the Norwegian shooting stars increased the lead in the championship standings. With only two APRC rounds to go, it looks like the next champion will be a ŠKODA driver again. Since 2012 every APRC champion was driving a ŠKODA FABIA. The Czech manufacturer is now on the route to defend the manufacturers title as well.

Changing weather, a mix of spontaneous rain showers and sunshine, made the 13 special stages (one stage had to be cancelled due to flooded roads) totally unpredictable. ŠKODA youngster Ole Christian Veiby concluded even before the start: “This is definitively one of the most difficult rallies I ever had to face.”

On the short opening show stage on Friday evening on the race track of Johor, Gaurav Gill brought his MRF ŠKODA FABIA R5 to the finish with the fastest time ahead of teammate O.C. Veiby and stormed into the lead. When the rally started proper on Saturday morning with a 32 kilometres stage on the Tai Tak palm oil plantation, the first split time showed Veiby trailing Gill by 20 seconds. “I touched a tree and later went off again slightly. Luckily we could continue. It is so difficult to judge the grip level. I have never driven under such difficult condition,” commented the Norwegian youngster. Although he lost some time, at the finish line he was fastest and took the overall lead with more than one minute ahead of Mitsubishi driver Jari Ketomaa from Finland.

What happened to the intermediate leader Gaurav Gill? Fastest halfway through the stage, he left the muddy jungle road as well. “I hit a tree stump I didn’t see. It was a pure driving error,” confessed the APRC champion. He bent a steering arm of his ŠKODA FABIA R5 and finished the stage at reduced speed. But that wasn’t the end of the story. After the stage at the refuelling point, the steering arm finally broke. Now Gill proved that he is not only a fast driver, but also a very skilful mechanic. He changed the broken part, got a road penalty for late arrival at the next time control



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but afterwards started his race to catch up. At the end, with a total of ten fastest times out of 13 stages, he had moved back into second position overall.

His teammate O.C. Veiby showed a stunning performance himself. With a clever and smart drive he showed, that he is not only able to drive fast but also to bring home a victory with a faultless drive. "I am absolutely delighted with the clever performance of O.C. Veiby and the comeback of Gaurav Gill", emphasizes ŠKODA Motorsport boss Michal Hrabánek. "With the third double win in a row ŠKODA could increase the lead in the APRC manufacturers standings. Also our drivers are leading comfortably in the driver standings."

Final Result APRC International Rally of Johor/Malaysia 3rd round of the 2017 FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC)

1. Veiby/Skjarmoen (NOR/NOR), ŠKODA FABIA R5, + 3:02:39.1 h
2. Gill/Prévot (IND/BEL), ŠKODA FABIA R5, + 4:41.7 min
3. Ketomaa/Mannisenmäki, (FIN/FIN), Mitsubishi Mirage AP4, + 5:00.4 min
4. Blomberg/Andersson (SWE/SWE), Mitsubishi Mirage AP4, + 2:23:10.1 h

Current standings APRC after three rounds (one round cancelled)

1. Veiby (NOR), ŠKODA, 108 points
2. Gill (IND), ŠKODA, 98 points
3. Blomberg (SWE), Mitsubishi, 63 points
4. Ketomaa (FIN), Mitsubishi, 56 points

Number of the day: 3

Third double win in a row for Team MRF ŠKODA in the 2017 FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship.

Calendar of the 2017 FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC)

| <u>Event</u> | <u>Date</u> |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Rally of Whangarei – New Zealand | 28/04–30/04/2017 |
| Rally Canberra - Australia | 26/05–28/05/2017 |
| China Rally (cancelled) | 07/07–09/07/2017 |
| Rally of Johor – Malaysia | 11/08–13/08/2017 |
| Rally Hokkaido – Japan | 15/09–17/09/2017 |
| Rally of India | 24/11–26/11/2017 |

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Media images:



ŠKODA at International Rally of Johor/Malaysia
Ole Christian Veiby (right) and co-driver Stig Rune Skjaermoen, driving a MRF ŠKODA FABIA R5, celebrating victory

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



ŠKODA at International Rally of Johor/Malaysia
Gaurav Gill and co-driver Stéphane Prévot fought back to second place with their ŠKODA FABIA R5 run by MRF Team

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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 (PY) 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 (Q) 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 (S/S) and Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler (CZ/CZ) contest selected races in the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2). Kopecký/Dresler also compete in the Czech Rally Championship (MČR), where they already claimed the third title in a row.

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, KAROQ, 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, Algeria 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.

