

## **Safari Rally Kenya: Škoda Fabia RS Rally2 crew masters mud baths to take WRC2 victory**

- › Unfazed by one of the wettest events in recent history, Robert Virves/Jakko Viilo from Estonia win WRC2 at the third round of the 2026 FIA World Rally Championship.
- › Also competing with a Škoda Fabia RS Rally2, Fabrizio Zaldivar from Paraguay and Italian co-driver Marcelo Der Ohannesian climb onto the WRC2 podium as third.
- › Seven private Škoda crews, including former WRC2 champion Andreas Mikkelsen and navigator Jørn Listerud, finish inside the WRC2 top 10.

**Naivasha (KEN), 15 March 2026 – Two Škoda Fabia RS Rally2 crews celebrated on the WRC2 podium of Safari Rally Kenya. Toksport WRT's Robert Virves and co-driver Jakko Viilo won the category on their debut at the East African classic. Meanwhile, Fabrizio Zaldivar/Marcelo Der Ohannesian secured third position for team RaceSeven. Double WRC2 champion Andreas Mikkelsen kicked off his comeback with the Czech brand with fourth place.**

Safari Rally Kenya once again lived up to its reputation as the FIA World Rally Championship's toughest event. The rocky sections and deep fesh-fesh sand caused technical issues and punctures for almost every competitor. Elsewhere, heavy rain turned the roads of the Great Rift Valley near Lake Naivasha into mud baths, sometimes stretching for hundreds of metres. The conditions were so poor that the organisers deemed the "Camp Moran 2" and "Sleeping Warrior 2" stages undriveable for the WRC2 field.

Andreas Mikkelsen, the WRC2 champion of 2021 and 2023 had returned to team Toksport WRT and was very much looking forward to his debut at the East African event. "I came here for the full Safari experience and would have loved to drive the famous 'Sleeping Warrior' stage in these conditions," the Norwegian joked. Navigated for the first time by Jørn Listerud, Mikkelsen lost nearly two minutes already in the very first stage. "The windscreen was full of mud, because we ran out of washer fluid," he explained.

Toksport WRT teammates Robert Virves/Jakko Viilo, on the other hand, delivered an impressive performance on their Safari Rally Kenya debut. The Škoda Fabia RS Rally2 crew kept out of trouble and in touch with the early leaders. When they hit trouble during the Friday leg, the Estonians climbed to the top of the WRC2 standings. From the first stage after the lunch break on Friday until Saturday evening, they extended their lead to almost one minute. They kept out of major trouble, especially during the second leg when retirements thinned out the field after each stage. With a measured pace, they protected their advantage. "It's one of the worst places to be, because then you start to look and listen for things you wouldn't usually," Robert Virves described the stress of being the leader.

However, the 25-year-old kept his nerve and managed the lead also during the final stages on Sunday. „It feels amazing. I wasn't a big fan of coming here, but I think we experienced the proper Safari. To come through with no issues is thanks to an incredible effort by the team,“ Robert Virves said after the second WRC2 victory of his career. He now leads the category overall level on points with the WRC2 winners of Rallye Monte-Carlo, Léo Rossel, and Rally Sweden, Roope Korhonen.

Another Škoda Fabia RS Rally2 crew who managed to avoid trouble were Fabrizio Zaldivar and co-driver Marcelo Der Ohannesian. Third place at the finish was a well-earned reward for the Paraguayan-Italian duo from team RaceSeven. “It was a tough weekend; we fought hard every day. But we avoided any mistakes and had zero punctures,” reported Fabrizio Zaldivar. Their lead over fourth-placed Andreas Mikkelsen and Jørn Listerud shrank from over a minute after the first stage to just 10.7 seconds at the finish. “To be honest, fighting Andreas is quite challenging. He's a driver I looked up to when I started my career,” added Fabrizio Zaldivar.

In fact, Andreas Mikkelsen achieved more WRC2 stage wins than any other driver. The Toksport WRT-run Škoda Fabia RS Rally2 was listed as the fastest in its category after eight of the 18 stages actually held for the WRC2 competitors. “After our delay on Thursday, there was basically too much to catch up on. There are lots of positives to take away, even though the result wasn't what we wanted,” said Andreas Mikkelsen, summing up his first start at the East African classic.

In total, only ten WRC2 competitors reached the finish line, seven of whom were Škoda crews. Daniel Chwist and Kamil Heller from Poland, driving for Eurosol Racing Team Hungary, secured sixth position, followed by the local pairings of Karan Patel/Tauseef Khan and Aakif Virani/Zahir Shah. Samman Singh Vohra and British co-driver Drew Sturrock rounded off the impressive WRC2 result for the Czech brand by finishing in ninth position.

Following the relentless gravel of Eastern Africa, the FIA World Rally Championship moves on to European asphalt. The Mediterranean coastal town of Rijeka hosts Rally Croatia, the season's fourth round from 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> April.

**Number of the rally: 5**

Also thanks to the high retirement rate among the Rally1 cars, Škoda Fabia RS Rally2 crew Robert Virves and co-driver Jakko Viilo finished fifth overall – one of the best results ever achieved by a WRC2 competitor.

