

Southampton's Golden Girl

Powerboat racer and bridal wear shop owner, Shelley Jory leads an extraordinary double life; she told Emma Caulton which life she's passionate about

Southampton's Shelley Jory leads a fantasy double-life – from Monday to Friday she lives the girly dream running her bridal wear business, but at weekends she's a powerboat racer.

We meet at Ocean Village, ahead of the start of the P1 race season (equivalent to F1 in motor racing). Shelley is the first woman to compete in the Evolution Class of P1. It is an outstanding achievement and all the more impressive when she reveals that five years ago she swam away from a terrible powerboat crash.

But Shelley laughs, quite literally, in the face of danger; her conversation is perpetually punctuated with infectious giggles.

Although being selected to compete in the P1 World Championship was a goal of hers, it has come around sooner than expected.

"I've been racing for 12 years now, always climbing up and up, and this year I was going to take a year out from racing to concentrate on other projects that I'd been doing like commentating and radio presenting which I really love," explains Shelley.

"But then the American powerboat team Lucas Oil contacted me and said, 'we've been watching you in Honda, would you like to do P1?'"

Team owner and throttleman Nigel

Hook will be Shelley's new race partner – a bit of a change after being part of an all-girl team for much of her racing career.

"It is still my ambition to have an all-girl team in P1, but Nigel has vast experience at this level of racing so I really need to go in with his expertise."

Crash course in success

Shelley was born in Southampton in 1969 and brought up in Warsash. "My parents moved away, but I've moved back to Warsash. I've moved back to my roots. I'm truly Southampton born and bred."

In 2006 Shelley was made Ambassador of Southampton. "I'm really proud of that

"It was purely a hobby at weekends. But my career just went upwards and upwards. The big break was my V24 race in which I had a really serious accident in the Solent in 2003. A lot of people thought that would be the end of me and I wouldn't get back in a boat and carry on. I wrote the boat off and was trapped under water for three minutes, but escaped unharmed.

"I got back in a boat really quickly, just a month later when we finished rebuilding the boat and, remarkably, I then went on and won the three-hour endurance race on Lake Windermere. I was the first lady ever to win the

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role. I work here in Southampton, with my bridal shop, I play here, those waters out there are where I practise my powerboat racing, and I live here. Cut me in half and it probably says 'I love Southampton'."

Back in 1995 her then boyfriend, who was a keen powerboat racing spectator, wanted to get involved in racing; Shelley became his team manager and got him started in the sport before deciding she'd like to give it a go herself.

endurance race, and that was in the boat that I'd sunk to the bottom of the Solent!

"Someone from local company Raymarine witnessed the crash and, seeing my determination to race, they became my sponsor and have sponsored me ever since."

It was about a year later that her previous partner Libby came on board – "Libby started in 2005 and by the end of