

# Rallye Monte-Carlo: Škoda newcomer Pepe López locked in thrilling three-way fight for WRC2 victory

- › Competing for the first time with a Škoda Fabia RS Rally2, Spanish duo Pepe López/David Vázquez finishes second in WRC2 at the FIA World Rally Championship's opening round.
- › Italians Mauro Miele and co-driver Luca Beltrame (Škoda Fabia RS Rally2) win WRC Masters Cup classification.
- › Not registered to score WRC2 points, Oliver Solberg and navigator Elliott Edmondson (Škoda Fabia RS Rally2) are among the fastest crews in Rally2 class.

**Monte-Carlo, 28 January 2024 – Pepe López/David Vázquez drove a Škoda Fabia RS Rally2 to second place in WRC2 at Rallye Monte-Carlo (25-28 January 2024), first round of the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC). The Spanish crew was fastest of the category on eight the event's 17 stages during their very first WRC event with the Rally2 car from Mladá Boleslav.**

Pepe López has won the Rally Superchampionship of his home country Spain already three times. Starting into his first full WRC2 season, the 28-year-old driver from Madrid changed car and co-driver. David Vázquez took over the hot seat in the Mapo Motorsport run Škoda Fabia RS Rally2. But the newly formed crew started into Rallye Monte-Carlo like they had been together already for years.

From the first stage on, López/Vázquez traded fastest WRC2 stage times with experienced duo Nikolay Gryazin/Konstantin Aleksandrov. Until Sunday morning, the lead changed an incredible eight times between both crews. The Spaniards were on top after the two night stages on Thursday. On Friday evening, Gryazin/Aleksandrov had the upper hand with not more than 1.3 seconds. After the next 24 hours of this gripping duel and additional 106 kilometres of competition, López/Vázquez had reduced the gap to 0.2 seconds.

And all of a sudden, a third crew entered the fight for WRC2 victory. Yohan Rossel/Arnaud Dunand from France had experienced a decent start into the rally, but significantly increased their speed over the course of Saturday. At the leg's finish, Rossel/Dunand trailed the WRC2 leaders by 6.9 seconds.

The French duo started into the final leg with two fastest WRC2 stage times, taking 12.5 seconds out of Gryazin/Aleksandrov, who had dropped to third. With only the Powerstage to run, López/Vázquez were back in the WRC2 lead just 0.9 seconds ahead of Rossel/Dunand. But the season opener's last 14.8 kilometres confirmed: Last year's WRC2 winner at Rallye Monte-Carlo definitely had found his rhythm: Rossel/Dunand arrived on top of the famous Col de Turini 4.9 seconds faster than anybody else, snatching away the category victory from López/Vázquez on the very last stage.

"Satisfied? No," Pepe López commented. "We fought a lot to win this rally. We did our best. Let's see what this year brings us." Small consolidation: The convincing speed of the Spanish Škoda crew was rewarded with the "FORUM8 WRC2 Most Stage Wins Award".

Not registered in WRC2 for Rallye Monte-Carlo, Oliver Solberg from Sweden and British co-driver Elliott Edmondson were fighting for a top position in Rally2 class during the Friday loop. But the crew of Škoda Motorsport supported team Toksport WRT was halted by two punctures after stage 10. "We chose to carry only one spare tyre. Sadly, this means we have to stop for the day," 22-year-old Solberg explained. He started again for the final leg. Despite being fastest Rally2 crew on four of the 17 stages, the Swedish-British duo finished way down the order.

The WRC Masters Cup, reserved for drivers of 50 years and older, was a walk in the park for Mauro Miele and co-driver Luca Beltrame. Sharing a Škoda Fabia RS Rally2 of team Dream One, the Italians led from start to finish eventually winning with a margin of more than nine minutes.

Next round of the FIA World Rally Championship is Rally Sweden (15-18 February 2024). On the snowy and icy stages in the Umeå region, Toksport WRT's Oliver Solberg and co-driver Elliott Edmondson start their bid for the WRC2 title.

### Number of the rally: 8

At the finish of Rallye Monte-Carlo, Pepe López and co-driver David Vázquez received the inaugural "FORUM8 WRC2 Most Stage Wins Award". The Mapo Motorsport run Škoda Fabia RS Rally2 was fastest of the category on eight of the event's 17 stages.