**Safari Rally Kenya (KEN), 12-15 March 2026,  
3<sup>rd</sup> round of the FIA World Rally Championship, Result WRC2**

- 1 Robert Virves/Jakko Viilo (EST/EST), Škoda Fabia RS Rally2, 3:27.44.3 hours**
- 2 Gus Greensmith/Jonas Andersson (GBR/SWE), Toyota GR Yaris Rally2, +30.3 seconds
- 3 Fabrizio Zaldívar/Marcelo Der Ohannesian (PAR/ITA), Škoda Fabia RS Rally2, +41.3 seconds**
- 4 Andreas Mikkelsen/Jørn Listerud (NOR/NOR), Škoda Fabia RS Rally2, +52.0 seconds**
- 5 Diego Domínguez/Rogelio Peñate (PAR/ESP), Toyota GR Yaris Rally2, +1.49.7 minutes
- 6 Daniel Chwist/Kamil Heller (POL/POL), Škoda Fabia RS Rally2, +33.58.0 minutes**

**Standings WRC2/Drivers (after 3 of 14 events)**

- 1 Robert Virves (EST), Škoda, 25 points**
- 2 Roope Korhonen (FIN), Toyota, 25 points
- 3 Léo Rossel (FRA), Citroën, 25 points
- 4 Gus Greensmith (GBR), Toyota, 17 points
- 5 Roberto Daprà (ITA), Škoda, 17 points**
- 6 Teemu Suninen (FIN), Toyota, 17 points

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**Škoda Motorsport:**



**Media images:**



**Škoda crews at Safari Rally Kenya**

Competing for the first time in East Africa, WRC2 winners Robert Virves and co-driver Jakko Viilo handled the difficult conditions like Safari veterans. The Škoda Fabia RS Rally2 of team Toksport WRT carried a livery celebrating “125 years of Škoda Motorsport”.

Source: Škoda Auto



**Škoda crews at Safari Rally Kenya**  
Two Škoda Fabia RS Rally2 crews on the WRC2 podium with winners Robert Virves/Jakko Viilo (centre) and Fabrizio Zaldivar/Marcelo Der Ohannesian (right).

Source: Škoda Auto



**Škoda crews at Safari Rally Kenya**  
Fabrizio Zaldivar from Paraguay and Italian co-driver Marcelo Der Ohannesian (Škoda Fabia RS Rally2 of team RaceSeven) claimed back-to-back Safari Rally Kenya podium finishes.

Source: Red Bull Content Pool



**Škoda crews at Safari Rally Kenya**  
Co-driven by fellow Norwegian Jørn Listerud, former WRC2 champion Andreas Mikkelsen started into his comeback with team Toksport WRT with a fourth position in WRC2.

Source: Škoda Auto



**Škoda crews at Safari Rally Kenya**  
Andreas Mikkelsen/Jørn Listerud (Škoda Fabia RS Rally2 of team Toksport WRT) posted more fastest WRC2 stage times than any other competitor.

Source: Škoda Auto



**Škoda crews at Safari Rally Kenya**

Polish duo Daniel Chwist/Kamil Heller (Škoda Fabia RS Rally2 of Eurosol Racing Team Hungary) finished sixth in WRC2.

Source: Škoda Auto



**Škoda crews at Safari Rally Kenya**

Coming home seventh in WRC2, Škoda Fabia crew Karan Patel/Tauseef Khan took the honours of being best-placed Kenyan competitors.

Source: Škoda Auto



**Škoda crews at Safari Rally Kenya**

All competitors paid tribute to long-time Škoda Motorsport Team Manager Pavel Hortek, who passed away recently.

Source: Škoda Auto

**Škoda Motorsport**

- › Škoda celebrates 125 years of Motorsport since the first efforts in 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 three times in 2020, 2022 and 2023. In 2025 Toksport WRT took another WRC2 Teams' title and Nikolay Gryazin/Konstantin Aleksandrov of Toksport WRT become WRC2 Challenger drivers' and co-drivers' champions respectively.

- › 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.
- › aims to become one of the top three best-selling brands in Europe by the end of the decade by offering its customers the best of both worlds through a range of attractive BEV, hybrid & ICE products.
- › effectively exploits the potential in important growth markets such as India, Vietnam and the ASEAN region.
- › currently offers customers 12 passenger car model ranges: Fabia, Scala, Octavia, Superb, Kamiq, Karoq, Kodiaq, Elroq, Enyaq, Slavia, Kylaq and Kushaq.
- › delivered more than 1,040,000 vehicles to customers worldwide in 2025.
- › has been part of the Volkswagen Group, one of the world's most successful car manufacturers, for more than 30 years.
- › is part of Brand Group CORE, an organisational merger of the Volkswagen Group's volume brands, with the aim of achieving joint growth and significantly increasing the overall efficiency of all five volume brands.
- › independently develops and produces components such as MEB battery systems, engines and transmissions for other Volkswagen Group brands.
- › operates three production plants in the Czech Republic; has production capacities in China, Slovakia and India, mostly through group partnerships, as well as in Vietnam and Ukraine in cooperation with a local partner.
- › employs around 40,000 people worldwide and is active in almost 100 markets.