

# Škoda Motorsport NEWSLETTER

> 6<sup>th</sup> issue 2023



## Winning package

by **Michal Hrabánek**, Head of Škoda Motorsport

The 2023 season comes to an end. A very successful season for Škoda Motorsport, to be more precise. Rally cars built by us at Mladá Boleslav not only helped to win all available titles in the WRC2 category of the FIA World Rally Championship (see page 2). One of our customers also won the FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship. In addition, the reports of national titles being won by Škoda crews arrive on a nearly daily base (see page 11). The ongoing success of our customer teams makes all of us at Mladá Boleslav very proud. It gives us the motivation to constantly strengthen our efforts. Which brings me to 2024. The start of the coming season is only weeks away with the WRC round Rallye Monte-Carlo in mid of January marking a first highlight. We are fully



The 2023 season ended with WRC2 titles for Andreas Mikkelsen, co-driver Torstein Eriksen and Škoda Motorsport customer team Toksport WRT

aware, that the competition for our Škoda Fabia RS Rally2 will be even stronger than during the past twelve months. But we are also fully content, that we will again offer a winning package. We are constantly working to further improve our championship winner. On this occasion, I would like to sincerely thank all our customer teams

worldwide. Their feedback on performance and reliability related aspects of the Škoda Fabia RS Rally2 is invaluable to us. Our own development team really tests a lot, which, by the way, requires a big effort in logistics (see page 8). But without the experience and knowledge of all the Škoda drivers out there, our rally car wouldn't be as good as it is. With this Newsletter we say goodbye to the year 2023. All from Škoda Motorsport wish you and your loved ones Merry Christmas, a peaceful holiday season and a happy New Year.

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WRC2 champions  
Andreas Mikkelsen/  
Torstein Eriksen (Škoda  
Fabia RS Rally2 of team  
Toksport WRT) finished  
off the season with WRC2  
victory in Japan



## Clean sweep for Škoda drivers and teams

**All WRC2 titles of the 2023 FIA World Rally Championship were won with the help of the Škoda Fabia RS Rally2**

Although they started their campaign only when four of the 13 events were already done, Andreas Mikkelsen and co-driver Torstein Eriksen won the WRC2 title of the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC) already at the penultimate round. In the end, the Norwegians celebrated WRC2 victory at four of the seven events they started with the Toksport WRT run Škoda Fabia RS Rally2. "This has been a tough season. When we put this thing together, it was for four rallies only. But I kept on pushing and eventually we got the programme," Mikkelsen said before travelling to the season finale in Japan.



Norwegians Andreas Mikkelsen (right) and co-driver Torstein Eriksen





Biggest success of WRC2 Challenger champions Kajetan Kajetanowicz/Maciej Szczepaniak (Škoda Fabia RS Rally2 of ORLEN Rally Team) was WRC2 victory at Safari Rally Kenya (Photo: Red Bull)



Kajetan Kajetanowicz (right) and co-driver Maciej Szczepaniak from Poland

Without the need for a good result, Mikkelsen and Eriksen drove the Rally Japan just for fun. Not an easy task especially during the first leg, when torrential rain hit the mountains around the host town of Nagoya. But the Škoda crew was unimpressed by the extreme condi-

tions. "At one point we were fourth overall running between the Rally1 cars – that was really cool," Mikkelsen reflects. Needless to say, that the newly crowned champions won WRC2.

Third place in the category was enough for Kajetan Kajetanowicz and co-driver Maciej Szczepaniak from Poland to take the WRC2 Challenger title. "It's an amazing feeling," commented Kajetanowicz, a three times FIA European Rally Champion and four times title winner in Poland. Sharing an ORLEN Rally Team run Škoda Fabia RS Rally2, "Kajto" and Szczepaniak won WRC2 Challenger classification on

### Final standings:

#### Top 3 WRC2, Drivers + Co-Drivers

- 1 Andreas Mikkelsen/Torstein Eriksen (NOR/NOR), Škoda
- 2 Gus Greensmith/Jonas Andersson (GBR/SWE), Škoda
- 3 Yohan Rossel/Arnaud Dunand (FRA/FRA), Citroën

#### Top 3 WRC2 Challenger, Drivers + Co-Drivers

- 1 Kajetan Kajetanowicz/Maciej Szczepaniak (POL/POL), Škoda
- 2 Nikolay Gryazin/Konstantin Aleksandrov (ANA/ANA), Škoda
- 3 Sami Pajari/Enni Mätkönen (FIN/FIN), Škoda

