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# ŠKODA New Zealand Rally Team take their first rally win in Hawke's Bay

Photography credit to Alex McDonald Bush



- Hunt won two stages and was consistently near the front to secure ŠKODA New Zealand Rally Team's first event win.
- Hunt relied on the FABIA R5's handling capabilities to carry speed and finish 42 seconds ahead, despite a minor throttle issue.

ŠKODA New Zealand, 25 July 2022, The ŠKODA New Zealand Rally Team have taken their first event win in the 2022 New Zealand Rally Championship at the weekend's rally of Hawke's Bay.

It was a hard-fought rally the ŠKODA FABIA R5 piloted by Ben Hunt and Co-driver Tony Rawstorn proved consistently quick throughout the eight stages.



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The rally started conservatively for Hunt as he identified a throttle issue in the earlier stages, an issue he would need to drive around for the whole rally.

“Right out of the gate we formed a niggly throttle issue and the throttle body wasn't opening exactly as it should. It put us on the back foot, and we needed to change our driving / co-driving style to mitigate that, but thankfully it was a fast-flowing rally and I could really focus on keeping my lines clean and carrying speed through the corners. Despite the throttle issue, I probably learned more in this rally about the dynamic capabilities of the ŠKODA FABIA R5, the excellent handling characteristics really helped me in this rally”

Hunt's slow start gave two-time Supercar Champion Shane van Gisbergen, also driving a ŠKODA FABIA R5, opportunity to push ahead, winning the first three stages, but Hunt and Rawstorn quickly found a rhythm and tightened the gap on SS2 and SS3.

Van Gisbergen slid off the road in stage four allowing Hunt to capitalise, but a very close pack consisting of drivers Raana Horan, Ari Pettigrew, Robbie Stokes and Matt Summerfield, were all charging hard keeping the time sheets very close.

“I think we were all enjoying this rally and there was great competition. It's a shame Shane came unstuck this rally, we were looking forward to really going toe-to-toe with him, but it was a really closely fought rally which was great. The first rule of rallying is 'to finish first, first you have to finish' and that was very true for team ŠKODA New Zealand at Hawke's Bay. We kept it consistent all day to take the overall win. A great result!

The win is validation of a lot of work from Hunt and the rest of the team who have adapted to a radically different car this season. ŠKODA New Zealand General Manager, Rodney Gillard could not be more pleased with the result.

“The win at Hawke's Bay really is testament to just how great the ŠKODA FABIA R5 rally car and, of course Ben, Tony and the whole team are and it is very much a well-deserved win. We're a passionate bunch at ŠKODA New Zealand, so we're all very proud of the team's first win in the New Zealand Rally Championship so early in this partnership. May it be the first of many more wins for the FABIA R5.”

The win is also a great start to ŠKODA New Zealand's launch phase of the new FABIA MONTE CARLO which, celebrating ŠKODA's long heritage in motorsport, is named after the legendary Monte Carlo rally event.

**Further information:**

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