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# COLLECTING PASSION

FOUNDER OF RACING HALL OF FAME COLLECTION, DARREN JACK  
TURNED A CHILDHOOD HOBBY INTO AN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS  
ROOTED IN MOTORSPORT HISTORY AND CULTURE.

STORY BY NATHAN KELLY





There's an old Formula 1 racing wheel that sits in Darren Jack's collection of motorsport memorabilia, serving as a functional coffee table. Like each of the pieces showcased in the Racing Hall of Fame Collection, it has a story that contributes to its value, a story that is stewarded and sometimes even generated by Darren. This particular objet d'auto, is one of his oldest and most precious.

Its story starts back in Europe in 1992, when Darren was just a 12-year-old boy from the UK, visiting the Formula One Belgian Grand Prix at the Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps with his family. They were watching the Saturday practice laps when a young up and coming driver named Michael Schumacher approached the notorious hairpin corner, La Source, lost control and spun out, damaging one of his car's rear wheels. At the end of the day, an incredible opportunity presented itself to Darren when he spotted the damaged F1 wheel in the team's trash pile in the paddock.

"I was by myself as my family had already walked back to the campsite," recalls Darren. He quickly decided that he needed to have it. "I was a young, small, skinny, 12-year-old kid and the wheel was rather large and awkward. It took me like three hours, but I walked back to our campsite through the woods carrying this wheel...I remember getting back and being exhausted. I think it was raining. I held the wheel over my head like I'd just won the Stanley Cup or something."

Darren's father did not share the same enthusiasm at the time, citing the lack of available cargo space in the family vehicle as the main reason for this outlook. Darren ignored this paternal advice, however, and sat with the F1 wheel on his lap in the small English car for the entire 16-hour drive back to their home country. At the time, he had no idea exactly how special this piece of memorabilia would become. Fast-forward a couple decades and a crashed wheel from Michael Schumacher's Formula One debut win is an incredible piece of history.

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For Darren Jack, the allure of motorsport memorabilia has sculpted a lifelong journey filled with passion and stories. Like all motorsport enthusiasts, the obsession began at a young age with influence from his father. "We grew up around the sport," he says. "My grandfather was a mechanic for Ken Wharton, who raced in F1 in the 50s, and my father grew up as a huge fan, and still is today. So naturally my brother, Kristian, and I were born in to it."

Darren's first Grand Prix experience was at age the age of four, in Imola. There he picked up a giant tattered Ferrari flag that was left in a puddle on the ground that day—he still has it today. Their location in the UK gave the young enthusiast and his family regular access to such events as Formula One, Sportscar Racing, MotoGP, Speedway Bike Racing and the Isle of Man TT.

As a youngster, to have the chance to run around the paddock of a professional motorsport event and meet the drivers was a dream come true. Naturally these events supplied plenty of memorabilia and souvenirs that he collected as tokens. He regularly spent hours in the dark, waiting for his favourite drivers to walk out of the track, hoping for an autograph, sticker or a photo of him with his hero.

To this day, Darren remains particularly fond of the Isle of Man TT, the most dangerous and exciting motorbike race in

the world, held on a small Island between Ireland and Great Britain. Since 1907, this time-trial race performed on closed public roads has claimed the lives of over 250 people, a fact that does little to deter the incredible enthusiasm of the event, which truly is something you have to see to understand.

For Darren, who has attended the race almost every year since he was five, the TT paddock is like a family reunion. Frequent encounters with the likes of Joey Dunlop (rated in a 2016 poll as the second most iconic motorcycle rider in history behind Valentino Rossi, whom Darren also met when they were both just 15 years old) and other riders led to an even greater emotional investment in the race. Tragically, Joey would later lose his life during a race in July of 2000. Losses like this are the hardest part of motorsport, says Darren.

It was when he took up photography as a hobby that access to drivers started to come more readily. "Taking photos before there were things like Google Images was rather special," says Darren. The drivers would often be ecstatic to see current photos of themselves in action and ask him for copies, which he happily traded for small items like visors, old gloves and shoes. After doing this for some time, he was able to save up and buy some helmets, which is when the collection really began to take off.



As Darren got older he began to see that there was an opportunity in the motorsport business that he may be able to grab ahold of. When, in 1999, at age 19, his family moved from the UK to Canada, he focused his lens and energy on IndyCar racing, the top open wheel series in North America. Indy has some of the most spirited personalities in the world of motorsport, with a rich history that provides an intimate connection between fans and drivers. Events such as the Indianapolis 500 became a fascination for Darren, and his collection began to expand to represent that.

"I am particularly proud of my Indy 500 Champions Collection," says Darren. "I tracked down an original race-used helmet and/or suit from every winner from 1957 to 2017. I have a few more helmets from earlier than that, too, including the first man to drink milk in 1933, three-time winner Louis Meyer." Another stand-out piece is what is believed to be the world's oldest driving suit, which belonged to 1911 Indy 500 Pole Sitter Lewis Strang.

What began as a fan passion is now a professional career, with Darren having established relationships with motorsport household names such as Mario Andretti, Emerson Fittipaldi, Alexander Rossi, Lewis Hamilton and Jorge Lorenzo. He also works with professional MotoGP, IndyCar, and F1 drivers to represent the sales of their race-worn equipment



and collections on his website [www.racinghalloffamecollection.com](http://www.racinghalloffamecollection.com). This niche business is the result of decades of networking and self-establishment. His work has also brought him into contact with plenty of other celebrities from outside the world of motorsport. At the 100th running of the Indianapolis 500 in 2016, for example, he helped put the deal together for music sensation Lady Gaga to attend the event.

"At the time, Lady Gaga was dating my good friend Taylor Kinney," he recalls. "And she was curious why Taylor and I had such a great time at the races. So, at first we invited her just off the cuff, almost incognito, as a fan, if you like. Then Scott Borchetta of Big Machine Records called me the day before the race as his artist was set to appear in the two-seater IndyCar but had to pull out at the last minute.

Mario Andretti was unhappy as they had done a lot of press, but with Scott and IndyCar's help, we saved the day and Gaga flew in at 2 am on race day." Within a few hours, she had a fire suit and helmet on and was strapped into the passenger seat of Mario's IndyCar, set to lead the field of 33 to the green flag in front of approximately 400,000 fans.

"She really embraced the event, came out for dinner afterwards with James Hinchcliffe, myself and some other friends, and then came to the driver after



party and danced the night away," he says. "It was a big success."

At age 38, Darren has developed a full-scale business with connections across the globe. He is constantly busy setting up displays of automotive memorabilia, doing on-stage driver interviews for circuits, representing professional racecar drivers and collectors or taking calls and emails from clients looking to buy or sell. His staff report from the UK, Canada and the US, helping him manage the increasing volume of his business.

The next step forward for Darren, is the growth of his driver management business. "I like to put money in drivers' pockets," he says. "It's an expensive sport and I want to help young drivers get what

they deserve. Understanding the team's perspective and corporate partners' needs is also key, so finding the right deal for everybody is important for me."

From picking up discarded flags and wheels at motorsports events as a child, to using a network built from a lifetime of hustle buying and selling motorsport memorabilia to help young drivers get a start; Darren's journey from passion to profession has come full circle, but something tells us he's far from finished.

As a footnote to this story: Darren just informed us that he has acquired the iconic Blue helmet used by Steve McQueen in the famed 1971 cult movie Le Mans which is being dubbed as the "Million Dollar Helmet".