#### Top 3 WRC2, Teams

- 1 Toksport WRT 3 (Škoda)
- 2 Toksport WRT 2 (Škoda)
- 3 Toksport WRT (Škoda)

#### Top 3 WRC Masters, Drivers

- 1 Alexander Villanueva (ESP), Škoda
- 2 Armin Kremer (DEU), Škoda
- 3 Miguel Díaz Aboitiz (ESP), Škoda

### Rally Japan, 16-19 November 2023, Result WRC2

- 1 Andreas Mikkelsen/Torstein Eriksen (NOR/NOR), Škoda Fabia RS Rally2
- 2 Nikolay Gryazin/Konstantin Aleksandrov (ANA/ANA), Škoda Fabia RS Rally2
- 3 Kajetan Kajetanowicz/Maciej Szczepaniak (POL/POL), Škoda Fabia RS Rally2
- 4 Osamu Fukunaga/Misako Saida (JPN/JPN), Škoda Fabia Rally2 evo
- 5 Daniel Chwist/Kamil Heller (POL/POL), Škoda Fabia Rally2 evo





Alexander Villanueva/José Murado Gonzáles (Škoda Fabia RS Rally2 of team RaceSeven) took the title of the WRC Masters Cup

three of the seven events of their campaign.

Another highlight of the 2023 season finale in Japan was the strong performance from former Formula One driver Heikki Kovalainen. The Finn and local co-driver Sae Kitagawa, who together had just won the Japanese Rally Championship for a second time, were listed as high as fourth in WRC2. Unfortunately, they had to retire their Team Aicello run Škoda Fabia Rally2 during the second leg.

On eleven of the 2023 season's 13 events, WRC2 was won by Škoda crews. Mikkelsen/Eriksen scored in Sardegna/Italy, Estonia, Greece and Japan. Their Toksport WRT teammates Gus Greensmith/Jonas Andersson sprayed the champagne in Mexico

and Portugal. Victory in Sweden and Chile went to Oliver Solberg/Elliott Edmondson, who also competed for Toksport WRT. One win each were the season highlights for Kajetanowicz/Szczepaniak (Kenya), Toksport WRT's Sami Pajari/Enni Mälkönen (Finland) and Nicolas Ciamin/Yannick Roche of team Sarrazin Motorsport (Central European Rally).

Germany based team Toksport WRT conquered the top three positions of the Teams' championship with its legally three independent teams. In WRC Masters Cup, even the top five final positions went to Škoda drivers with Team RaceSeven's Alexander Villanueva from Spain coming out as title winner.



Alexander Villanueva/José Murado Gonzáles (Škoda Fabia RS Rally2 of team RaceSeven) took the title of the WRC Masters Cup

## 2024 FIA World Rally Championship

25-28 January	Rallye Monte-Carlo (asphalt, ice, snow)
15-18 February	Rally Sweden (snow, ice)
28-31 March	Safari Rally Kenya (gravel)
18-21 April	Rally Croatia (asphalt)
9-12 May	Rally de Portugal (gravel)
30 May-2 June	Rally Italia Sardegna (gravel)
27-30 June	Rally Poland (gravel)
18-21 July	Rally Latvia (gravel)
1-4 August	Rally Finland (gravel)
5-8 September	Acropolis Rally Greece (gravel)
26-29 September	Chile Bio Bío (gravel)
31 October-3 November	Central European Rally (asphalt)
21-24 November	Japan (asphalt)

## 2024 FIA European Rally Championship

12-14 April	Rally Hungary (gravel)
2-4 May	Rally Islas Canarias (asphalt)
13-15 June	Royal Rally of Scandinavia, Sweden (gravel)
5-7 July	Rally Estonia (gravel)
26-28 July	Rally Roma di Capitale, Italy (asphalt)
16-18 August	Barum Czech Rally Zlín (asphalt)
30 August-1 September	Rali Ceredigion, Wales (asphalt)
11-13 October	Rally Silesia, Poland (asphalt)

# “It’s always worth a try”

Competing in WRC2, co-driver Enni Mälkönen shares a Škoda Fabia RS Rally2 with Finnish hot-shot Sami Pajari

Rallying is primarily a sport for men. But there are quite a number of women, who also play an important role. In this interview, Finnish co-driver Enni Mälkönen speaks about her switch from the back of a horse to the hot seat of a rally car.

