

PRESS RELEASE no. 41**Kopecký continues to rule, winning the Barum Rally for the eleventh time**

The extraordinary streak of Jan Kopecký (Škoda Fabia RS Rally2) is never ending, the experienced driver dominated the 52nd Barum Czech Rally Zlín with co-driver Jan Hloušek. He achieved his eighth triumph in a row and his eleventh overall. Jan Kopecký took the lead after the fifth stage and remained in the lead until the end of the event. Second place went to Miklós Csomós (Škoda Fabia Rally2 Evo) from Hungary, with Austrian Simon Wager (Škoda Fabia RS Rally2) taking third place in a thrilling finish. **"We reached the finish, it was really demanding rally. I'm very happy, but also really tired,"** admitted the fresh winner immediately after getting out of the car.

While Jan Kopecký secured his tenth Czech championship title on Saturday, New Zealander Hayden Padden (Hyundai i20 N Rally) celebrated his European championship title at the end of the final stage. He won the title despite being forced to withdraw from the Barum Rally on Sunday. **"It was a bit strange way to win the whole championship like that, but the truth is that we have done six good rallies this year and only once badly. I'm enjoying Europe, I believe I haven't driven it for the last time,"** smiled Paddon.

The beginning of the competition weekend offered an interesting tug-of-war. The order of the top places was shuffling and during the first five stages five different drivers changed the leading position. The change came only in the early afternoon on Saturday, when Jan Kopecký became the leader. Unlike his rivals, the experienced champion settled firmly and permanently in first place.

The rest of the first leg Jan Kopecký increased his lead to fifteen seconds over the second Miklós Csomós from Hungary, who impressed with his fast and balanced performance. **"Barum Rally is a tough competition, we had a difficult day, but at the same time I am very happy. The set-up of the car, the tyres, everything is working great, the whole team is doing a really good job,"** said Miklós Csomós happily at the middle of the weekend.

The Hungarian driver continued his good performance on Sunday as well, as he reduced his deficit to ten seconds in the morning. It seemed that the battle for the overall championship could stretch to the last kilometres. However, Jan Kopecký did not allow any drama in the end. The record holder of the Zlín rally showed his experience to the full and safely kept his lead in the last stages.

The fight for the third place decided just at the last stage

The second best Czech result was fought for in the second half of the weekend, namely by Adam Březík (Škoda Fabia Rally2 Evo) and Filip Mareš (Škoda Fabia Rally2 Evo), who managed the fastest qualifying stage in Malenovice on Friday morning.

For a long time, it seemed that only fourth place in the overall standings was at stake, but a bad drive and extra seconds gained by Austrian Simon Wagner (Škoda Fabia RS Rally2) on the



penultimate SS Pindula added even more intensity to the competition of the Czech crews. All three drivers squeezed into less than four seconds before the final stage!

Simon Wagner finally compensated his weak moment on the SS Pindula in the best possible way - on the last Power Stage in Halenkovice he resisted the attacks of his Czech rivals, set the fastest time and returned to the third position. Adam Březík and Filip Mareš finished fourth and fifth respectively.

Erik Cais (Škoda Fabia RS Rally2) was also thinking about the top positions before the start of the Barum Rally, but a puncture in the sixth SS Kateřinice knocked him out of the fight for the podium. The young driver was certainly not without chances - he kept up with the fastest ones throughout the whole weekend, and even won four stages. In Kateřinice, however, he picked up a deficit of over eighty seconds, which knocked him down the order. **"Unfortunately, I didn't estimate the right speed going into one curve, even though I knew there would be gravel. I got on the outside edge, which took the tyre off the rim,"** rued Caise.

The Czech driver was not the only one who dropped out of the fight for the overall triumph. Alexey Lukyanuk (Škoda Fabia RS Rally2), driving with a Cypriot licence, did not finish the event at all, as he did not enter Sunday's second leg after technical problems. European championship leader Hayden Paddon (Hyundai i20 N Rally2) from New Zealand also failed to finish his first participation in Barum Rally, having a broken wheel after a fault on the tenth SS Halenkovice.

Among the juniors, Timo Schulz (Opel Corsa Rally4) won by a huge margin. The young German also dominated the ERC4 and 2WD categories, in which his closest rival was Jaromír Tarabus (Peugeot 208 Rally4). The Czech driver got close to Schulz on Sunday morning by less than eight seconds, but in the end he did not catch up.

In the domestic championship, Václav Pech (Ford Focus WRC) had an excellent result. The experienced matador of Czech motorsport managed to run performances comparable to the European top and he finished the whole Barum rally in the fastest time of all drivers in the starting field.

Final standings of Barum Czech Rally Zlín 2023 (ERC)

1. Kopecký, Hloušek (CZE, Škoda Fabia RS Rally2)	1:53:18,5 min
2. Csomós, Bán (HUN, Škoda Fabia Rally2 Evo)	+ 14,3 s
3. Wagner, Winter (AUT, Škoda Fabia RS Rally2)	+ 48,2 s
4. Březík, Krajča (CZE, Škoda Fabia Rally2 Evo)	+ 51,1 s
5. Mareš, Bucha (CZE, Škoda Fabia Rally2 Evo)	+ 51,9 s
6. Stříteský, Hovorka (CZE, Škoda Fabia R5)	+ 1:00,4 min
7. Cais, Bacigál (CZE/SVK, Škoda Fabia RS Rally2)	+ 1:11,1 min
8. Larena, Fernandez (ESP, Škoda Fabia R5)	+ 1:33,6 min
9. Franceschi, Malfoy (FRA, Škoda Fabia RS Rally2)	+ 1:48,7 min
10. Tempestini, Itu (ROU, Škoda Fabia Rally2 Evo)	+ 3:03,9 min
13. Schulz, Wenzel (DEU, Opel Corsa Rally4), 1st place ERC4, ERC4J, 2WD	+ 9:49,5 min
22. Widlak, Pawlowski (Ford Fiesta Rally3), 1st place ERC3	+ 17:51,0 min



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Total number of SS victories: 5 – Kopecký, 4 – Cais, 2 – Wagner, 1 – Lukyanuk, Csomós, Březík

(note: Kopecký and Cais won SS 7 with identical time)

More information available at www.czechrally.com and don't forget to follow the Barum Rally on the official Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter accounts and the other press information.

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