



JAMES HUNT

James Hunt's Formula One career started with him joining the Hesketh racing team in 1973, founded by Thomas Alexander Fermor-Hesketh, an English baron whose passion for exuberance was only outweighed by his considerable wealth. The baron's interest in good times, however, does not compare to Hunt's, the man who would lead his racing team to fame and success in the early 1970s, and would cement his place as an icon not only in the sporting world, but also as one of the most original and captivating personalities of modern times.

Hunt and his team were initially not taken very seriously by their opponents on the track, and earned themselves (Hunt especially) reputations as the playboys of Formula One. This was not a label Hunt was particularly keen to lose. For much of his driving career, Hunt wore a patch on the right breast of his driving suit—usually extremely valuable advertising space—emblazoned with the words 'Sex, Breakfast of Champions'. Indeed, Hunt's appetite for sex was insatiable, and it occupied a great deal of the time he spent outside of the cockpit; much of his remaining time was spent drinking, smoking cannabis, or taking cocaine.

Such was Hunt's dedication to promiscuity that it is reported that he slept with over 30 British Airways air stewardesses in the nights leading up to the World Championship race of 1976 when staying at the Tokyo Hilton hotel. While other drivers were preparing for the race, Hunt would wait at reception for a group of stewardesses arriving for a 24-hour stopover, and it seems few could refuse the invitation of a party in Hunt's room. Knowing how Hunt would prepare for his races gives a possible explanation for his fail-safe pre-race ritual: disappear beside the cockpit, vomit, and jump into the car. Though this is perhaps explainable by the inevitable nerves that come with Formula One racing, Hunt's lifestyle can only have weakened his constitution on the early morning of the race. In any case, Hunt would win the Japanese Grand Prix in 1976 with McLaren, and with it the championship by one point. Certainly a commendable achievement for a man who we can fairly assume was grappling against a potent hangover.

Though Hunt never won another drivers' championship, his racing career continued for many years, each one as controversial as the last. Before the 1976 championship, Hunt refused to sign a clause in his contract that required him to wear suits to official functions. Instead, Hunt would usually wear jeans and a T-shirt, would arrive visibly drunk more often than not, and rarely wore shoes or socks. In 1977, Hunt attended a function