**Your first sport was show jumping. Are some experiences made with horses beneficial in rallying?**

For sure. I have had ten years of experience in show jumping before I started rallying. To some respect, horses are almost like drivers. You have to earn their trust. You must be calm but at the same time decisive and clear in giving your instructions.

**Why did you change from horses to rally cars?**

My horse was injured and his career was over after that accident. Then I decided to focus on one thing: rallying.

**When did you and Sami first meet?**

I met Sami for the first time in 2018, at a rally test. He was really young.

Enni Mälkönen



But even then he impressed me with his driving skills. We did our first rally together in the winter of 2021. It was the Arctic Rally Finland in Rovaniemi, which that year was part of the FIA World Rally Championship. Sami's

co-driver was busy at the time, so I stepped in at the last minute. We've been competing together ever since.

**You started rallying at the world level quite quickly . . .**

Before I started co-driving Sami, I had already ten years of experience under my belt. I would say I've done a lot of work to get to this level.

**Do you have a special trick for writing the pace notes?**

I try to keep my notes as simple and concise as possible when writing them down during the recce. And at the same time, I'm also already thinking about how I'm going to read the notes at a competitive pace.

**How challenging is the role of co-driver?**

Rallying is definitely not an individual sport. As a co-driver, I am the driver's



Enni Mälkönen and Škoda Motorsport engineer Yannick Willocx





Enni Mälkönen and driver Sami Pajari

colleague and a member of the team. A co-driver has to perform a lot of tasks during the competition itself as well as before it. In this role you have to be able to handle quite a lot of things at once. And sometimes you also have to make quick decisions.

***Do you and Sami talk strategy during a rally?***

Of course, we aim for the best possible result in every rally. The competition changes from special stage to special stage. Therefore the strategy often changes as well. Sometimes you have to take risks. Then there are situations, when you have to be smart and make sure that you reach the finish line.

***How did you enjoy your first ever WRC2 victory during this year's Rally Finland?***

This success at my home rally was of course great. But for me, the best

celebration was that I finally got to eat a good meal and slept well!

***What are your recommendations to young girls who are also thinking of taking up rallying?***

Rallying as a sport is suitable for everyone. Hopefully, as women in the rallying world, we set a good example

also for young people who would like to make their dreams come true. It is definitely possible. Rally is an interesting and challenging sport and you can do it at many different levels. I welcome anyone who is interested to join the sport. You never know where your journey will take you. It's always worth a try. Follow your dreams!



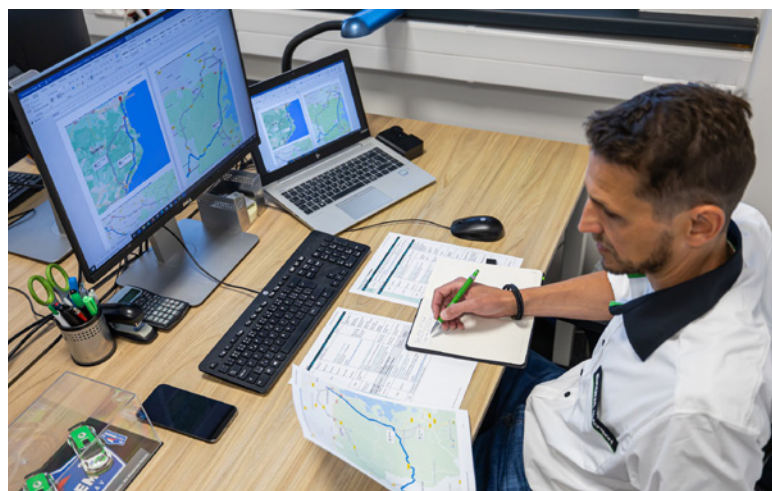
Enni Mälkönen and driver Sami Pajari during an autograph session



# Always on time

**Taking rally cars and service vans to all corners of Europe for testing is a challenge, the Škoda Motorsport logistics experts have to master**

Rallying involves constant transfers. Sending a group of several dozen people, a truck, facilities and spare parts for a test car hundreds of miles through Europe is a big challenge. That's why flawless logistics is one of the key areas, which the success of the entire team depends on. In 2022, when the development of the new Škoda Fabia RS Rally2 was in full swing, the team completed more than 15 different multi-day tests across Europe. In addition to the usual agenda consisting for example of business trips and customer support, the test program was a real extra workload for the two-man logistics team of Jan Přindiš and Marek Masopust. However, in the days when Škoda Motorsport ran its own factory team in the FIA World Rally Championship, the logistical planning was even more demanding. Back then, the logistics team consisted of five persons.



