

FIA European Rally Championship 2018: Round 7 of 8  
PZM Rally Poland: Leg two report, 23 September

## GRYAZIN IN POLE POSITION FOR CAREER LIFT-OFF WITH SENSATIONAL ERC VICTORY

- \*Youngster claims overall and FIA ERC Junior Under 28 honours
- \*Average age of top five just 23 as youth shines in Poland
- \*Aged 19, Sesks shines with Pirelli-backed FIA ERC Junior Under 27 title\*
- \*Lukyanuk's overall FIA ERC crown\* completes memorable weekend

Nikolay Gryazin secured his second career FIA European Rally Championship victory on PZM Rally Poland, fending off Jari Huttunen and strengthening his FIA ERC Junior Under 28 title challenge.

Co-driven by Yaroslav Fedorov in a Sports Racing Technologies ŠKODA Fabia R5, the Pirelli-equipped Gryazin and ERC Junior Under 27 graduate Huttunen were locked in an epic tussle throughout leg two, and with no championship aspirations to worry about, the young Finn went flat out to catch the rally leader.

Huttunen won all three afternoon stages, unleashing the shackles on his Hyundai i20 R5. A 10s time penalty for late check-in to SS14 undid his progress but failed to dampen his determination, driving on the ragged edge and finishing with a rear-left puncture, broken bumper and spoiler from his final push.

Though he won the rally-closing Baranowo test by 4.6s, Huttunen fell short of victory, Gryazin securing top spot by 8.3s, with Huttunen settling for second.

Young stars in R5 cars dominated the top positions, with Chris Ingram scoring his first overall ERC podium in third. He escaped the clutches of ERC Junior U28 rival Fabian Kreim over the course of leg two for second in class, the Toksport WRT and ŠKODA AUTO Deutschland pilots separated by 17.3s at the finish. Though unable to challenge Ingram, Kreim still secured an ERC Junior U28 podium and fourth overall.

ERC Junior U28 debutant Miko Marczyk held off a late challenge from Polish championship rival Łukasz Habaj to score a sensational top-five finish for ŠKODA Polska Motorsport. The prodigious young talent has only two years' rallying experience and had covered less than 200 competitive kilometres on gravel before this weekend, yet resisted pressure from both sixth placed Habaj and Grzegorz Grzyb in seventh with Grzyb taking the Polish title for the second time in his career.

ACCR Czech Team's Filip Mareš successfully pulled away from and then held fellow ERC Junior U28 competitor Tomasz Kasperczyk at bay for eighth overall and fifth in ERC Junior U28. It was a strong result for Mareš, taking part in his first gravel rally in an R5-specification car. Despite a trip through a garden on Saturday morning, road sweeping today as first on the road and even rolling his car over this afternoon, Norbert Herczig brought his MOL Racing Team Fabia home P10.

Mārtiņš Sesks took the FIA ERC Junior Under 27 title spoils\* despite crashing out of the Pirelli-supported category for a second day. Tom Kristensson gave the ADAC Opel Rallye Junior Team double cause for celebration with the class win ahead of Rally Team Spain's Efrén Larena. Marcin Słobodzian won ERC2 for Subaru Rally Team Poland.

### Leg two recap: Russian rockets clinch Polish silverware

As dawn broke over Mikołajki and Alexey Lukyanuk celebrated his new status as ERC champion\* from the sidelines, ERC crews headed to Pozezdrze, where the ERC Juniors were quickest to wake up and get to

work. Tiger Energy Drink Rally Team Tomasz Kasperczyk used his home advantage to great effect straight out of the blocks, taking 4.2s out of Filip Mareš to reclaim fourth in ERC Junior U28 and eighth overall.

Admitting he'd been too cautious, Autoklub of Czech Republic-backed Mareš responded immediately on Gołdap, regaining his place from Kasperczyk, which he held until the finish. Out front, ERC Junior U28 and rally leader Gryazin had dropped nearly three seconds to Huttunen on the first stage, only to take it all back and then some more through Gołdap, making clear he wasn't surrendering his lead without a fight.

Gołdap had offered a welcome reprieve from the narrow tracks that featured heavily throughout PZM Rally Poland, its wide open roads a much more forgiving setting. Ingram took a mammoth 9.4s out of ERC Junior U28 rival Kreim despite plenty of sideways moments, though the roads didn't help Ingram's Toksport WRT team-mate Orhan Avcioglu, who stalled twice at a junction.

