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Jan Kopecký: I still don't realize what we achieved

Up to the last meters of the 46th Barum Czech Rally Zlín the crew Jan Kopecký, Pavel Dresler (Škoda Fabia R5) was fighting for defending the winning the rally which belonged to the FIA European Rally Championship (FIA ERC) and Czech rally championship (MČR). Kopecký has secured his fifth overall win in this rally and he's got a Challenge cup to his permanent possession. This cup was waiting for its new owner forty six years. It was designated for drivers who win the Barum rally five times or three times in a row. Jan Kopecký is the first driver in the Barum rally history who achieved this.

Jan Kopecký was hardly battling over the whole weekend with Russian Alexey Lukyanuk (Ford Fiesta R5). During the rally, their time margin was never bigger than nine seconds. However in the ultimate stage Luykanuk damaged his car and freed the way to Kopecký's triumph. **"Alex was sometimes running like mad, but he kept his car on the road. Up to the latest stage. I feel sorry for him, our fight was just great,"** said 34years old Kopecký, who passed Lukyanuk's car in the stage. **"I was asking Pavel Dresler if he would mind to slow down little bit. But after few seconds I started to think whether it really was Alex's car. Pavel assured me that it was 100% him. I knew that we either would comfortably win or become the biggest morons, if it wouldn't be Alex,"** said with smile the Barum rally record breaker Kopecký.

The member of Škoda Motorsport factory team was during the weekend awarded not only the rally win and gaining his fourth Czech championship title, he also picked up the Challenge cup which was a part of the Barum Czech Rally Zlín from its beginning back in 1971. **"At this point I don't have much words, I still don't realize what we achieved. The rally was just great, unbelievable. This year the pace was really high. I have to thanks to the whole team and all rally fans. The atmosphere was simply great,"** added Kopecký.

34 years old driver will now look for an appropriate place where to put the Challenge cup. He took it from Zlín already four times, but now he doesn't have to return the trophy. **"I will watch the cup extensively. We must to find some nice place for it. But if Mr. Regner, the Clerk of the course, will want to borrow it, I'll be happy to satisfy him,"** said Kopecký.

After three years brake the overall podium was occupied exclusively with Czech crews. Tomáš Kostka wrote his career highlight with second place, he was co-driven by Ladislav Kučera. **"During the weekend we faced some technical issues, however the result is perfect. And the atmosphere along the route was amazing, none of us has ever seen anything like that,"** pleased Kostka rally fans' support.

First podium in the Barum Czech Rally Zlín of his career has recorded Jan Černý with co-driver Petr Černohorský (Škoda Fabia R5). **“We did a lot of work here, thanks belong to all team members. We purchased a new car and before rally start it was quite hectic. There was matching everything we were thinking about. We wished nothing bad to Lukyanuk, but this is our top result. Third place in this rally is incredible. We enjoy it and hopefully next year we will repeat that,”** promised Černý.

Just behind the podium finished local Pavel Valoušek (Škoda Fabia R5) who was during the event slowed down with several punctures. On Saturday he fell down to the end of Top 10 and was considering retiring from the race. But together with his co-driver Veronika Havelková they decided to continue and it was worth. Although they suffered another puncture on Sunday, they managed to rise up in the classification. **“Finally we are happy with the fourth place,”** said Valoušek who is about to compete in Slovakian Rally Košice next week. **“That’s why we were thinking about retiring and saving the car. Many people were against, some of them agreed with such decision. But we spontaneously decided to continue and the result was finally good,”** added Valoušek, BTW 2010 Czech rally champion.

Russian Alexey Lukyanuk was the only one who was able to keep up the pace of Jan Kopecký. Several times he appeared in the rally lead but he didn’t manage the rally finale. While trying to eliminate his gap to Kopecký at the final stage of the rally, he damaged suspension of his car and fell down to 16th place with more than 10 minutes loss to the rally winner Kopecký. **“Despite of that I’m not disappointed. Many kilometres we could run really quickly, it’s good contribution for the future,”** said Lukyanuk. **“I’m happy we had such battle with Jan. He’s the king, we know that. The fight was great, exciting,”** added Lukyanuk.

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Petr ŘÍHA
Press Centre
Barum Czech Rally Zlín

