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# Another podium for Ben Hunt and ŠKODA New Zealand at Whangārei



Photography credit to Geoff Ridder

- › Ben Hunt and Tony Rawstorn finishes second overall in the ŠKODA FABIA R5 rally car.
- › Despite a day one error and a puncture on day two, he made the time back to finish in second, 1:16 ahead of Ari Pettigrew in third.
- › Fast, off camber roads of Whangārei suit Hunt's smooth driving style.



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**ŠKODA New Zealand, 16 May 2022.** It's been yet another outstanding performance for Ben Hunt in his ŠKODA New Zealand backed FABIA R5 rally car, having placed second overall at the fast and flowing Rally of Whangārei this weekend.

Whangārei is known in rally circles around the world as having some of the best gravel stages on earth, with an exhilarating mix of fine gravel and fast and flowing, off camber corners. A combination well suited to Hunt's driving style and the ŠKODA FABIA R5.

"I had a lot of fun! The roads really allow me to carry plenty of speed through corners which suits my technique. I was still sweeping a bit of loose gravel as second car on the road behind Hayden (Paddon) which naturally makes it trickier on turn in, but the ŠKODA FABIA R5 was great, I could still keep the car tight in corners."

"Compared to my previous car the differences are huge. The ŠKODA FABIA R5 feels like a nippy little shopping trolley compared to the long wheelbase I used to drive! It is a learning curve adapting to it, but I really learned a lot with the car this rally" Hunt said.

Ben and co-driver Tony Rawstorn were consistently quick in the stage times and see-saw battle for second began between Hunt and Josh Marston in his Holden Barina AP4 car, but Hunt overshot a junction on stage seven, the mistake costing 13 seconds. Hunt attacked the rest of the stage to finish in eighth.

"Mistakes are going to happen, but we were still second overall, and Tony and I knew we could build up our margin again. It was heads down at that point, Tony kept letting me know when I could be going faster, and I gained a lot of confidence in the car." Hunt said.

Even a puncture on Day 1 couldn't stop Ben's charge and consistency, his precision and smooth driving style was evident and saw the ŠKODA FABIA R5 finishing most stages in the top 3 and establishing an excellent overall time for second.

The second rally in the New Zealand Rally Championship has enabled Ben to establish a better understanding of the vehicle and relay that to his team to optimise set up.

"The way the turbo blow-off valve bleeds off boost is quite different to what I'm used to, so we'll look into that, I think we can adapt that to better compliment my driving and that could help a lot for the future. As I get settled with the car, we can now see where those little improvements can be made." Said Hunt.

ŠKODA New Zealand are delighted with another outstanding podium finish in just the second outing for the car.



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“Yet again Ben Hunt and Tony Rawstorn have really blown us away with a storming performance so early in the partnership. We’re very proud to be involved in Motorsport in New Zealand and for the ŠKODA brand to be at the skinny end of a very competitive category” said General Manager of ŠKODA New Zealand, Rodney Gillard.

“The dynamic capabilities of the ŠKODA FABIA R5 rally car demonstrated on rally stages in all corners of the world filters down to road car development too, and we’re confident the nimble characteristics of the new FABIA we release this year will present a fantastic driving experience.”

## Further information:

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More photographs available [here](#).  
Photography credit to Geoff Ridder

## ŠKODA AUTO

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- › aims to be one of the five best-selling brands in Europe by 2030 with an attractive line-up in the entry-level segments and additional e-models.
- › is emerging as the leading European brand in India, Russia and North Africa.
- › currently offers its customers ten passenger-car series: the FABIA, RAPID, SCALA, OCTAVIA and SUPERB as well as the KAMIQ, KAROQ, KODIAQ, ENYAQ iV and KUSHAQ.
- › delivered over 870,000 vehicles to customers around the world in 2021.
- › has been a member of the Volkswagen Group for 30 years. The Volkswagen Group is one of the most successful vehicle manufacturers in the world.
- › independently manufactures and develops not only vehicles but also components such as engines and transmissions in association with the Group.
- › operates at three sites in the Czech Republic; manufactures in China, Slovakia and India primarily through Group partnerships.
- › employs more than 43,000 people globally and is active in over 100 markets.