Jan Přindiš sets up a precise “Movement Schedule” for all the team’s personell and equipment

Today, testing is the main task for Škoda Motorsport. Choosing the right testing ground is extremely important. The requirement for the type of test stage comes from the Škoda Motorsport Technical Group. Some locations are already known from previous tests. However, if new tracks are selected, the local organiser will usually offer several options, which are then evaluated. If necessary, Škoda





## ► Background

The team's set-up during a test day is basically the same wherever it travels



Motorsport engineers travel to the recommended location and personally check the suitability of the track. It is also important to provide space at the test location for the team's service facilities, where the truck and other supporting equipment, including tents for engineers and catering, can set up camp.

The actual length of preparation for the test can vary considerably. In some foreign locations, local permits can be processed in just a few days. This is usually the case for private or closed areas and circuits. But there are also places where the necessary permits take up to three months to process. An average test in Spain, for example, takes about three to four weeks to prepare.

The movements of the truck and other accompanying equipment are planned to make the journey as smooth as possible and to arrange it at a reasonable cost. And sometimes that can be a real challenge, especially with the transport of equipment. In general, logisticians plan routes through EU countries, where complex transport documents are not required.

With one exemption: fuel. This is handled by an external freight forwarding company with a licence to transport this type of cargo. Even buying flight tickets way in advance is not always a sure bet either. Occasionally, an airline cancels

or delays a flight with no reason given – a significant complication in the case of mass movements of personnel. All important information regarding the test or event is written in a comprehensive form in the so-called "Movement Schedule". This is the main logistics document that is created before each event. All the information is listed in the document – who will be going to the event, what are the tasks and so on. The list of cars that will be used covers not only rally cars, but also service trucks and vans, personal cars or cars from local rental companies. The document also contains information about flights, trains, ferries, accommodation and GPS coordinates of the main event locations, such as service facilities for tests, service parks during the rally and so on.

Last but not least, the "Movement Schedule" contains a timetable, which details who has to be where, when and how they will be travelling. This detailed information ensures, that the team's movements run as smoothly as possible. All team members have the document available approximately a week before the event.

Impeccable logistics is simply a crucial factor for success in motorsport and rallying in particular. That's why the green and white ŠKODA Motorsport caravan will always be on time and in full numbers, wherever the next job takes the team.



The Škoda Octavia RS is the perfect car for having fun on Alpine roads



## Double the fun

**This “Hidden Alpine Gems” road trip crosses no less than two famous passes: Splügen and San Bernardino**

The latest trip along the most beautiful Alpine roads takes rally driver Erik Cais and navigator Julia Thulin over two fascinating passes on the border of Italy and Switzerland. Both passes have become a kind of legends among drivers. The pleasure behind the wheel here can easily be interspersed with occasional stops and walks along the route. Starting point is Lago di Montespluga in the Italian Alps. It would be a shame to leave straight away, because the surroundings of the lake are truly breath-taking. “This is such a beautiful place,” says Julia. The lake's surroundings offer fascinating views and travellers can discover a local peculiarity: The water of the lake, which serves as a reservoir for

the hydroelectric power stations down in the valley, is held back not by a single, but by two separate dams. Erik and Julia leave the lake with a Škoda Octavia RS north-bound. And the fun begins immediately. The road winds and climbs up the Splügenpass, which, incidentally, has been



Rally experts Julia Thulin and Erik Cais

described by the famous Top Gear pundits as one of the best Alpine roads ever. The beautifully smooth asphalt reminds Erik and Julia of the Rally Catalunya stages in Spain. The serpentines are literally exemplary, hairpin after hairpin. The road offers great views and it's a joy to drive here. There aren't many cars on the road, but the route is also popular with cyclists.

