

Laurin & Klement FC from 1908: The first major motor racing successes of automobiles from Mladá Boleslav

- › **The success of Laurin & Klement's motorbikes on the racetrack was confirmed shortly afterwards by the first automobiles from the Mladá Boleslav manufacturer**
- › **From 1908 to 1911, the FCS and FCR left the competition behind in the toughest races of the time**
- › **Laurin & Klement chief engineer Otto Hieronimus set a world speed record on the Brooklands circuit in 1908**

Mladá Boleslav, 14 May 2026 – Laurin & Klement's automobiles were victorious on racetracks and in reliability races even in the early days of the company. These racing successes helped raise the profile of the young brand from Mladá Boleslav. Wherever Laurin & Klement entered its racing cars, they were often the first to cross the finish line. The Laurin & Klement FC made a significant contribution to this success at the beginning of the 20th century.

Laurin & Klement achieved its first motorsport triumphs on motorbikes at the beginning of the 20th century. It quickly became clear from these successes that victories in motorsport boosted business and thus also the development of the up-and-coming company from Mladá Boleslav. For this reason, Václav Laurin and Václav Klement began building a racing car immediately after the premiere of the company's first automobile, the Voiturette A. This strategy proved successful; with an output of 9 hp and a top speed of 45 km/h, L&K's Voiturette B took first, second and fourth place in the famous Semmering race in Austria in 1906.

Laurin & Klement's vehicles held their own against the competition in subsequent races at home and abroad, attracting even more attention to the car manufacturer. The FC model, which was based on the F series of passenger cars, guaranteed success during this period.

Between 1907 and 1909, the designer, racing driver and chief engineer Otto Hieronimus developed 19 vehicles of this type, which differed both in terms of appearance and technology. Depending on the classification, the in-line four-cylinder engines of the L&K FC had displacements between 2.0 and 2.5 litres with varying dimensions for bore and stroke. In all cases, the rear wheels were driven via a three-speed gearbox.

1908 was a particularly successful year for the ambitious automobile manufacturer. In March, it entered several vehicles in different classes in the Zbraslav-Jíloviště hill climb race and secured six first places, five second places and one third place. In Ries near Graz, Laurin & Klement celebrated a double victory in the two-litre class. Otto Hieronimus himself took first

place in his class on the 686-kilometre long-distance drive from St. Petersburg to Moscow, thus proving the outstanding reliability of the vehicles he had designed. The L&K FC also left the competition behind at the demanding Prinz-Heinrich-Fahrt in Germany. Over nine days, the route covered 2,200 kilometres from Berlin via Kiel and Hamburg to Hanover, Cologne and Trier before the participants reached the finish in Frankfurt am Main.

However, this was not enough for Otto Hieronimus; he went on to design the Laurin & Klement FCS, which had an overhead-valve engine and a displacement of 3.5 litres. At the Semmering hill climb in Austria, the brand took the first three places in its class straight away. In 1908, Otto Hieronymus took the wheel at Brooklands in the UK on the world's first test track built exclusively for racing and testing. On the 5.2-kilometre oval course with two banked bends, he reached a speed of 118.72 km/h, setting a new speed record for the FCS vehicle class.

The most powerful and uncompromising variant of the FC was the FCR in 1909. It had a slim body and an arrow-shaped radiator and achieved an output of exactly 100 hp (74 kW) with a displacement of 5.6 litres. The top speed was 140 km/h, which was incredible at the time. The vehicle made its debut at the Semmering, where Hieronimus immediately secured another class victory. He also won the overall classification at the Zbraslav-Jiloviště and Trieste-Opicina hill climbs in 1911.

The successful racing driver Alexander Count Kolowrat-Krakowsky was another personality who had a strong influence on Laurin & Klement's corporate development during this period. The Bohemian nobleman, who grew up in the USA, decided against studying agriculture in Switzerland and instead spent his time in the workshop, tuning up racing cars. "Count Kilowatt", as his friends called him, always came up with unconventional solutions. It was this improvisational skill and wit that enabled him to win the hill climb in Gaillon, France, in 1908.

On 10 October, Count Kolowrat registered for the competition under the alias Doconald, as he did not want his father in America to find out about his racing exploits. However, Kolowrat waited in vain for his Laurin & Klement FC, which was supposed to be delivered by rail in a wooden crate. Giving up early was out of the question, though. So, he decided to put his faith in the Laurin & Klement Type F he had arrived with. By then, the vehicle had clocked up 18,000 kilometres, a considerable mileage at the time.

'Sascha' and a mechanic spent the night preparing his L&K FC for the race; the pair stripped the car of everything that was not absolutely necessary for the competition. They even removed the seats and mounted small wooden boxes without backrests in their place. By optimising the weight of the vehicle, Count Kolowrat had managed to compensate for his car's power deficit. In his class, he beat all seven rivals. This success had one minor drawback for Kolowrat personally, however – the secret he had kept from his father was now history...

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Laurin & Klement FC from 1908

The FC model had a front engine with SV valve control and a 2,438 cm³ displacement. The top speed was up to 90 km/h. The wheelbase was 2,448 mm; the track width was 1,300 mm front and rear. The two rigid axles were suspended by leaf springs. Laurin & Klement produced 19 vehicles of the FC type in total.

