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## A win for ŠKODA in the far north, but a simple part takes spark out of Ben Hunt's chances



Photography credit to Alex McDonald Bush

- Hunt fastest on SS1 but noted loss of power shortly afterward
- A failed spark plug was identified, car was repaired and drove fine in later stages

**ŠKODA New Zealand, 5 July 2022**, The Rally of the Far North couldn't have started better for Ben Hunt and Co-Driver, Tony Rawstorn in the ŠKODA New Zealand supported FABIA R5. The pair were fastest in the first stage of the rally, topping the time sheets 2.9 seconds over Supercar ace and talented rally driver, Shane van Gisbergen.



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But the car started to feel flat in SS2 and by SS3 had developed a misfire and Hunt decided to stop the car for fear of damaging the engine. The ŠKODA New Zealand rally team identified a damaged sparkplug and once replaced the car returned and drove fine, but Hunt wasn't able to record times for stages 3 or 4.

"I'm gutted we couldn't have driven through it but stopping ultimately was the right call. Had it been a championship event, I might have kept going, the car could still drive OK under low load, but it wasn't worth the risk for a club event."

"ŠKODA do specify a certain Special Stage mileage for the plugs, we were due to replace these at the end of this rally, but obviously this one didn't want to hang in there. A bunch of reasons could contribute to that, fuel, driving style and conditions so we'll play it safe and replace the plugs each rally going forward." Said Hunt.

The team have a few cautionary checks to make but are confident the car will be firing on all cylinders again for the Rally of Napier in a few weeks' time and the Rally of New Zealand in September. And there's reassurance in the product support they receive from ŠKODA directly. Being a factory-built car for the global rally market, the ŠKODA FABIA R5 engine actually comes with a full 3000km motorsport warranty, clients around the world can compete knowing the quality of the engine is fit for the most challenging conditions and backed 100% by ŠKODA.

Despite Hunt returning in SS5 and taking some late stage wins, Shane van Gisbergen and Co Driver Glen Weston took victory in the Race Torque Engineering ŠKODA FABIA R5 out of Australia.

"I would've loved to go toe to toe with Shane (van Gisbergen) over the full duration of rally, he's a fantastic driver and also contesting the ŠKODA FABIA R5, I think he was enjoying the competition too. That plug issue aside, the car was feeling quick, it was a really enjoyable rally and cool to benchmark our performance against Shane who was pushing hard every stage. Great to see another ŠKODA FABIA R5 take the rally victory though, congrats to SVG on the win!" Said Hunt.

**Further information:**

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