The ERC field passed through Baranowo without much fuss, though Grzyb did run wide only two corners into the test. Habaj capitalised, whittling down his deficit for sixth place to only 0.2s, while Marczyk seized his opportunity to leave his more experienced countrymen behind and build a gap for fifth. Szymon Ruta was not so fortunate, retiring from P13 at midday service with a technical issue.

Attention switched back to the lead battle after service. Huttunen had won SS10, with Gryazin responding in the following two tests, though his resistance began to falter thereafter. With no allocation of fresh tyres remaining, Gryazin struggled to match Huttunen on Pozezdrze, dropping 4.1s and focussing his efforts on securing a vital maximum scored for his ERC Junior U28 title campaign instead.

Huttunen was pushing hard to put Gryazin under pressure, taking a tyre off his Hyundai's rear-left rim on the very first corner of Pozezdrze. That first corner contact decided the rally in an unexpected manner.

Fixing the damage he'd picked up by the roadside and setting off to the next stage, Huttunen rocked up at the Gołdap time control one minute late, incurring a 10-second penalty. "Damn it!" exclaimed a frustrated Huttunen at the Gołdap stage end, and for good reason – it had undone all the ERC Junior U27 graduate's hard work, having gained 10.1s across SS13 and SS14.

As Gryazin focused on bringing his Fabia home in one piece, Huttunen put everything on the line through Baranowo in a last-ditch effort to take victory. Flying through the stage, Huttunen pushed his i20 to its limits, keeping his foot to the floor where others lifted or used their brakes. He arrived at the finish line with a car sporting rear bodywork damage and a rear left puncture, visible evidence of his monumental final push. It was not enough though, Gryazin arriving moments later only 4.6s slower, wrapping up a successful weekend for the ERC's Russian contingent with a new ERC champion\* crowned in Alexey Lukyanuk and a star of the future scoring his first outright win of 2018.

### **ERC Junior U28: Title battle goes down to the wire as Gryazin wins**

Nikolay Gryazin's FIA ERC Junior Under 28 victory on PZM Rally Poland has set up a sensational showdown on the Latvia finale, with rivals Chris Ingram and Fabian Kreim completing the podium. While he successfully fended off Jari Huttunen for overall victory, Gryazin had openly paid more attention to beating Ingram and Kreim to class honours, safely navigating his Sports Racing Technologies-prepared ŠKODA Fabia R5 to the finish despite nursing worn tyres. ŠKODA AUTO Deutschland driver Kreim had entered this weekend as championship leader but found himself on the back foot, edged out by fellow Fabia runner Ingram. Toksport WRT's young charger steadily pulled away over the course of leg two's six stages, scooping an overall podium as a bonus with his vital second place in ERC Junior U28. Kreim settled for third, 17.3s behind Ingram and 43.8s clear of a fantastic debut ERC performance by Miko Marczyk. The ŠKODA Polska Motorsport driver had completed less than 200 kilometres of competitive

stages on gravel before this event yet still scored fourth in ERC Junior Under 28, which earned him an overall top five finish. Filip Mareš (ACCR Czech Team) had a slow start to leg two, falling behind Tomasz Kasperczyk (Tiger Energy Drink Rally Team) on SS10 but quickly regaining fifth on the following stage, slowly building his advantage to finish 16.9s ahead of sixth placed Kasperczyk. PEUGEOT Rally Academy's young charge Laurent Pellier returned under Rally2 rules this morning following his retirement on leg one, having damaged his radiator when colliding with a hay bale. There were no such dramas on leg two, bringing his PEUGEOT 208 T16 home seventh. Gryazin's win has blown the ERC Under 28 title race wide open with only one championship round remaining, next month's Rally Liepāja.