Source: Škoda Auto



Laurin & Klement FC from 1908: St. Petersburg – Moscow long-distance drive

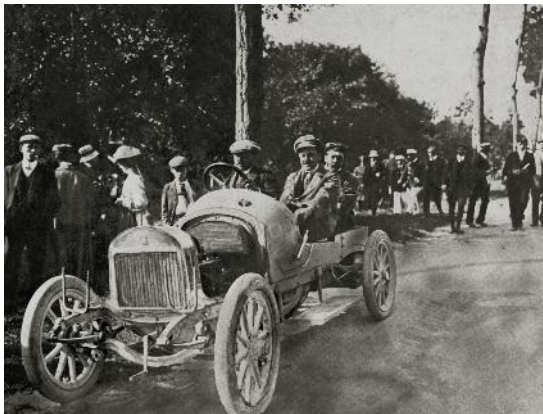
One of the most significant motorsport successes of the fledgling automobile manufacturer was the Laurin & Klement FC's victory in the long-distance drive from St. Petersburg to Moscow in 1908.

Source: Škoda Auto



Laurin & Klement FC from 1908: St. Petersburg – Moscow long-distance drive
Alexander Kolowrat-Krakowsky came from a Bohemian noble family and was an extremely talented racing driver who raised the profile of Laurin & Klement in the highest social circles at that time.

Source: Škoda Auto



Laurin & Klement FC from 1908: The first major motor racing successes of automobiles from Mladá Boleslav

It was improvisational skill and wit that enabled Alexander Kolowrat-Krakowsky to win the hill climb in Gaillon, France, in 1908.

Source: Škoda Auto

Škoda Motorsport

- › Škoda celebrates 125 years of Motorsport since the first efforts in 1901, garnering success in rallies as well as in circuit racing.
- › Highlights include winning the 1981 European Touring Car Championship (ETCC) with the Škoda 130 RS.
- › Since 2009, the Škoda Fabia celebrated numerous successes for the Czech manufacturer on rally stages worldwide.
- › Until 2014, the Škoda Fabia S2000 (2.0 naturally aspirated engine, four-wheel drive) secured 50 international titles and national rally championships. The Škoda Fabia S2000 also helped to win the FIA European Rally Championship (ERC) and the Intercontinental Rally Challenge (IRC) three times each.
- › The successor model Škoda Fabia R5 (1.6 turbo engine, four-wheel drive) entered the scene in 2015. Later renamed to Škoda Fabia Rally2 and followed by the further developed Škoda Fabia Rally2 evo, the model collected nearly 2,000 victories in 68 countries until the end of the 2022 season.
- › During this period, Škoda Motorsport factory drivers Jan Kopecký (CZE), Esapekka Lappi (FIN), Pontus Tidemand (SWE) and Kalle Rovanperä (FIN) won the FIA World Rally Championship's support category WRC2/WRC2 Pro. Škoda Motorsport also took the WRC2/WRC2 Pro Manufacturers' title five times in a row from 2015 to 2019.
- › Beginning with the 2020 season, Škoda Motorsport changed its strategy to supporting private teams. The success story continued: Driving a Škoda Fabia Rally2 evo run by Toksport WRT, Andreas Mikkelsen (NOR) und Emil Lindholm (FIN) became WRC2 Champions in 2021 and 2022. Mikkelsen became WRC2 Champion again in 2023 with team Toksport WRT, when the all-new Škoda Fabia RS Rally2 entered the scene. The Škoda Motorsport supported team Toksport WRT also won the WRC2 Teams' title three times in 2020, 2022 and 2023. In 2025 Toksport WRT took another WRC2 Teams' title and Nikolay Gryazin/Konstantin Aleksandrov of Toksport WRT become WRC2 Challenger drivers' and co-drivers' champions respectively.
- › Škoda Motorsport customer teams have also won titles in the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC), FIA European Rally Championship (ERC), the FIA African Rally Championship (ARC), the FIA North American and Central American Rally Championship (NACAM), the FIA South American Rally Championship (CODASUR) and the FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC).

Škoda Auto

- › is successfully steering through the new decade with the Next Level Škoda Strategy;
- › aims to become one of the top three best-selling brands in Europe by the end of the decade by offering its customers the best of both worlds through a range of attractive BEV, hybrid & ICE products;
- › effectively exploits the potential in important growth markets such as India, Vietnam and the ASEAN region;
- › currently offers customers 12 passenger car model ranges: Fabia, Scala, Octavia, Superb, Kamiq, Karoq, Kodiaq, Elroq, Enyaq, Slavia, Kylaq and Kushaq;
- › delivered more than 1,040,000 vehicles to customers worldwide in 2025;
- › has been part of the Volkswagen Group, one of the world's most successful car manufacturers, for more than 30 years;
- › is part of Brand Group CORE, an organisational merger of the Volkswagen Group's volume brands, with the aim of achieving joint growth and significantly increasing the overall efficiency of all five volume brands;
- › independently develops and produces components such as MEB battery systems, engines and transmissions for other Volkswagen Group brands;
- › operates three production plants in the Czech Republic; has production capacities in Slovakia, Kazakhstan and India, mostly through group partnerships, as well as in Vietnam and Ukraine in cooperation with a local partner;
- › employs around 40,000 people worldwide and is active in almost 100 markets.