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Rally Italia Sardegna: ŠKODA's Jan Kopecký leads WRC 2, teammate O.C. Veiby storms into third place

- › Jan Kopecký and co-driver Pavel Dresler (ŠKODA FABIA R5) on top of the WRC 2 category after day three of the FIA World Rally Championship round on Sardinia
- › After suspension issues on Friday ŠKODA juniors Ole Christian Veiby and Stig Rune Skjaermoen stormed from eighth to third position with six stage wins
- › ŠKODA Motorsport boss Michal Hrabánek: "Jan again drives faultlessly and fast, O.C. showed great moral after his mishap and is heading for a podium position in WRC 2."

Alghero, 9 June 2018 – On Saturday morning Jan Kopecký (CZE) and Pavel Dresler (CZE) powered their ŠKODA FABIA R5 into the lead of the WRC 2 category at Rally Italia Sardegna. With one more day to go they are facing a possible third season win in the FIA World Rally Championship 2018. ŠKODA juniors Ole Christian "O.C." Veiby and Stig Rune Skjaermoen (NOR/NOR) delivered an impressive race to catch up the time they lost on Friday due to a technical mishap. With six fastest times out of the seven Saturday stages, they climbed from eighth to third place in the WRC 2 category.

After temporary heavy rainfall on Thursday and Friday, on early Saturday morning the sun returned to the beautiful harbour of Alghero in the northwest of Sardinia. The day featured the longest leg of the rally with seven special stages covering more than 146 kilometres. Due to the rain of the days before, some passages of the stages were still muddy and slippery on the first run in the morning. After the roughly 15 kilometres long special number ten, two classic tests were waiting for the crews, each nearly double the distance: the "Monti di Ala" and the famous "Monte Lerno" stage which is the longest stage of the rally with exactly 28.89 kilometres.

The ŠKODA works crews started the Saturday leg with different missions. While second placed Jan Kopecký and co-driver Pavel Dresler tried to put the leading Citroën driver Lefebvre under pressure, their young teammates Ole Christian Veiby and Stig Rune Skjaermoen wanted to recover from their Friday's mishap. Leading in the WRC 2 category after the first five stages, they were delayed by a suspension issue and dropped down to eighth position.

And both ŠKODA works crews had an encouraging start into the Saturday. While Kopecký was second quickest and reduced the gap to the leader to 12.2 seconds, Veiby set the first fastest time of the Saturday morning. On the next stage, Kopecký's rival in the fight for the lead, Citroën driver Lefebvre, damaged his suspension and the Czech Champion moved into the lead. In the meantime O.C. Veiby set another fastest time and continued to move up the leader board.

At the midday service halt along the harbour of Alghero, Jan Kopecký was in a convincing lead, while teammate O.C. Veiby was moving closer to the competitors ahead of him. With three fastest times in a row on the morning stages, he moved up to fifth place in the WRC 2 interim category standings and had now the podium in sight. "I would have preferred, that Lefebvre would be still in the battle and I could fight with him. Now it is not easy for us, because when there is no pressure, you can easily lose concentration and make a mistake," commented Kopecký.



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After a short show stage on the rally cross track of Itteri, the afternoon saw the repetition of the morning stages. Veiby set another fastest time on stage 13, while Kopecký was quickest one stage later despite collecting two slow punctures, which left him with no spare tyres for the two remaining, in total 58 kilometres long special stages of the day. His task was now to drive as careful as possible to avoid another puncture which would have put him out of the competition. But he stayed cool, not risking too much and safely reaching the finish of the Saturday leg at the harbour of Alghero with a lead of more than three minutes. The Czech Champion admitted a big moment earlier on: "In the second stage after the service we almost rolled. There was a big rock in one of the ruts and the car went onto two wheels".

Teammate O.C. Veiby set his sixth fastest time on Saturday which, after a great drive, brought him into third position and even in reach of the second place of the WRC 2 category.

ŠKODA Motorsport boss Michal Hrabánek said: "Jan again drives faultlessly and fast, O.C. showed a great moral after his mishap and could achieve a podium result in the WRC 2 category here in Sardinia." Sunday will bring the final decision with four stages, totalling around 42 kilometres, close to the coast north of the host town of Alghero.

Standings Rally Italia Sardegna after Day 3 (WRC 2)

1. Kopecký/Dresler (CZE/CZE), ŠKODA FABIA R5, 3:12:58.3 h
2. Ciamin/de la Haye (FRA/FRA), Hyundai i20, +3:09.4 min.
3. Veiby/Skjaermoen (NOR/NOR), ŠKODA FABIA R5, +3:37.6 min.
4. Loubet/Landais (FRA/FRA), Hyundai i20, +4:30.8 min.
5. Andolfi/Scattolin (ITA/ITA), ŠKODA FABIA R5, +6:29.1 min.

Number of the day: 6

Out of seven stages during the Saturday leg of Rally Italia Sardegna, O.C. Veiby won six, eventually moving from eighth to third position in the WRC 2 interim standings.



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The calendar of the 2018 FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2)

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date</u>
Monte-Carlo	24/01–28/01/2018
Sweden	15/02–18/02/2018
Mexico	08/03–11/03/2018
France	05/04–08/04/2018
Argentina	26/04–29/04/2018
Portugal	17/05–20/05/2018
Italy	07/06–10/06/2018
Finland	26/07–29/07/2018
Germany	16/08–19/08/2018
Turkey	13/09–16/09/2018
Great Britain	04/10–07/10/2018
Spain	25/10–28/10/2018
Australia	15/11–18/11/2018

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ŠKODA at Rally Italia Sardegna 2018

Reigning Czech Champions Jan Kopecký and Pavel Dresler (CZE/CZE), driving a ŠKODA FABIA R5, took the lead in the WRC 2 category after day three of Rally Italia Sardegna

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



ŠKODA at Rally Italia Sardegna 2018

Norwegian ŠKODA juniors Ole Christian Veiby/Stig Rune Skjaermoen fought back from eighth to third position in the WRC 2 interim standings

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO





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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.

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 the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2) 2016, Esapekka Lappi/Janne Ferm (FIN/FIN) won the title for the Czech car maker. 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.

2017 was the most successful year in the history of ŠKODA Motorsport. Works duo Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson (S/S) became WRC 2 Champions, ŠKODA Motorsport won the Team Championship. Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler (CZ/CZ) won the Czech Rally Championship (MČR) for the third time in a row and are the spearhead of in total 14 crews winning their country's national titles. Furthermore the FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC), the FIA South American Rally Championship (CODASUR) and the FIA African Rally Championship (ARC) have been won by teams competing in a ŠKODA FABIA R5.

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 2017 delivered more than 1.2 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 35,000 people globally and is active in more than 100 markets.

