

PRESS RELEASE

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120 years of ŠKODA Motorsport: Starting signal for the Paris-Berlin route with motorbikes from Laurin & Klement

- › First international race with vehicles from Mladá Boleslav: On 27 June 1901, two motorbikes from Laurin & Klement set off on the route from Paris to Berlin
- › The L&K Type B 'motorised two-wheelers' were powered by an air-cooled 240cm³ single-cylinder four-stroke engine; the standard version had an output of 1.75 hp (1.3 kW) and reached speeds of 40 km/h
- › Immediately after the Czech manufacturer's motorsport debut, an impressive series of victories followed for the motorbikes and cars from Laurin & Klement and ŠKODA

Mladá Boleslav, 28 June 2021 – The history of ŠKODA Motorsport begins on Thursday, 27 June 1901, at 6:58 in the morning. At the so-called Paris-Berlin Marathon, the most challenging road race of its time, the two riders Topf and Podsedníček each started on a Laurin & Klement single-cylinder Type B. Laurin & Klement used the experience they had gained in international racing to quickly rack up numerous victories, including the world championship title in 1905.

In addition to the full selection of images accompanying this press release, a comprehensive collection of articles and features on various topics from [120 years of ŠKODA Motorsport](#) can be found on the [ŠKODA Storyboard](#).

The foundation stone for the Mladá Boleslav-based company was laid at the end of 1895 by the technician Václav Laurin and the visionary Václav Klement. In addition to their lifelong friendship and connection to the region, they were also united by their passion for cycling. In a modest workshop, they began by repairing bicycles, soon expanding their offer to include proprietary bicycles, which they marketed under the brand name SLAVIA. These were made of high-quality materials and were characterised by an attractive price-performance ratio as well as innovative technical ideas.

As early as spring 1899, the company had added a petrol auxiliary motor of its own design to the wide range of bicycles and tricycles and finally presented two technologically advanced L&K motorbike models in Prague on 18 November 1899. They had a four-stroke single-cylinder engine mounted in the lower part of the frame, where it was better protected from damage. Deliberately shifting the centre of gravity improved the handling of the motorbike. At that time there was no clutch or gearbox; the engine was connected to the driven rear wheel by a long leather belt. To start the engine, the machine had to be pushed. Then, the rider jumped into the saddle and placed their feet on the pedals. To tackle steep climbs, they could assist the motor by pedalling.

The modern machines from Mladá Boleslav quickly became a success. At the end of 1899, Václav Klement returned from a business trip to Germany with orders for 35 of these motorbikes. Moreover, in the spring of 1900, he was able to arrange the delivery of 150 motorbikes to Great Britain. The superior quality of the models from Mladá Boleslav compared to strong

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international competitors is also documented in numerous awards, such as first prizes in the respective categories at exhibitions in Frankfurt am Main (1900) and Vienna and Hamburg (1901).

The manufacturer's successful engagement in motorsport also began 120 years ago. The brand from Mladá Boleslav made its international racing debut on the 1,196-kilometre route Paris – Aachen, Aachen – Hanover, Hanover – Berlin that was completed in three stages. In addition to 110 cars, which competed in three different categories depending on their weight (up to 400 kg, 400 to 650 kg, over 650 kg), ten motorbikes and three-wheelers also raced in a combined category. The cars in the main category set off at two-minute intervals from half-past three in the morning on Monday, 27 June 1901. The motorbikes from Laurin & Klement, which were also offered on some markets under the name 'Republic', were represented in Paris with two type B machines: At 6:58, racer number 168 set off, followed two minutes later by Narcis Podsedníček.

Narcis Podsedníček, who was born in 1866 in Mysločovice, Moravia, joined the company as one of the first sales representatives of SLAVIA bicycles in Holešov as early as 1897. At the age of 33, 'Podseda', as he was known to friends and acquaintances, started working for Laurin & Klement on 3 February 1900. Thanks to his dedication and foresight, he quickly rose to the position of senior foreman for bicycle and motorbike production. His experience as a technician and rider made him the ideal choice for the Paris to Berlin competition.

The most demanding race of its time put both the technology and the riders' skills to the test, firstly due to its length and secondly because of the road surface, as the route included unpaved roads and cobblestones. The riders, who were left to their own devices, had to deal with punctures caused by countless nails, metal and glass shards and abrasive gravel along the way.

Narcis Podsedníček mastered the challenge and was one of the few riders to reach the finish line in Berlin on 29 June 1901. However, as he arrived in the German capital at night and his finish time was not documented correctly, four French tricycles from De Dion – Bouton were ultimately named the winners in the motorbike and tricycle category.

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International motor racing debut of the Mladá Boleslav brand from 27 to 29 June 1901 at the Paris-Berlin race. Riders Topf and Podsedníček (photo) competed on single-cylinder Laurin & Klement Type B motorbikes.

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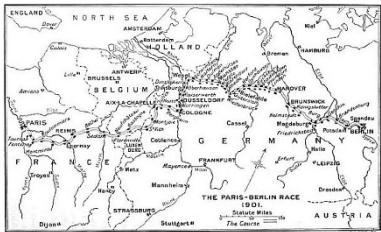
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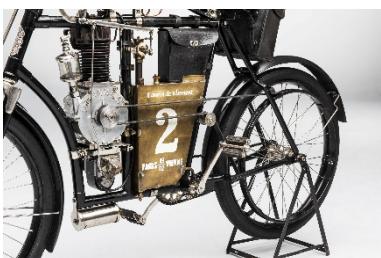
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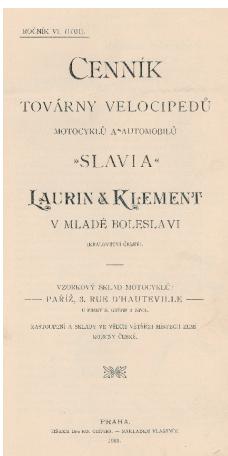


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The L&K Type B 'motorised two-wheelers' were powered by an air-cooled 240cm³ single-cylinder four-stroke engine; the standard version had an output of 1.75 hp (1.3 kW) and reached speeds of 40 km/h (25 mph). The model had neither a clutch nor a gearbox and had to be pushed to start. The rider could assist the engine by pedalling.

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Laurin & Klement motorbikes were also successful in the most demanding markets of Germany (since 1899) and Great Britain (since 1900). The Paris dealership was located at 3, Rue d'Hauteville at the time of the race.

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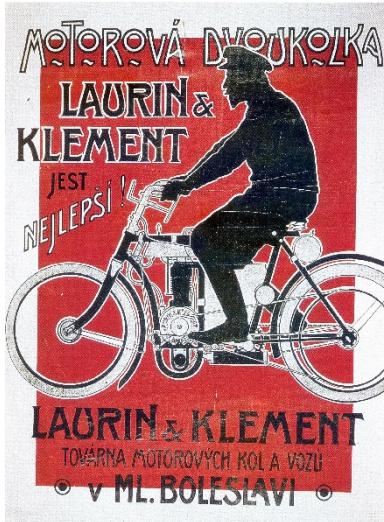
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The characteristic silhouette of Narcis Podsedníček was also used in contemporary advertising.

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Narcis Podsedníček (1886-1932) worked in Mladá Boleslav with several years' break from 1900-1925. Pictured here with his son, Rudolf.

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- › is successfully steering through the new decade with the NEXT LEVEL – ŠKODA STRATEGY 2030.
- › 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 one million vehicles to customers around the world in 2020.
- › 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, Russia, Slovakia and India primarily through Group partnerships, as well as in Ukraine with a local partner.
- › employs more than 43,000 people globally and is active in over 100 markets.