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ACI Rally Monza: ŠKODA crews survive winterly mountain stages to keep 1-2 lead in WRC3

- › During an eventful leg 2 of the FIA World Rally Championship finale, Norwegians Andreas Mikkelsen/Anders Jæger (ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo) defend top spot in WRC3
- › Also driving a privately entered ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo, Pontus Tidemand and co-driver Patrik Barth from Sweden are still in the fight for the WRC2 title
- › With three stages to go, ŠKODA Motorsport supported Oliver Solberg from Sweden and co-driver Aaron Johnston from Ireland hold second in WRC3 classification
- › With heavy snow falls hitting the mountains of Lombardy, two of Saturday's seven stages were cancelled for safety reasons

Monza, 5 December 2020 – With weather playing a major role during leg 2 of ACI Rally Monza (3-6 December 2020), ŠKODA crews experienced ups and downs in categories WRC2 and WRC3. Overnight WRC2 leaders Pontus Tidemand/Patrik Barth (SWE/SWE) struggled with the tyre choice for their ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo and reached the day's finish in second position. Better luck for WRC3 dominators Andreas Mikkelsen/Anders Jæger (ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo) from Norway. Their lead was big enough to defend top spot despite similar tyre woes. In their wake, ŠKODA Motorsport supported Oliver Solberg (SWE) and co-driver Aaron Johnston (IRL) overtook Finnish ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo privateers Emil Lindholm/Mikael Korhonen for second position in WRC3.

While Friday's first leg was completely run inside the boundaries of the Monza race track, on Saturday the cars headed for the nearby mountains. Although most of the snow, which the crews encountered three days ago during recce, had melted at least on the roads, the conditions were still treacherous. As a consequence, the crews had different opinions concerning tyre strategy.

While the opposition in WRC2 opted for rain tyres, overnight category leader Pontus Tidemand went out on a mixture of rain and snow rubber on his Toksport WRT Team run ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo. When the teams came back to Monza after three stages for the midday service, Tidemand was down in 4th. "Definitely the wrong tyre choice," the Swede confessed. In WRC3, overnight leader Andreas Mikkelsen also lost time for the same reason. But the Norwegian in the Eurosol Racing Team Hungary ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo hung onto the lead. With his first WRC3 stage win of the rally, ŠKODA Motorsport supported Oliver Solberg bumped Finnish ŠKODA privateer Emil Lindholm from category second.

When the crews headed back to the mountains it turned out, that the difficult morning was just an appetizer for an even more challenging afternoon. First of all, stage 10 was cancelled for WRC2 and WRC3 crews due to two crashed cars blocking the road. The next test caught the competitors out with some fresh snow. This time, Pontus Tidemand had the correct rubber on his ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo. With a category stage win he climbed back to P2 in WRC2.

As the next stage was also cancelled, this time due to heavy snow fall, crews headed back to Monza for the day's last test on the Autodromo grounds. With no further changes in the classifications, Andreas Mikkelsen goes into the last leg of the rally with a slim 14.3 seconds WRC3 lead over Oliver Solberg. "What an incredible difficult day of rallying – but it has been a good one



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for us,” said the 19 years old son of former World Champion Petter Solberg. Solberg and Mikkelsen didn’t hesitate to put their respective ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo into the top 10 overall, amidst the roughly 100 hp stronger World Rally Cars. Mikkelsen is in 6th overall, Solberg in 7th. Rounding up the top 10 on the overall leader board is ŠKODA privateer Emil Lindholm, 4th in WRC3. The Finn was lucky enough to escape a puncture on stage 11. However the rubber hung onto the rim and he reached the stage finish without changing the tyre.

While WRC3 was dominated by ŠKODA crews, Pontus Tidemand trails WRC2 leader Mads Østberg (Citroën) by 30.9 seconds. Czech crew Jan Kopecký/Jan Hloušek hold 3rd in the second Toksport WRT Team run ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo. Tidemand and Østberg fight for the 2020 WRC2 title. “It’s a pity, I needed that cancelled long stage. Not a lot is left now. All we can do is push as hard as we can,” Tidemand said, well aware, that he has to pass the Norwegian to win his second WRC2 title after 2017. He has three stages on Sunday to do so. All are run inside the Royal Park of Monza, covering the final 38.31 kms of the 2020 season.

