

Rally Japan: Škoda Fabia RS Rally2 driver Emil Lindholm collects points as fourth in WRC2

- › Former WRC2 Champion Emil Lindholm and co-driver Gabriel Morales (Škoda Fabia RS Rally2) experience a difficult seventh round of the FIA World Rally Championship.
- › Japanese veterans Osamu Fukunaga/Misako Saida (Škoda Fabia RS Rally2) finish home event fifth in the WRC Masters Cup classification.
- › The second half of the season features only gravel events and begins in four weeks' time with Acropolis Rally Greece.

Toyota City (JPN), 31 May 2026 – Just eleven crews competed for WRC2 points during Rally Japan, seventh round of the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC). Emil Lindholm from Finland and Brazilian co-driver Gabriel Morales brought their Toksport WRT-run Škoda Fabia RS Rally2 home in fourth position in WRC2. Osamu Fukunaga and navigator Misako Saida drove a similar car of team Three Five Motorsport to fifth place in the WRC Masters Cup classification.

The character of the asphalt stages of Rally Japan is unique. Based in the Aichi and Gifu prefectures close to the city of Nagoya, the only Asian WRC event features narrow and twisty roads, often lined by barriers, drop-offs or dense trees. Relatively low grip adds to the challenge. Anything but ideal for a driver from Finland, who is more at home on fast and flowing gravel stages.

“A lot of back-to-back slow corners. I'm not getting any rhythm, the grip is changing all the time. I'm more or less just surviving,” Emil Lindholm admitted after the opening stages. Sharing a Škoda Fabia RS Rally2 with Brazilian co-driver Gabriel Morales, the former WRC2 champion could only manage fifth place in WRC2 on Friday evening. The Saturday and Sunday stages proved equally challenging. “We've struggled with the pace notes. If you hesitate at each corner, you lose a lot of seconds. It's a fantastic rally, but demanding,” Emil Lindholm explained.

Due to a retirement ahead of them, they eventually finished fourth in WRC2. Twelve championship points for Emil Lindholm in the WRC2 drivers' and for Gabriel Morales in the co-drivers classification were only a small consolidation. “This result wasn't what we came for. But after all, we have to be happy to be here in one piece,” Emil Lindholm said at the finish of the last stage.

The same was true for Osamu Fukunaga and co-driver Misako Saida. The Japanese veterans competed in a Škoda Fabia RS Rally2 from team Three Five Motorsport. Their goal was to score points in the WRC Masters Cup classification, which is reserved for drivers aged 50 and over. However, a damaged suspension caused by a minor off-road incident forced them to

retire on Saturday. After restarting with a repaired car for the final leg on Sunday, the local crew finished fifth in the category and tenth in WRC2.

Rally Japan was the last tarmac round of the 2026 FIA World Rally Championship. Acropolis Rally Greece (25-28 June) marks the start of seven consecutive gravel events that make up the second half of the season.

Number of the rally: 11

This year was the eleventh time that Rally Japan had been part of the FIA World Rally Championship. Osamu Fukunaga competed in all of them, including the event's WRC debut in 2004. This pedigree makes the 55-year-old, who again drove a Škoda Fabia RS Rally2 for team Three Five Motorsport, the competitor with the most experience of the event.

**Rally Japan (JPN), 28-31 May 2026,
7th round of the FIA World Rally Championship, Result WRC2**

- 1 Nikolay Gryazin/Konstantin Aleksandrov (BUL/KGZ), Lancia Ypsilon Rally2 HF Integrale, 3:26:29.3 hours
- 2 Alejandro Cachón/Borja Rozada (ESP/ESP), Toyota GR Yaris Rally2, +18.3 seconds
- 3 Yuki Yamamoto/James Fulton (JPN/IRL), Toyota GR Yaris Rally2, +2:54.4 minutes
- 4 Emil Lindholm/Gabriel Morales (FIN/BRA), Škoda Fabia RS Rally2, +3:50.3 minutes**
- 5 Hiroki Arai/Hiroki Tachikui (JPN/JPN), Toyota GR Yaris Rally2, +7:37.6 minutes
- 6 Norihiko Katsuta/Takahiro Yasui (JPN/JPN), Toyota GR Yaris Rally2, +14:12.1 minutes

Standings WRC2/Teams (after 7 of 14 events)

- 1 Lancia Corse HF, Lancia, 163 points
- 2 Toksport WRT, Škoda, 126 points**
- 3 M-Sport Ford World Rally Team, Ford, 45 points

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Škoda crews at Rally Japan

Emil Lindholm and co-driver Gabriel Morales (Škoda Fabia RS Rally2 of team Toksport WRT) finished fourth in WRC2.

Source: Škoda Auto



Škoda crews at Rally Japan

The narrow and twisty stages of Rally Japan presented challenging conditions for former WRC2 Champion Emil Lindholm from Finland. He shared the Toksport WRT-run with Brazilian co-driver Gabriel Morales.

Source: Škoda Auto



Škoda crews at Rally Japan

Tens of thousands of fans lined the road sections to greet the competitors like locals Osamu Fukunaga/Misako Saida (Škoda Fabia RS Rally2 of team Three Five Motorsport).

Source: Škoda Auto



Škoda crews at Rally Japan

Osamu Fukunaga and co-driver Misako Saida (Škoda Fabia RS Rally2 of team Three Five Motorsport) scored points as fifth in the WRC Masters Cup classification.

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 Slovakia, Kazakhstan 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.