

Rally Japan: Škoda Fabia RS Rally2 driver Nikolay Gryazin takes over WRC2 Challenger lead

- › **Nikolay Gryazin and co-driver Konstantin Aleksandrov of Škoda Motorsport customer team Toksport WRT finish Rally Japan second in WRC2 and WRC2 Challenger.**
- › **The Škoda Fabia RS Rally2 crew heads into the FIA World Rally Championship season finale in Saudi Arabia as leaders of WRC2 Challenger drivers' and co-drivers category.**
- › **Local Škoda crew Takuma Kamada/Yuichi Matsumoto wins the WRC Masters Cup classification.**

Toyota City (JPN), 9 November 2025 – Second place in WRC2 Challenger classification at Rally Japan was enough for Nikolay Gryazin and co-driver Konstantin Aleksandrov (Škoda Fabia RS Rally2) to advance into the overall lead of the category. Before the season's finale Rally Saudi Arabia in three weeks' time, both are four points ahead in the drivers' and co-drivers' rankings respectively.

Rally Japan was the last all-asphalt round of the 2025 FIA World Rally Championship. The 20 special stages, which were held in the forests of the Aichi and Gifu area, mostly featured narrow, winding roads. Often edged by drainage ditches, rock faces or even concrete walls, they left no room for error. Heavy rain during the last leg on Sunday added to the challenge.

Entered into the WRC2 and WRC2 Challenger categories, Nikolay Gryazin from Bulgaria and co-driver Konstantin Aleksandrov from Kyrgyzstan mastered the challenge perfectly. Realising, that they could not match the speed of the eventual winners, Alejandro Cachón/Borja Rozada, the Škoda Fabia RS Rally2 crew focused on securing as many championship points as possible. They briefly interrupted the Spaniards' winning streak by taking the WRC2 lead after stage 4. However, the former order was re-established already after the next speed test and Nikolay Gryazin/Konstantin Aleksandrov back in second position.

After the Friday leg, they trailed the category leaders by 12.1 seconds. By Saturday evening, the gap has grown to 26.9 seconds. "I'm trying my best," Nikolay Gryazin said. "But I think, more than second is not possible." Nevertheless, the Škoda Fabia RS Rally2 crew managed to keep the third-placed pairing of Jan Solans and Rodrigo Sanjuan at bay. They extended their lead over their Spanish rivals to 49.8 seconds at the finish. By collecting 17 championship points each, Nikolay Gryazin and Konstantin Aleksandrov took the overall lead in the WRC2 Challenger drivers' and co-drivers' standings respectively.

By contrast, Japan was not really worth the long journey for Englishman Gus Greensmith and Swedish co-driver Jonas Andersson. During the morning of the Friday leg, Gus Greensmith struggled with the tendency of the RaceSeven run Škoda Fabia RS Rally2 to understeer.

Some adjustments during the midday service seemed to help. “I’m happy with the progress, we were pushing on in the afternoon,” he described after finishing the Friday leg in fourth WRC2 position. However, the situation worsened again the next morning – Gus Greensmith/Jonas Andersson retired before Saturday’s second stage due to a technical issue.

Lady Luck was more on the side of two local Škoda crews. Hiroki Arai and co-driver Hiroki Tachikui brought their R2R×YAHAGI Racing Team run Fabia home in fifth place in both WRC2 and WRC2 Challenger categories. They even posted the fastest WRC2 time on the so-called power stage. Takuma Kamada/Yuichi Matsumoto finished the event seventh in WRC2. They also won the WRC Masters Cup classification, which is reserved for drivers aged 50 and over.

The finale of the 2025 FIA World Rally Championship is scheduled for 25–29 November, when Rally Saudi Arabia is part of the WRC calendar for the very first time.

Number of the Rally: 4

While the WRC2 title has already been decided, the final round of the season will determine the WRC2 Challenger champions. Following Rally Japan, the leaders and runners-up in the WRC2 Challenger standings are separated by just four points. In the drivers’ classification, it’s Nikolay Gryazin (Škoda) versus Roope Korhonen (Toyota). Meanwhile, their respective navigators, Konstantin Aleksandrov and Anssi Viinikka, are competing for the co-drivers’ title with the same gap. With Jan Solans and co-driver Rodrigo Sanjuan only three more points adrift, the fight for both titles will go down to the wire at Rally Saudi Arabia.