Standings ACI Rally Monza after Leg 2 (WRC2)

1. Østberg/Eriksen (NOR/NOR), Citroën C3 Rally2, + 1:52:26.2 hrs.
2. Tidemand/Barth (SWE/SWE), ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo, + 30.9 sec.
3. Kopecký/Hloušek (CZE/CZE), ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo, + 1:11.4 min.
4. Fourmaux/Jamoul (FRA/BEL), Ford Fiesta Rally2, + 26:26.5 min.

Standings ACI Rally Monza after Leg 2 (WRC3)

1. Mikkelsen/Jæger (NOR/NOR), ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo, 1:51:07.8 hrs.
2. Solberg/Johnston (SWE/IRL), ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo, + 14.3 sec.
3. Huttunen/Lukka (FIN/FIN), Hyundai i20 Rally2, + 48.3 sec.
4. Lindholm/Korhonen (FIN/FIN), ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo, + 1:46.0 min.
5. Kajetan Kajetanowicz/Maciej Szczepaniak (POL/POL), ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo, + 3:06.9 min.
6. Bulacia Wilkinson/Der Ohannesian (BOL/ARG), Citroën C3 Rally2, + 4:16.8 min.

Number of the day: 29.8

When the clocks at the end of stage 11 stopped, Pontus Tidemand and co-driver Patrik Barth had completed the 10.9 kms test a whopping 29.8 seconds faster than anybody else in WRC2. The championship leaders were clever enough to put two snow plus two rain tyres on their ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo. The competition struggled on full rains.

The calendar of the 2020 FIA World Rally Championship

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date</u>
Monte-Carlo	23/01–26/01/2020
Sweden	13/02–16/02/2020
Mexico	12/03–15/03/2020
Estonia	04/09–06/09/2020
Turkey	18/09–20/09/2020
Italia Sardegna	08/10–11/10/2020
Monza/Italy	03/12–06/12/2020

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ŠKODA Motorsport at ACI Rally Monza

With three stages to go on Sunday, Norwegians Andreas Mikkelsen and Anders Jæger (ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo) lead WRC3

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



ŠKODA Motorsport at ACI Rally Monza

During leg 2, ŠKODA Motorsport supported Oliver Solberg (SWE) and co-driver Aaron Johnston (IRL), sharing a ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo, moved up to second position in WRC3

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



ŠKODA Motorsport at ACI Rally Monza

Driving a privately entered ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo, Swedish pairing Pontus Tidemand/Patrik Barth fight for the WRC2 title

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



ŠKODA Motorsport at ACI Rally Monza

Czech crew Jan Kopecký/Jan Hloušek (ŠKODA FABIA Rally2 evo) holds third position in WRC2 at the 2020 FIA World Rally Championship finale

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ŠKODA Motorsport Overview

2019 was the most successful year in the history of ŠKODA Motorsport so far. Kalle Rovanperä and Jonne Halttunen (FIN/FIN) won the WRC 2 Pro drivers' and co-drivers' title of the FIA World Rally Championship 2019 as well as substantially supporting ŠKODA Motorsport to win the WRC 2 Pro manufacturers' title. Also in 2019, ŠKODA customer teams conquered five FIA championships and took additional 23 national titles around the world.

Driving a ŠKODA FABIA R5, Chris Ingram/Ross Whittock (GBR/GBR) won FIA European Rally Championship (ERC). Filip Mareš/Jan Hloušek (CZE/CZE) took the FIA European Rally Championship/ERC1 Junior title. Manvir Singh Baryan/Drew Sturrock (KEN/GBR) powered a ŠKODA FABIA R5 to the FIA African Rally Championship (ARC), while Ricardo Triviño/Marc Martí (MEX/ESP) won the FIA North American and Central American Rally Championship (NACAM).

The ŠKODA FABIA R5 evo, a high-tech 4x4, was homologated by the International Automobile Federation FIA on 1 April 2019 and is successfully continuing the long tradition of ŠKODA Motorsport. In total, both generations of the Czech rally car have been sold more than 320 times worldwide.

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

- › is this year celebrating 125 years since the company was founded during the pioneering era of the automobile in 1895, making it one of the longest-established car manufacturers in the world.
- › currently offers its customers ten passenger-car series: the CITIGO® iV, FABIA, RAPID, SCALA, OCTAVIA and SUPERB as well as the KAMIQ, KAROQ, KODIAQ and ENYAQ iV.
- › delivered 1.24 million vehicles to customers around the world in 2019.
- › 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 and India mainly through Group partnerships, as well as in Ukraine and Kazakhstan with local partners.
- › employs approximately 42,000 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.