

Škoda 180 RS and 200 RS (1974): Rally cars from another league

- › Rally prototypes 180/200 RS established the 'RS' designation for sporty Škoda models
- › Engines generated outputs of up to 163 hp
- › The Škoda 180/200 RS models competed in 1974 and 1975 before being replaced by the renowned 130 RS

Mladá Boleslav, 14 May 2026 – Before the legendary Škoda 130 RS conquered the Czechoslovakian race tracks, the Škoda 180/200 RS coupés represented the Mladá Boleslav-based car manufacturer in rally sport. Škoda still uses the RS (Rally Sport) designation for the sporty variants of its models to this day.

At the beginning of the 1970s, the Mladá Boleslav team realised that engines with a displacement of up to 1,300 cm³ – such as in the Škoda 120 S Rallye – would not hold their own against international competitors in demanding rallies. It was soon decided to develop a rally vehicle with a correspondingly large displacement.

The Škoda 110 R Coupé with an Škoda 720 aluminium engine served as the basis for implementing this ambitious project. It featured modern OHC valve timing and had originally been developed in the second half of the 1960s for the eponymous prototype. The designers also drew on their experience from building the Škoda 120 S Rally; the technology from these two vehicles was to be combined in a new model. The first prototypes were roadworthy as early as 1971 and used the bodies of the Škoda 1000 MB and the Škoda 100 L. For testing purposes, five-speed gearboxes from the Tatra 603-2 racing cars of the time were installed. Jaroslav Bobek and Bořivoj Kořínek took these prototypes to the racetracks, while Oldřich Horsák and Jiří Motal drove them on rally courses.

Lead responsibility for developing the body was borne by designer and driver Jiří Šedivý, who built the Škoda 110 R B5 for the 1973 season. The car's roof was lowered by 7.5 centimetres, and the windscreen was also set lower. Both the roof and bonnet were pressed from 0.7 mm sheet aluminium, and the vehicle weighed 85 kg less overall than the standard version.

During the development phase, however, the designers faced a number of challenges with the project. For example, the engine installed in front of the rear axle proved to be disadvantageous once the Škoda 110 R was being tested on the circuit. The drivers' impression that the car was prone to significant understeering was also confirmed by computer simulations of the centre of gravity shift. Following the final evaluation of the tests, work began in October 1973, and the first car was on the grid just seven months later.

The skeleton of the Škoda 110 R – with the tried and tested lower roof and side panels lowered just above the underbody – formed the basis of the new rally coupé. This is where the safety cage was integrated, which reinforced the structure, increased torsional rigidity and protected the occupants in the event of a collision. Modifications were also made to the front of the car so that a tubular radiator with air outlets could be fitted to the bonnet. In addition, the designers installed a front spoiler, which they scientifically referred to at the time as an “uplift spoiler”.

Riveted to the body, the roof was pressed from light sheet metal; the bonnet was made of the same material. For the engine cover, the developers used fibreglass-reinforced plastic, which allowed the rear section of the coupé to be fitted with ventilation apertures and the characteristic wing to be modelled with a tear-off edge. The widened mudguards were particularly striking, and the wheel arches accommodated wide 7-8" × 13" rally tyres at the front and 7-10" × 13" at the rear on bipartite magnesium rims. Girling disc brakes were used at the front for deceleration, while the standard drum brakes of the Škoda 110 were fitted at the rear. During development, these were also replaced by disc brakes from the British manufacturer Girling on one of the models.

The front axle was based on the counterpart of the Škoda 120 S; the wishbones were lengthened and reinforced for a wider track, and the steering was also adapted. The rear wheels were suspended on triangular wishbones, allowing the camber and toe to be adjusted. The suspension of the Škoda rally car featured traditional coil springs and the custom-made telescopic shock absorbers from Koni Sport could be calibrated.

The Škoda 720 engine made it possible for one engine to be constructed with various displacements – a feature that the designers took full advantage of. The smaller of the four-cylinder engines had a displacement of 1,772 cm³, the larger was 1,997 cm³. Given the identical bore of 87 mm, the difference was due to the different crankshaft strokes of 74.5 and 84 millimetres respectively. The engines had dry-sump lubrication and the model designation was derived from the engine capacity in each case: The car with the smaller engine, which achieved a maximum output of 154 hp at 6,250 rpm with a Weber 45 DCOE 2 double carburettor, was given the designation 180 RS. The car with the two-litre engine, which generated 163 hp at 6,000 rpm, was given the name 200 RS. In their search for a suitable gearbox, the designers opted for a manual five-speed gearbox from Porsche, type 915.003.133, paired with a single-disc clutch with diaphragm spring from Fichtel & Sachs.

As a result, the very lightweight rally cars came in at just over 800 kilograms and achieved top speeds of up to 240 km/h, depending on the gear ratio. The 200 RS made its debut at the IDA Rally in what was then Czechoslovakia in May 1974, followed by the Barum Rally with two cars and the Rally Škoda in Mladá Boleslav, where the three red-and-white-painted cars competed alongside each other on 1 June 1974.

A total of two Škoda 200 RS and one Škoda 180 RS were built. At first, it seemed that the engineers had developed a first-rate rally car that could hold its own against the most

successful vehicles in motorsport. But things turned out differently; changes to the regulations brought the careers of the 180 RS and 200 RS to an abrupt end: the new regulations ruled out the homologation of rally prototypes, and instead, only cars based on production models were allowed to compete.

In response, the designers in Mladá Boleslav built the successor 130 RS. They based their technical design on the Škoda 110 R and also drew on their knowledge and experience from creating the 180 RS and 200 RS. Weighing only 720 kilograms, the rear-wheel-drive vehicle with a 140 hp 1.3-litre engine quickly became a success, leaving the competition behind on rally tracks as well as on the circuit up until 1983.

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Škoda 200 RS

The rally prototype with an OHC engine delivered 163 hp at 6,000 rpm. Two copies of the rear-wheel-drive car were built.

Source: Škoda Auto



Škoda 200 RS

The very lightweight rally cars came in at just over 800 kilograms and achieved top speeds of up to 240 km/h, depending on the gear ratio.

Source: Škoda Auto



Škoda 200 RS

The 200 RS made its debut at the IDA Rally in what was then Czechoslovakia in May 1974, followed by the Barum Rally with two cars and the Škoda Rally (pictured) in Mladá Boleslav, where the three red-and-white-painted cars competed alongside each other on 1 June 1974.

Source: Škoda Auto



Škoda 200 RS

Pictured here is the Škoda 200 RS with the Kvasiny crew of Jiří Šedivý - Jiří Janeček after winning the Rally Šumava 1975. The main role in the development of the bodywork was played by Ing. Jiří Šedivý (right), engineer and driver in one person. One of the most experienced co-drivers, Jiří Janeček (left), formed a crew with Jiří Šedivý from 1972 to 1980, and worked for the factory team until 1992.

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.