

1955: Škoda 440 on the international stage

In the mid-1950s, the political conditions in Czechoslovakia were not particularly favourable to international motor racing.

Even so, Škoda from Mladá Boleslav took part in events abroad and, thanks to the new Škoda 440 (4 cylinders and 40 hp), also made its presence felt. The Spartak, as the car was popularly known, made its debut in mid-June 1955 at the Alpine Rally, where Václav Bobek took silver and Miroslav Fousek bronze in the class up to 1,300 cm³. This was a much more successful appearance than a year earlier, when the crews had struggled there with the Škoda 1200 and had to reverse up the steep climb to the Turracher Höhe.

In 1955, Škoda also competed in the Liège–Rome–Liège Rally, where, after 5,100 kilometres, the Fousek–Čížkovský crew finished tenth out of 143 starters. At Norway's Viking Rally, three crews in Škoda cars finished fourth, sixth and eleventh.

In January 1956, the AZNP factory team also returned to the famous Monte Carlo Rally, where seven "Spartaks" with foreign crews started alongside the three factory cars. The Norwegian pairing of Ingier–Askersrud finished fifth in its class, in which a total of 107 cars competed.

The new Škoda vehicle then demonstrated its strength at the demanding Tulip Rally (Tulpenrallye). Although the event was based in the Netherlands, its 3,600 kilometres also covered Germany, Switzerland, Monaco and Luxembourg and included special stages at the Nürburgring and Zandvoort circuits. Only 137 of the 240 cars finished; the Fousek–Kohout crew came sixth in its class and Viček–Dobry thirteen.

Contact

Vítězslav Kodym

Head of Product Communications

+420 604 292 131

vitezslav.kodym@skoda-auto.cz

Kateřina Boukalová

Spokesperson Product Communications

+420 734 299 812

katerina.boukalova@skoda-auto.cz

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