

PRESS RELEASE no. 17

Special stage Kašava is a reminder of Jiří Sedlář

After more than a quarter century, the route of Barum Czech Rally Zlín is returning onto the heaps around Podkopná Lhota and to the narrow valley in which lies the village Kašava. For many years the special stage meandered the narrow road from Vlčková to Držková that nobody calls other than Podhoran and it is in this year's route again. Whilst lately the track has been turning north to Troják in Držková, this year it will go the other way to Kašava.

This village has a significant meaning for history of Czechoslovakian motor sport as Jiří Sedlář was born there. A modest young man began his sporting career on go-karts, achieving multiple highly-valued results including European vice-champion title. Since events like Barum Rally or Rally Walachia Winter were running literary just outside his doors, it did not take a long time and for race adjusted Škoda 120 LS was parked in his garage. Originally a family car could not measure up to factory prepared cars. The greater was fans' excitement when Sedlář on Barum Rally 1984 was pushing hard on Škoda factory crews. He finished eighth and suddenly a new idol was born. A year later, Jiří Sedlář with his co-driver Josef Častulík started with a newer Škoda 130 LR prepared in workshop of JZD Lukov. This crew was determined to end up on the podium, however, their hopes were crushed by a broken driveshaft. The 15th Barum Rally was history for them but they wrote a new chapter for themselves the following year. Barum Rally 1986 was the longest and probably the most demanding track in history, aside from classical sections around Zlín and the Wallachia region, there were also challenging gravel-like roads in Slovakia, in mountain range Tríbeč and Povážský Inovec. Sedlář dealt with the hard sections capably plus his car proved to be reliable and the Wallachian driver claimed a wonderful second position. His Škoda 130 LR could not keep up only with Audi Quattro of Leo Pavlík, having twice power output, however, Sedlář outclassed by many minutes the third Armin Schwarz, who was an up-and-coming star of German motorsport driving another Audi.

In 1987 on the door of his Škoda car was labelled with an unflattering three digit starting number. After FIA banned cars of Group B from international championships, these cars were at the tail of the pack and figured only in national classification and in Mitropa Cup. Sedlář's biggest success came that year when he won this Central European series. As a reward for the year 1988, he purchased a prominent four-wheel Lancia Delta HF. Unfortunately this car built only in Group N turned out to be unreliable, thus Sedlář switched to time-tested Škoda after an unsuccessful season. First two events of 1989 he was racing with Škoda 130 L of group A, but then a brand new Favorit appeared in Lukov workshop. Sedlář did not have any troubles switching to front-wheel drive and the great results were about to come. That year on Barum Rally he finished in top ten despite driving less powerful car, he was still able to compete with guests from Mitropa and Austrian championship. Unfortunately that was Jiří Sedlář's last accomplishment of his promising career. Only two months after Barum Rally, popular 'Jura' (his nickname) had a tragic accident while testing his racing special and due to unfortunate circumstances, he succumbed to his injuries shortly after. Czechoslovakian rally sport lost one of its greatest talents. He was only thirty years old.

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