### ERC Junior U27: Kristensson scores maiden win, Sesks secures title\*

Tom Kristensson capped a perfect day for ADAC Opel Rallye Junior Team in FIA ERC Junior Under 27, scoring his first win in the Pirelli-supported category as team-mate Mārtiņš Sesks, 19, secured the championship title\*. Sesks, an ERC Junior Experience graduate, had retired on Saturday after rolling his Opel ADAM R2 but returned for leg two, only to crash out again on the morning pass of Baranowo. Despite his no-score, he is now mathematically out of reach, ensuring a sensational ERC Junior U27 title on his first full year in the category. Meanwhile, Kristensson was busy fending off the advances of Efrén Llarena, who won every stage of leg two after SS10 and SS11 winner Sesks had retired. Though Llarena gained 7.1s over the course of six stages, he had started the day too far adrift of Kristensson, finishing 13.1s in arrears to clinch second place. A day of firsts was continued by Saintéloc Junior Team's young Finn, Miika Hokkanen. Though unable to match Kristensson and Llarena's pace, his measured drive ensured he finished third, his maiden ERC Junior U27 podium. Mattia Vita is quickly becoming the most consistent driver in ERC Junior U27, clinching a third consecutive fourth place. His rally had not been without dramas, though, spinning on the second pass of Goldap but continuing without damage. ERC Ladies' Trophy victor Catie Munnings sealed her third top-five finish this year in the second Saintéloc-prepared PEUGEOT 208 R2, matching her results from Azores Airlines Rallye and Rally di Roma Capitale earlier this season. Dominik Brož had soldiered on following his Friday retirement with an electrical issue and his challenging weekend continued in a similar vein. He checked out three minutes late from morning service due to a late damper switch – fitting a set of gravel dampers loaned to him by Llarena's Rally Team Spain – and then crashed on the same stage as Sesks, damaging his radiator and forcing him to retire on the spot.

### The party starts now: Lukyanuk, Arnautov FIA ERC champions for 2018\*

Alexey Lukyanuk and Alexey Arnautov cannot be caught in the battle to win the 2018 FIA European Rally Championship and, subject to confirmation of the final results, will be crowned champions in due course. The Russian Performance Motorsport pair have been on top form for much of the season in their Pirelli-shod, H-Racing-run Ford Fiesta R5. Despite crashing out of PZM Rally Poland on leg one, their three wins and one second place, coupled with the non-entry in Poland of title rivals Bruno and Hugo Magalhães due to budgetary constraints, means Lukyanuk and Arnautov are the first Russian ERC champions\*. "It feels a bit strange but I'm happy for the team and for the sponsors," said Lukyanuk. "It's a really big step for us. We tried to be on the limit all the time but we don't have enough practice, enough testing and sometimes we lose control. Still, we have good pace, good feeling, good mood and it's a good end of the season. "I'm sorry for Bruno's [Magalhães] withdrawal so early but anyway the competition is very strong. It was a tough year for us but the party starts now." Of his accident on Saturday morning, Lukyanuk said: "I think I overworked a bit with the car and I put it sideways before the jump, I had to straighten a bit before but, unfortunately, the speed was okay but the line was not perfect so we hit a tree after landing. Not a good moment for us but that was really unpredictable." Click [here](#) for a full Q&A with Lukyanuk, while ERC All Access on Eurosport on Tuesday will take a closer look behind the scenes of Lukyanuk's winning weekend. Check local listings for more details.

*\*Subject to confirmation of the results by the FIA*

**LEG ONE REPORT:** Click [here](#) for leg one report

**PROVISIONAL TOP 10 POSITIONS (after 15 stages, 214.92 kilometres)**

- 1 Nikolay Gryazin (LVA)/Yaroslav Fedorov (RUS) ŠKODA Fabia R5 +1h53m43.5s
- 2 Jari Huttunen (FIN)/Antti Linnaketo (FIN) Hyundai i20 R5 +8.3
- 3 Chris Ingram (GBR)/Ross Whittock (GBR) ŠKODA Fabia R5 +2m25.9s
- 4 Fabian Kreim (DEU)/Frank Christian (DEU) ŠKODA Fabia R5 +1m58.2s +2m43.2s
- 5 Miko Marczyk (POL)/Szymon Gospodaczyk (POL) ŠKODA Fabia R5 +3m27.0s
- 6 Łukasz Habaj (POL)/Daniel Dymurski (POL) ŠKODA Fabia R5 +3m33.6s
- 7 Grzegorz Grzyb (POL)/Jakub Wróbel (POL) ŠKODA Fabia R5 +3m38.4s
- 8 Filip Mareš (CZE)/Jan Hloušek (CZE) ŠKODA Fabia R5 +5m33.7s
- 9 Tomasz Kasperczyk (POL)/Damian Syty (POL) Ford Fiesta R5 +5m50.6s
- 10 Norbert Herczig (HUN)/Ramón Ferencz (HUN) ŠKODA Fabia R5 +6m10.2s

