



ŠKODA
SIMPLY CLEVER

PRESS RELEASE

Page 1 of 3

70 years ago today: ŠKODA's only start in the famous 24 Hours of Le Mans

- › Specially developed ŠKODA Sport had a lightweight aluminium body and was based on the successful series-produced 1101/1102 'Tudor' model
- › Václav Bobek and Jaroslav Netušil fought for first place in its class until a small defect caused the car to drop out after 13 hours of racing
- › Return of the ŠKODA Sport to the 'Circuit des 24 Heures' planned for next year: Le Mans Classic 2020 has been postponed due to coronavirus pandemic

Mladá Boleslav, 24 June 2020 – In 1950, ŠKODA AUTO experienced a very special moment in its history: ŠKODA's only appearance at the world-famous 24 Hours of Le Mans race.

After the Second World War, ŠKODA launched a new model series: The 1101/1102 'Tudor' featured a 1,089cc four-cylinder engine and soon enjoyed great popularity in many European countries, as well as markets overseas. The vehicles, which boasted a robust and modern design for their time, proved their outstanding reliability time and again on rally tracks and long-distance circuit races. In 1948, for example, they won all four categories of the 2,649-kilometre Raid Polski, in which ŠKODA was represented with its own cars. At the South American Rally Montevideo – Melo – Montevideo, which crossed adventurous terrain, they took first and second place.

But the 'Tudor' – whose name is derived from the English 'two-door' – also demonstrated its capabilities on traditional circuits. At the 24-hour race in Spa-Francorchamps, Belgium, the three four-seaters with closed bodywork used by ŠKODA each covered 1,972 kilometres and finished the long-distance challenge in the first three places in their cubic-capacity class. To underline this success, the Czech trio made pit stops together and crossed the finish line in formation. This gave them the confidence to make even more ambitious plans.

For the 1949 season, the Czech car manufacturer developed a special racing variant based on the 'Tudor': the ŠKODA Sport. The open two-seater had a wheelbase shortened by 400 millimetres and a particularly flat pontoon body made of light aluminium. It made its debut at the Czechoslovakian Grand Prix held in Brno. However, the brand had its sights set on another goal – Le Mans, the already world-famous 24-hour race in the French department of Sarthe. On 24 June 1950, a Saturday, the ŠKODA factory team finally made it: The enhanced version of the 1101 Sport was positioned diagonally in front of the pit wall of the 13.65km 'Circuit des 24 Heures', ready for the Le Mans start at 16.00 hrs, which was still common at that time – the drivers lined up on the opposite side of the track ready to sprint to their racing cars at the signal, jump in, start the engine and speed off. It was not until 1970 that this practice was abolished for safety reasons.

Václav Bobek and Jaroslav Netušil were behind the wheel for ŠKODA. Their 600-kilogram light contest vehicle had a wheelbase that was extended to 2,150 millimetres specifically for Le Mans, which improved directional stability, and sickle-shaped air vents were installed next to the main headlights. These directed cooling air to the drum brakes of the front wheels. Two additional headlights brought light into the dark of the night hours. The rest of the technology was largely based on the standard 'Tudor', such as the 12-volt electrical system from PAL and the cross-ply tyres from Barum. The unchanged 1,089cc, water-cooled four-cylinder engine under the low bonnet



ŠKODA
SIMPLY CLEVER

PRESS RELEASE

Page 2 of 3

had, among other things, a slightly higher compression ratio of 8.6:1 and a Solex 40 UAIP carburettor. This enabled it to deliver 50 hp (37 kW) at 5,200 rpm, an increase of more than 50 per cent over the 32 hp production engine. With the usual racing fuel of the time – a mixture of petrol, ethanol and acetone – the ŠKODA Sport reached a top speed of 140 km/h with a consumption of only twelve litres per 100 kilometres. Fully fuelled and equipped with the tools and spare parts that could only be used during a repair stop, it had an operating weight of 700 kilograms.

Jaroslav Netušil and Václav Bobek, both Le Mans débutants, gave it their all. With an average speed of 126 km/h, they soon fought their way up to second place in the up to 1,100cc class in the field of 60 contenders in the eleven-car class. In the performance coefficient special classification, which was still widespread at the time, the duo had meanwhile moved up to fifth place. However, at dawn, after 13 hard hours on the fast track, the car with the number 44 rolled out on its 115th lap. A technical defect knocked the ŠKODA Sport out of the race: The locking element of a crankpin had snapped, and it was not possible to repair it on site.

For ŠKODA this was the only Le Mans race in the company's history. In the years that followed, the brand's special models were no longer able to participate in the French 24-hour race due to the difficult political situation.

The original ŠKODA Sport, which today belongs to a private Czech collection and has been fully restored, should have been back on the track in front of crowds of spectators at the beginning of July to mark the 70th anniversary of its Le Mans debut and ŠKODA's 125th anniversary. However, the Le Mans Classic – held biennially since 2002 for historic racing cars that participated in the endurance classic before 1979 – had to be postponed to 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

For further information, please contact:

Vítězslav Kodym

Communications Classic

T +420 326 811 784

vitezslav.kodym@skoda-auto.cz



ŠKODA
SIMPLY CLEVER

PRESS RELEASE

Page 3 of 3

Media images:



70 years ago today: ŠKODA's only start in the famous 24 Hours of Le Mans

At the 18th run of the 24 hours of Le Mans (24 – 25 June 1950), the ŠKODA Sport factory team Václav Bobek and Jaroslav Netušil, briefly held second place in the cubic capacity class up to 1,100cc. In the special performance efficiency classification, the duo took fifth place out of a total of 60 cars that started.

[Download](#)

Source: ŠKODA AUTO



70 years ago today: ŠKODA's only start in the famous 24 Hours of Le Mans

The untimely exit came after 13 hours of driving and 115 race laps: The two-seater sports car based on the series-produced 'Tudor' had to pull out due to an engine problem.

[Download](#)

Source: ŠKODA AUTO



70 years ago today: ŠKODA's only start in the famous 24 Hours of Le Mans

The ŠKODA sport on the 13,65 km 'Circuit des 24 Heures', seen from the perspective of the painter Vladimír Bidlo (1925 – 1997)

[Download](#)

Source: ŠKODA AUTO

ŠKODA AUTO

- › is this year celebrating 125 years since the company was founded during the pioneering era of the automobile in 1895, making it one of the longest-established car manufacturers in the world.
- › currently offers its customers nine passenger-car series: the CITIGO, FABIA, RAPID, SCALA, OCTAVIA, KAROQ, KODIAQ, as well as the KAMIQ and the SUPERB.
- › delivered 1.24 million vehicles to customers around the world in 2019.
- › has belonged to Volkswagen Group since 1991. The Volkswagen Group is one of the most successful vehicle manufacturers in the world. In association with the Group, ŠKODA AUTO independently develops and manufactures vehicles, as well as components such as engines and transmissions.
- › operates at three locations in the Czech Republic; manufactures in China, Russia, Slovakia, Algeria and India mainly through Group partnerships, as well as in Ukraine and Kazakhstan with local partners.
- › employs over 42,000 people globally and is active in more than 100 markets.
- › is pressing ahead with the transformation from a traditional car manufacturer to the 'Simply Clever company for the best mobility solutions' as part of the ŠKODA 2025 Strategy.