



Forgotten F1 Teams – Hesketh Racing

Hello and welcome to Forgotten F1 Teams – a miniseries brought to you by Sidepodcast. This is the second series taking a look at those teams who are consigned to the history books for all the right, and sometimes the wrong, reasons. There'll be seven short shows over consecutive days and an omnibus at the end, but for now, let's look at our first Forgotten F1 Team – Hesketh Racing.

In the 1950s, Lord Thomas Alexander Fermor-Hesketh was born, a baron no less. He was, what you would call, eccentric, and didn't take too kindly to school. When he was 21, his family inheritance made him rich, and what better hobby to take up than racing cars?

He teamed up with his friend Anthony "Bubbles" Horsley, and in 1972, they entered a team in the F3 series, with few results. Then they met and signed up James Hunt. He had been ousted from the March F1 team, falling out of favour for being a bit reckless out on track. This suited the Hesketh ethos well, as the team soon garnered a playboy style reputation. They celebrated with champagne whether they won or lost, turned up to events in flash cars, and ran without sponsorship, just because they could.

The team decided to test the water in Formula 1, purchasing a March chassis and poaching ex-March designer Harvey Postlethwaite. Their first appearance was in 1973, with some good results, improving all the time. Hunt scored a 2nd place finish at the season-ending US Grand Prix. Lord Hesketh was encouraged by what he had seen. He converted stables at his property to build the next year's car, and he transformed a farmhouse into apartments for the mechanics to stay in while they did. The team spirit had never been higher and Hesketh decided their F1 involvement should be a full time thing.

With a brand new car designed by Postlethwaite, the team scored three third places. There were plenty of retirements along the way, but they had done a great job for a new team. Hunt finished the championship in ninth place that year.

1975 was similar, so much so, they even used the same car. They did have a great opening to the year, though, a second place in Argentina. Their first and only win came at the Dutch Grand Prix, where Hunt managed to hold off a Ferrari to take the top step of the podium. Hunt was a constant for the team, whilst they ran a second car with a succession of pay drivers, including Harald Ertl and Alan Jones. The new car was ready towards the end of the season, allowing Hunt to pick up some more points, and he finished fourth in the championship at the end of the year.

That was the peak of the team's success though. Lord Hesketh began to realise he was running low on money. He searched for some sponsorship, but with nothing major forthcoming, he decided to pull out of the sport.

The cars were sold off, and James Hunt found another seat at McLaren, replacing the outgoing Emerson Fittipaldi.

Bubbles Horsley wanted to keep the Hesketh name going, and brought in Nigel Stroud when Postlethwaite followed his own cars to their new owner Williams. Horsley found sponsorship in the form of Rizla and Penthouse Magazine, and he signed up Harald Ertl and Guy Edwards. 1976 was a poor year, and 1977 was very similar. Frank Dernie had a go at designing a new car, but 7th place was the best that could be achieved.



Surprisingly, Hesketh were still racing in 1978, when Olympus Cameras sponsored the team for female racer Divina Galica. She never qualified the car, though, and was replaced after two races. Several retirements and failures to qualify later and Horsley had to admit defeat. The team folded.

The name continued on as Hesketh Motors for a while, producing parts for other teams. Meanwhile, Lord Hesketh tried his hand at manufacturing motorcycles, became President of the British Racing Drivers Club, and set up an airline which was later sold.

That is all for our first Forgotten F1 Team. You can read the transcript of this show, or make suggestions for future episodes of this series on Sidepodcast.com. I will be back tomorrow with our next installment, see you then.

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