**FIA ERC2:** Marcin Słobodzian (POL)/Grzegorz Dachowski (POL) Subaru Impreza STI

**FIA ERC3:** Tom Kristensson (SWE)/Henrik Appelskog (SWE) Opel ADAM R2

**FIA ERC Junior Under 28:** Nikolay Gryazin (RUS)/Yaroslav Fedorov (RUS) ŠKODA Fabia R5

**FIA ERC Junior Under 27:** Tom Kristensson (SWE)/Henrik Appelskog (SWE) Opel ADAM R2

**ERC Ladies' Trophy:** Catie Munnings (GBR) PEUGEOT 208 R2

Click [here](#) full results, stage classifications, retirements and other data.

**RALLY LEADERS**

**SS1:** Lukyanuk/Arnautov

**SS2-15:** Gryazin/Fedorov

**STAGE WINNERS**

**Leg one (Friday 21 September and Saturday 22 September, 117.02 kilometres):**

**SS1:** Mikołajki Arena (2.50kms):

ERC1	ERC2	ERC3	ERC Junior U28	ERC Junior U27
Lukyanuk	Słobodzian	Llarena	Pieniżek	Llarena

**SS2:** Paprotki 1 (15.22kms):

Gryazin	Słobodzian	Sesks	Gryazin	Sesks
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**SS3:** Świętajno 1 (19.60kms):

Gryazin	Słobodzian	Kristensson	Gryazin	Kristensson
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**SS4:** Stare Juchy 1 (13.31kms):

Gryazin	Słobodzian	Kristensson	Gryazin	Kristensson
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**SS5:** Mikołajki MAX 1 (9.13kms):

Gryazin/Huttunen	Słobodzian	Llarena	Gryazin	Llarena
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**SS6:** Paprotki 2 (15.22kms):

Gryazin	Słobodzian	Kristensson	Gryazin	Kristensson
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**SS7:** Świętajno 2 (19.60kms):

Gryazin	Słobodzian	Kristensson	Gryazin	Kristensson
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**SS8:** Stare Juchy 2 (13.31kms):

Huttunen	Słobodzian	Llarena	Gryazin	Llarena
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**SS9:** Mikołajki MAX 2 (9.13kms):

Huttunen	Słobodzian	Llarena	Gryazin	Llarena
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**Leg two (Sunday 23 September, 97.90 kilometres):**

**SS10:** Pozezdrze 1 (13.45kms):



Huttunen	Słobodzian	Sesks	Gryazin	Sesks
<b>SS11: Gołdap 1 (19.90kms):</b>				
Gryazin	Słobodzian	Sesks	Gryazin	Sesks
<b>SS12: Baranowo 1 (15.60kms):</b>				
Gryazin	Słobodzian	Llarena	Gryazin	Llarena
<b>SS13: Pozezdrze 2 (13.45kms):</b>				
Huttunen	Słobodzian	Llarena	Gryazin	Llarena
<b>SS14: Gołdap 2 (19.90kms):</b>				
Huttunen	Słobodzian	Llarena	Gryazin	Llarena
<b>SS15: Baranowo 2 (15.60kms):</b>				
Huttunen	Słobodzian	Llarena	Gryazin	Llarena

## KEY STATISTICS

**ERC rally wins in 2018:** Lukyanuk 3, Galatariotis, Gryazin, Kopecký and Magalhães 1

**ERC stage wins in 2018:** Lukyanuk 30; Gryazin 12; Magalhães 8; Al-Attiyah 7 and Huttunen 7; Basso, Campedelli, Jakeš and Nordgren 3; Botka, Herczig and Kreim 2; Ählin, Avcioglu, Brynildsen, Ingram, Mareš, Moura, Pellier, Ptaszek and Tsouloftas 1

**CHAMPIONSHIP POSITIONS** Click here for the provisional positions after 7/8.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

**Rally Liepāja, 12-14 October:** The brainchild of rally driver turned promoter Raimonds Strokšs and first run to great acclaim in 2013, Rally Liepāja was originally a winter event but switched to the autumn for 2016. The new date effectively made for an all-new rally as crews adjusted to gravel stages free of snow and ice. Although the time of year had changed, the high-speed stages in western Latvia continued to thrill drivers and spectators alike. And with its new format now firmly established, this forward-thinking rally serves as a fitting season finale with Liepāja proving to be a popular destination for fans and competitors.

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