“I like the long rear overhang of the Octavia, which helps you turn the car beautifully into corners,” comments Erik. But he says he likes the front differential even more. “Even though the Škoda Octavia RS doesn't have all-wheel drive, you can really feel the power of the car when exiting the corners,” he smiles. The 245 hp of





the two-litre turbo charged engine are more than enough here. The route meets the Hinterrhein river in the village of Splügen. The highway A13 follows the river for a while west-bound and provides a brisk transfer to the San Bernardino area. The local pass is a legend in itself. All avid drivers have to do is exit the highway before entering the famous San Bernardino tunnel. The tunnel saves an hour or two of time compared to the pass. But for an unmatched experience behind the wheel, it's advised to head for the old route over the pass. The road is over 200 years old and in the past it was a major and vital strategic route to cross this part of the Alps between Marschhorn and Piz Uccello. Usually, the road is characterized by minimal traffic,



smooth asphalt and countless turns. Here, the driver can concentrate on the rhythm of the drive and nicely enjoy one corner after the other. Lake Moesola, for example, which the road passes shortly after the initial most twisted passage of the pass, invites for a stop. Erik and Julia

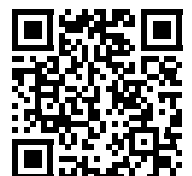
continue to their final destination in the village of Mesocco. "It's a long descent and you have to think about your car's brakes and use the engine to brake as much as possible," Erik explains how to avoid overheating the brakes.

Brakes usually indicate by their sound, that something is wrong. As soon as they become unnaturally noisy, it is a sign that the temperature is rising dangerously. In such a case, it is better to stop for a while, give them a breather and in the meantime enjoy the fascinating landscape. This combination of driving and touring experiences is truly addictive.



The Montespluga lake is the starting point for a road trip over two famous passes

Video of the road trip  
over Splügenpass and  
San Bernardino





# Championships won by Škoda drivers



## Asia-Pacific Rally Championship

Rifat Sungkar (LFN Sederhana Motorsport)



## Middle East Rally Championship (MERC)

Abdullah Al-Rawahi (shared title)



Photo: private



## Argentina

Martin Scuncio



Photo: Harald Illmer



## Austria

Simon Wagner (RS Club Wolfsberg)



Photo: private



## Chile

Jorge Martínez



# Results



## Czech Republic

Jan Kopecký (Agrotec Škoda Rally Team)



## Finland

Teemu Asunmaa (TGS Worldwide)



## Germany

Marijan Griebel (Pole Promotion)



## Hungary

Ferenc Vincze jr. (Korda Racing)



## Japan

Heikki Kovalainen (Rally Team Aicello)



Photo: private



## Latvia

Karl Peder Nordstrand (Sports Racing Technologies)



Photo: private



## Poland

Grzegorz Grzyb (Rufa Motor-Sport)



## Spain

José Antonio Suárez (Recalvi Team)



## > Results



### Asia-Pacific Rally Championship

Local Rifat Sungkar and Australian co-driver Ben Searcy By (Škoda Fabia Rally2 evo of team LFN Sederhana Motorsport) won Danau Toba Rally in Indonesia, the only round of the FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship.



### Argentina

Full Škoda podiums at 9th and 10th round of the Argentinean championship. Miguel-Angel Baldoni/Gustavo Franchello (pictured) won Rally de Villa Dolores from Alejandro Cancio/Diego Cagnotti and Nicolás Díaz/Luis Ernesto Allende. Rally de Entre Rios ended with victory for



Martin Scuncio/Javiera Roman followed by Cancio/Cagnotti and Gaston Pasten/Matias Ramos.



### Chile

Jorge Martínez Fontena/Alberto Alvarez Nicholson (Škoda Fabia RS Rally2) won Rally de Osorno, 8th round of the Chilean championship.



### France

Matthieu and Mathilde Margaillan (Škoda Fabia RS Rally2) won Rallye Terre de Vaucluse, seventh round of the French gravel championship.



### Italy

Unbelievable but true: Škoda crews took the top 16 (!) positions of ACI Rally Monza, eighth round of the Italian Championship. Northon Racing's Andrea Mabellini/Virginia Lenzi (Škoda Fabia RS Rally2)

won from team M33's Paolo Andreucci/Rudy Briani (Škoda Fabia RS Rally2) and Gas Racing's Tommaso Ciuffi/Pietro Cigni (Škoda Fabia Rally2 evo).