### Rallye Monte-Carlo, 25-28 January 2024, Result WRC2

1 Yohan Rossel/Arnaud Dunand (FRA/FRA), Citroën C3 Rally2, 3:20:00.7 hours

**2 Pepe López/David Vázquez (ESP/ESP), Škoda Fabia RS Rally2, +4.0 seconds**

3 Nikolay Gryazin/Konstantin Aleksandrov (BGR/ANA), Citroën C3 Rally2, +15.4 seconds

4 Nicolas Ciamin/Yannick Roche (FRA/FRA), Hyundai i20 N Rally2, +4:14.3 minutes

5 Stéphane Lefebvre/Andy Malfroy (FRA/FRA), Toyota GR Yaris Rally2, +5:58.5 minutes

6 Jan Solans/Rodrigo Sanjuan de Eusebio (ESP/ESP), Toyota GR Yaris Rally2, +9:13.5 minutes

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#### **Škoda crews at Rallye Monte-Carlo**

Sharing Mapo Motorsport's Škoda Fabia RS Rally2, Pepe López and co-driver David Vázquez left their mark in WRC2. Eventually, they finished second of the category by 4.0 seconds only.

Source: Škoda Auto



#### **Škoda crews at Rallye Monte-Carlo**

Pepe López (right) and co-driver David Vázquez (Škoda Fabia RS Rally2) celebrate on the podium in front of the casino in Monaco.

Source: Škoda Auto



#### **Škoda crews at Rallye Monte-Carlo**

Oliver Solberg and co-driver Elliott Edmondson (Škoda Fabia RS Rally2 of team Toksport WRT) experienced a fantastic fan atmosphere during the rally opening night stages.

Source: Škoda Auto



### Škoda crews at Rallye Monte-Carlo

Mauro Miele/Luca Beltrame (Škoda Fabia RS Rally2 of team Dream One) easily won the WRC Masters Cup classification.

Source: Škoda Auto

### Škoda Motorsport

- › Škoda has been active in motorsport since 1901, garnering success in rallies as well as in circuit racing.
- › Highlights include winning the 1981 European Touring Car Championship (ETCC) with the Škoda 130 RS.
- › Since 2009, the Škoda Fabia celebrated numerous successes for the Czech manufacturer on rally stages worldwide.
- › Until 2014, the Škoda Fabia S2000 (2.0 naturally aspirated engine, four-wheel drive) secured 50 international titles and national rally championships. The Škoda Fabia S2000 also helped to win the FIA European Rally Championship (ERC) and the Intercontinental Rally Challenge (IRC) three times each.
- › The successor model Škoda Fabia R5 (1.6 turbo engine, four-wheel drive) entered the scene in 2015. Later renamed to Škoda Fabia Rally2 and followed by the further developed Škoda Fabia Rally2 evo, the model collected nearly 2,000 victories in 68 countries until the end of the 2022 season.
- › During this period, Škoda Motorsport factory drivers Jan Kopecký (CZE), Esapekka Lappi (FIN), Pontus Tidemand (SWE) and Kalle Rovanperä (FIN) won the FIA World Rally Championship's support category WRC2/WRC2 Pro. Škoda Motorsport also took the WRC2/WRC2 Pro Manufacturers' title five times in a row from 2015 to 2019.
- › Beginning with the 2020 season, Škoda Motorsport changed its strategy to supporting private teams. The success story continued: Driving a Škoda Fabia Rally2 evo run by Toksport WRT, Andreas Mikkelsen (NOR) and Emil Lindholm (FIN) became WRC2 Champions in 2021 and 2022. Mikkelsen became WRC2 Champion again in 2023 with team Toksport WRT, when the all-new Škoda Fabia RS Rally2 entered the scene. The Škoda Motorsport supported team Toksport WRT also won the WRC2 Teams' title four times in a row from 2020 to 2023.
- › Škoda Motorsport customer teams have also won titles in the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC), FIA European Rally Championship (ERC), the FIA African Rally Championship (ARC), the FIA North American and Central American Rally Championship (NACAM), the FIA South American Rally Championship (CODASUR) and the FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC).

### Škoda Auto

- › is successfully steering through the new decade with the Next Level – Škoda Strategy 2030.
- › aims to be one of the five best-selling brands in Europe by 2030 with an attractive line-up in the entry-level segments and additional e-models.
- › effectively leverages existing potential in important growth markets such as India, North Africa, Vietnam and the ASEAN region.
- › currently offers its customers eleven passenger-car series: the Fabia, Scala, Octavia and Superb as well as the Kamiq, Karoq, Kodiaq, Enyaq, Enyaq Coupé, Slavia and Kushaq.
- › delivered over 866,000 vehicles to customers around the world in 2023.
- › has been a member of the Volkswagen Group for 30 years. The Volkswagen Group is one of the most successful vehicle manufacturers in the world.
- › independently manufactures and develops components such as MEB battery systems, engines and transmissions as part of the Volkswagen Group; these components are also used in vehicles of other Group brands.
- › operates at three sites in the Czech Republic; has additional production capacity in China, Slovakia and India primarily through Group partnerships, as well as in Ukraine with a local partner.
- › employs over 40,000 people globally and is active in around 100 markets.