

Škoda 120 S Rallye (1972–1975)

- › Škoda took advantage of revised FIA regulations to develop a competition car with an engine enlarged from 1.2 to 1.3 litres
- › Key modifications to the Škoda 120 S included a revised cooling system, which also helped improve the car's weight distribution
- › In its most powerful competition specification, the Škoda 120 S Rallye produced up to 120 hp

Mladá Boleslav, 12 October 2026 – At first glance, the Škoda 120 S Rallye resembles the classic Škoda 100/110, but its redesigned cooling system and powertrain made it more closely related to the later Škoda 130 RS. It was developed in response to revised FIA regulations that abolished the class for cars with engines of up to 1,150 cc and introduced a new class for engines of up to 1,300 cc.

Despite its outward resemblance to the contemporary Škoda 100/110 models, the Škoda 120 S was so extensively re-engineered that it was assigned a new type designation, Š 728. One of the main changes was to move the radiator from the rear engine compartment to the redesigned front of the car. A new grille was also fitted to the bonnet to allow hot air from the radiator to escape. Relocating the cooling system also gave the car more even weight distribution between the axles and improved its handling.

The road-going Škoda 120 S had a liquid-cooled, four-stroke, 1,173 cc OHV four-cylinder engine mounted longitudinally behind the rear axle, with a Jikov carburettor and a compression ratio of 9.4:1. It produced up to 64 hp at 5,250 rpm and up to 89 Nm of torque at 4,000 rpm. Other modifications included cast-iron crankshaft bearing caps, an eight-port cylinder head, and more precise balancing of the crankshaft and connecting rods. The Škoda 120 S's weight of 795 kg helped it accelerate from 0 to 100 km/h in 16.4 seconds and reach a top speed of 150 km/h.

The more powerful 120 S Rallye had two twin-choke Weber carburettors and a higher compression ratio of 10.8:1, raising engine output to 84 hp at 6,500 rpm and cutting its 0–100 km/h acceleration time to just 14.2 seconds.

The most powerful competition version was intended primarily for Škoda's works drivers. Increasing the bore from 72 to 75.8 mm raised engine displacement to 1,299 cc. The cylinder-head intake ports, exhaust system, and valve timing were also modified, while a dry-sump lubrication system and improved Lucas ignition were introduced. In Group 2 Category A specification, the car produced 120 hp at 7,000 rpm and a maximum torque of 127 Nm at 5,000 rpm. It could accelerate from 0 to 100 km/h in just 10.4 seconds and reach speeds of up to 200 km/h, depending on the final-drive ratio.

Although the Škoda 120 S is less well known today, it played a major role in the subsequent development of Škoda's competition technology. Its engine, transmission, and cooling system made it a predecessor to the legendary Škoda 130 RS. Around 250 examples were built between 1972 and 1975. They were used by the Škoda works team and numerous privateer competitors in Czechoslovakia and abroad.

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