Rally Japan (JPN), 6-9 November 2025, Result WRC2 Challenger

- 1 Alejandro Cachón/Borja Rozada (ESP/ESP), Toyota GR Yaris Rally2, 3:31:50.5 hours
- 2 Nikolay Gryazin/Konstantin Aleksandrov (BUL/KGZ), Škoda Fabia RS Rally2, +54.6 seconds**
- 3 Jan Solans/Rodrigo Sanjuan (ESP/ESP), Toyota GR Yaris Rally2, +1:44.4 minutes
- 4 Heikki Kovalainen/Sae Kitagawa (FIN/JPN), Toyota GR Yaris Rally2, +4:09.4 minutes
- 5 Hiroki Arai/Hiroki Tachikui (JPN/JPN), Škoda Fabia Rally2, +4:26.6 minutes**
- 6 Diego Domínguez/Rogelio Peñate (PRY/ESP), Toyota GR Yaris Rally2, +4:40.1 minutes

Standings WRC2 Challenger/Drivers (after 13 of 14 rallies)

- 1 Nikolay Gryazin (BUL), Škoda, 94 points**
- 2 Roope Korhonen (FIN), Toyota, 90 points
- 3 Jan Solans (ESP), Toyota, 87 points
- 4 Roberto Dapra (ITA), Škoda, 86 points**
- 5 Robert Virves (EST), Škoda, 75 points**
- 6 Kajetan Kajetanowicz (POL), Toyota, 72 points

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Škoda crews at Rally Japan

Nikolay Gryazin and co-driver Konstantin Aleksandrov (Škoda Fabia RS Rally2 of team Toksport WRT) finished second in the WRC2 as well as the WRC2 Challenger classification.

Source: Škoda Auto



Škoda crews at Rally Japan

Big crowds and historic villages greeted the competitors of Rally Japan. The photo shows Škoda Fabia RS Rally2 crew Nikolay Gryazin/Konstantin Aleksandrov on a road section.

Source: Škoda Auto



Škoda crews at Rally Japan

Finishing fifth in WRC2 and twelfth overall, Hiroki Arai and co-driver Hiroki Tachikui (Škoda Fabia R5 of R2R×YAHAGI Racing Team) were best-placed Japanese crew at their home event.

Source: Škoda Auto



Škoda crews at Rally Japan

Locals Takuma Kamada/Yuichi Matsumoto (Škoda Fabia Rally2) won the WRC2 Masters Cup classification reserved for drivers over the age of 50.

Source: Škoda Auto



Škoda crews at Rally Japan

Englishman Gus Greensmith and Swedish co-driver Jonas Andersson (Škoda Fabia RS Rally2 of team RaceSeven) were running as high as fourth in WRC2 but eventually had to retire.

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) und 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. In 2024, the WRC2 title fight was not decided until the season finale. Škoda driver Oliver Solberg of team Toksport WRT finished second overall.

- › 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 pursuing its Next Level – Škoda Strategy 2030
- › aims to be among the three best-selling brands in Europe by 2030, with attractive offers in entry-level segments and additional electric vehicles
- › is unlocking growth potential in key markets such as India, North Africa, Vietnam and the wider ASEAN region
- › currently offers 12 passenger-car series: Fabia, Scala, Octavia, Superb, Kamiq, Karoq, Kodiaq, Elroq, Enyaq, Slavia, Kylaq and Kushaq
- › delivered more than 926,000 vehicles to customers worldwide in 2024
- › has been part of the Volkswagen Group – one of the world's most successful car manufacturers – for over 30 years
- › belongs to the Brand Group CORE, the Volkswagen Group's alliance of volume brands established to drive joint growth and boost overall efficiency
- › independently develops and produces components such as MEB battery systems, engines and transmissions, including for other Group brands
- › operates three production plants in the Czech Republic and, largely through Group partnerships, has manufacturing capacities in China, Slovakia and India, as well as in Vietnam and Ukraine with local partners
- › employs around 40,000 people worldwide and operates in almost 100 markets