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Page 1 of 4



Rally Portugal: Rovannerä and Kopecký lead field of R5 cars at WRC debut of ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo

- › After a puncture on the first day, Kalle Rovannerä/Jonne Halttunen dominated WRC 2 Pro category on Saturday, finishing the leg ahead of teammates Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler
- › ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo continues to impress with speed and reliability
- › On the six stages of Saturday, Kalle Rovannerä at the wheel of the ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo scored five fastest times among the R5 competitors

Matosinhos, 1 June 2019 – The new ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo continues to impress at his FIA World Rally Championship debut at Rally Portugal (30/05–02/06/2019). After suffering a puncture and dropping to second place in WRC 2 Pro during the opening Friday leg, Kalle Rovannerä/Jonne Halttunen (FIN/FIN) stormed back into the category lead, followed by their teammates Jan Kopecký and co-driver Pavel Dresler (CZE/CZE). After the second of three legs, seven ŠKODA crews are among the top ten of the 32 entries strong field of R5 cars.

After a setback during the fourth special stage on Friday, where he suffered a puncture, lost more than 40 seconds and the lead in WRC 2 Pro and among the R5 competitors, Kalle Rovannerä was a man on a mission. It took him and co-driver Jonne Halttunen only the very first stage of the Saturday leg and a stunning time to move back into the category lead again. From then on, their teammates Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler were relegated to second in the WRC 2 Pro category.

In the hands of the ŠKODA factory drivers the new ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo proved speed and reliability also during the longest leg of the rally, covering six tough special stages over more than 160 kilometres on gravel tracks. With two more category stage wins, Kalle Rovannerä extended his WRC 2 Pro lead, still followed by teammate Jan Kopecký. After the midday rest, three more stages had to be done. On the second run of the morning stages, the tracks were engraved with deep ruts and loose stones. The challenge for the ŠKODA works crews was from then on to avoid any risks and to find the right speed without losing concentration.

Jan Kopecký and Pavel Dresler had a scary moment in the middle of the eleventh special stage. Due to a heavy landing after a jump, the bonnet of their ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo flew open, staying against the windscreen for the rest of the stage. But the reigning WRC 2 champions managed to finish the stage despite the limited visibility and a lot of dust coming into the interior of their car.

Meanwhile, it was plain sailing for Kalle Rovannerä. The young Finn said: "It is all about managing the lead and avoiding any risks." And so he did, bringing his ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo safely back to the evening service in Matosinhos. Teammates Jan Kopecký and co-driver Pavel Dresler had another big moment during the last stage of the day. "We almost rolled when I missed a braking point. We were very lucky," Kopecký confessed. But he put that mishap aside as well as the earlier issue with the bonnet and brought second place among the R5 competitors and in WRC 2 Pro category to the day's finish.

On Sunday (2 June) the spectacular Fafe loop with five stages on fast and smooth gravel roads, including the famous jump, will be the spectator highlight of the event. After in total 20 special



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Page 2 of 4

stages covering 306.97 kilometres, the winner will reach the podium in Matosinhos close to the city of Porto at 14h20.

Standings Rally Portugal after Day 2 (WRC 2 Pro)

1. Rovanperä/Halttunen (FIN/FIN), ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo, 2:55:56.9 h
2. Kopecký/Dresler (CZE/CZE), ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo, +1:01.5 min.
3. Østberg/Eriksen (NOR/NOR), Citroën C3 R5, +19:28.1 min.
4. Pieniazek/Gerber (POL/POL), Ford Fiesta R5, +28:39.5 min.

Number of the day: 7

Seven ŠKODA crews are among the top ten of the 32 entries strong field of R5 cars.

The calendar of the 2019 FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2 Pro)

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date</u>
Monte-Carlo	24/01–27/01/2019
Sweden	14/02–17/02/2019
Mexico	07/03–10/03/2019
France	28/03–31/03/2019
Argentina	25/04–28/04/2019
Chile	09/05–12/05/2019
Portugal	30/05–02/06/2019
Italy	13/06–16/06/2019
Finland	01/08–04/08/2019
Germany	22/08–25/08/2019
Turkey	12/09–15/09/2019
Great Britain	03/10–06/10/2019
Spain	24/10–27/10/2019
Australia	14/11–17/11/2019

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Page 3 of 4



Media images:



ŠKODA at Rally Portugal

ŠKODA works crew Kalle Rovannerä/Jonne Halttunen is leading the WRC 2 Pro category with the new ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo after the second day of Rally Portugal

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



ŠKODA at Rally Portugal

Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler are currently second in the WRC 2 Pro category with their ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo at Rally Portugal

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



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Page 4 of 4

ŠKODA Motorsport Overview

2018 was the most successful year in the history of ŠKODA Motorsport so far. Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler (CZE/CZE) became WRC 2 champions and managed to win the Czech Rally Championship (MČR) for the fourth consecutive time. 2017 WRC 2 winners Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson finished second overall, and youngsters Kalle Rovanperä/Jonne Halttunen (FIN/FIN) completed a pure ŠKODA podium in the final standings of the 2018 FIA World Rally Championship's WRC 2 category. For the fourth time in a row ŠKODA Motorsport won the WRC 2 Championship for Teams.

The success story of the Czech brand took place worldwide. The private ŠKODA driver Yuya Sumiyama and navigator Takahiro Yasui from Japan won the 2018 FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC), Manvir Singh Baryan/Drew Sturrock (KEN/GBR) took the title win in the FIA African Rally Championship (ARC). After winning the FIA South American Rally Championship (CODASUR) in 2013, 2016 and 2017, ŠKODA crew Gustavo Saba/Fernando Mussano (PRY/ARG) again were successful. On top of that, ŠKODA crews won 17 national championships.

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.

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.

ŠKODA AUTO

- › was founded during the pioneering days of the automobile in 1895, making it one of the longest-established automobile companies in the world.
- › currently offers its customers nine passenger-car series: the CITIGO, FABIA, RAPID, SCALA, OCTAVIA, KAROQ, KODIAQ, as well as the KAMIQ and the SUPERB.
- › delivered more than 1.25 million vehicles to customers around the world in 2018.
- › has belonged to Volkswagen Group since 1991. The Volkswagen Group is one of the most successful vehicle manufacturers in the world. In association with the Group, ŠKODA AUTO independently develops and manufactures vehicles, as well as components such as engines and transmissions.
- › operates at three locations in the Czech Republic; manufactures in China, Russia, Slovakia, Algeria and India mainly through Group partnerships, as well as in Ukraine and Kazakhstan with local partners.
- › employs over 39,000 people globally and is active in more than 100 markets.
- › is pressing ahead with the transformation from a traditional car manufacturer to the 'Simply Clever company for the best mobility solutions' as part of the ŠKODA 2025 Strategy.