

## PRESS RELEASE no. 41

### Barum rally king Jan Kopecký: It was a dream to conquer the young guys

Twentieth start in Zlín, twelfth triumph. After a one-year break, Jan Kopecký returned to the throne of the **BARUM CZECH RALLY ZLÍN**, which he had continuously reigned over from 2015 to 2023. **"It was a sort of a dream to beat the young guys,"** admitted the Agrotec Škoda Rally Team driver at the finish ramp. His Škoda Fabia RS Rally2 was less than eleven seconds ahead of Jon Armstrong from Ireland in a Ford Fiesta Rally2 MkII at the finish line.

**"Thanks to everyone standing here with me, who worked hard with us to make us successful again,"** said the 43-year-old driver to his team at the final press conference. According to the promoter's rules, it took place for the first time on the finish ramp in front of the Zlín town hall. **"And, of course, we also receive great support from you. We really appreciate it, thank you all very much,"** said 43-year-old Kopecký to the crowded square in Zlín.

His twelfth triumph came without much difficulty. Together with his co-driver Jiří Hovorka, they took the lead in the Barum rally right from the opening special stage on Saturday and never lost it. **"The weather made it a lot easier, it was dry the whole time. The Bunč speed test was reversed, and in the second pass, the insert was very dismantled, so we had a big challenge ahead of us. And Sunday's Pindula, reversed after many years, was also very demanding. Podhoran had a new finish line, which had never been used before, so I was happy to drive there too. Kateřinice then led all the way to Pržno. Huge credit and respect to the organizers for the track layout,"** said Kopecký, who is well on his way to his eleventh Czech title.

Anyway, co-driver Jiří Hovorka, who won Barum rally last year with Dominik Stříteský, shouldn't be left in the background. This year, he was the fastest with a different driver. **"It's unique, I never thought it could happen. Jan and I were motivated to win, we made no secret of that. It must be acknowledged that there are a lot of talented drivers from Europe and also guys from the Czech championship. However, we drove almost flawlessly and on Sunday we were able to count on our lead,"** admitted experienced co-driver Jiří Hovorka.

The second crew in the overall standings, Irish duo Jon Armstrong and Shane Byrne in a Ford Fiesta Rally MkII2 from the M-Sport Ford World Rally Team, were also satisfied. **"It was a great rally, amazing fans, absolutely fantastic. Finishing second here is like a victory for me. We enjoyed the weekend to the fullest, but it must be said that it was challenging. For example, Bunč, the transition from dark sections, then from asphalt to gravel. We humbly accept the podium,"** said the winner of both passes through the dreaded Bunč section.

The bronze medal also went to a foreign team, the Italian mixed crew of Andrea Mabellini and Virginia Lenzi. **"To exaggerate a little, even as a baby in a pram, I admired Honza, who used**

to win here. There are a lot of fans here, the race is fast, and I am very happy with our result. To be just a few seconds behind #barummaster... We have to be proud," said 26-year-old Mabellini, who originally nicknamed Jan Kopecký over the weekend.

Similarly, Mabellini's co-driver also praised the winner of the 54th race. "The dream has come true, we are standing on the podium next to someone like Jan. We are really enjoying it," concluded Lenzi.

For more information, visit [www.czechrally.com](http://www.czechrally.com) and don't forget to follow Barum rally on the official Facebook, Instagram and X accounts, and in other press releases.

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Jakub KUDLÁČ, Roman ORDELT  
Press Office  
Barum Czech Rally Zlín