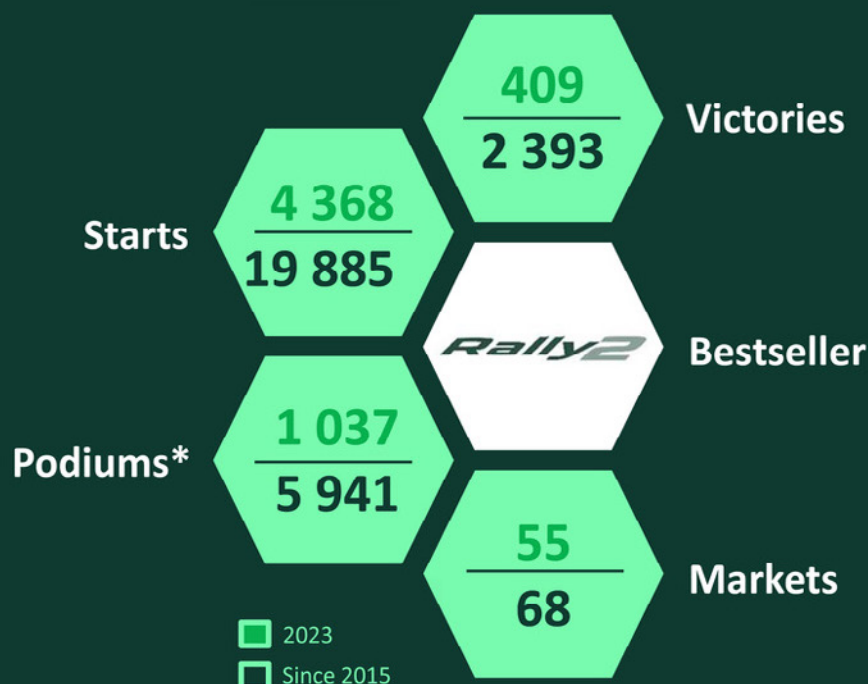


### Spain

On their way to the title of the Spanish Superchampionship, Recalvi Team's José Antonio Suárez/Alberto Iglesias Pin (Škoda Fabia RS Rally2, pictured) won round seven and eight, Rally La Nucía-Mediterráneo and Rally Ciudad de Pozoblanco. In Pozoblanco, Javier Pardo Siota/Adrián Pérez Fernández (Škoda Fabia Rally2 evo of Team MRF Tyres) finished second.



## Facts about the Škoda Fabia Rally2; Škoda Fabia Rally2 evo and Škoda Fabia RS Rally2\*\*



\* 1st to 3rd place

\*\* as of 1/4/2015 to 11/12/2023



## David vs Goliath

**Three decades ago, the 1,3-litre engined Škoda Favorit took on the two-litre powered competition – and won the F2 championship in 1994**

In 1987, after a quarter of a century dominated by vehicles with a rear-mounted engine and drivetrain, the Škoda Favorit was a revolutionary innovation. The car had the engine up front and front-wheel drive.

The Favorit replaced the 130 L/A as rally car. As a group A car, the rally going Škoda Favorit looked very similar to the series-production model at first glance. But it was a racing car through and through. The kerb weight was brought down to 750 kilograms. The 1.3 litres engine delivered 76 kW at 6,500 rpm. Later the power increased to 88 kW at 7,000 rpm. A five-speed gearbox was used at first, but this was later replaced by a six-speed gearbox with spur toothing.

The Škoda Favorit usually dominated its class (photo: 1993 RAC Rally)



Škoda Favorit crew Pavel Sibera/Petr Gross at the finish of the 1993 RAC Rally

Soon after its homologation on 1 January 1989, the Škoda Favorit celebrated its international premiere at the Finnish Hankki Rally, driving to class victory with Kalevi Aho at the wheel. The Škoda Favorit continued to dominate its class in the following years. It also asserted itself against the competition in demanding rounds of the FIA World Rally Championship

like the RAC Rally in Great Britain, the Finnish 1000 Lakes Rally and the Acropolis Rally in Greece. The winning streak of the duo Pavel Sibera/ Petr Gross, who won their class four times in a row at the Rallye Monte-Carlo, between 1991 and 1994, was particularly impressive. In 1993, new rules came into force with the announcement of the World Cup for vehicles with naturally aspirated engines, a maximum engine capacity of two litres and only one driven axle. Škoda Motorsport finished the first season of the so-called Formula 2 second overall. The following year, the works team even moved up one position: Leaving numerous well-known competitors behind, Škoda Motorsport secured the Formula 2 title. Also remarkable: In 1993, the Škoda Favorit was the first car to sport the green victory sign 'V' and red stripe – the emblem of the brand's RS cars today.

**SKODA Motorsport**



### Further information:

Zbyněk Straškraba, Communications Motorsport  
P +420 605 293 168

[zbynek.straskraba@skoda-auto.cz](mailto:zbynek.straskraba@skoda-auto.cz)

<http://skoda-motorsport.com>