



Belmont Abbey
COLLEGE

*That in all things God
may be glorified*

For Immediate Release

Contact: Sarah Bolton

P: 704-461-7016 E: sarahbolton@bac.edu

Belmont Abbey College Remembers Humpy Wheeler, Jr., Racing Icon and Beloved Alumnus

Belmont, N.C. (August 21, 2025) – Belmont Abbey College expresses deep sorrow over the passing of Howard "Humpy" Wheeler, Jr., a devoted supporter and beloved friend of the college. A native of Belmont and alumnus of the Abbey's Preparatory School, Wheeler played a pivotal role in founding the college's renowned Motorsport Management program in 2007.

Wheeler's contributions to Belmont Abbey were multifaceted. He served two terms on the Board of Trustees, offering invaluable leadership and insight. In recognition of his outstanding service, the Abbey awarded him both the Grace Award and the Sport at the Service of the Spirit Award. In 2008, the college inducted him into the Alumni Wall of Fame. He received an honorary degree from the college in 2019 in recognition of his outstanding contributions. Throughout his life and career, Wheeler's deep connection to Belmont Abbey and the Benedictine tradition remained evident—not only through his own unflinching service but also through the legacy of two of his children, who followed in his footsteps as Abbey alumni.

Dr. Joseph Wysocki, Belmont Abbey's Interim President, remarked, "Humpy Wheeler's visionary leadership and unwavering commitment have left an indelible mark on our college community. As an alumnus, trustee, and generous benefactor, he demonstrated an enduring commitment to the Abbey and its mission. His leadership helped shape the direction of the college, and his support opened doors for countless students. Humpy believed in forming not just professionals, but principled leaders—and his impact will continue to be felt through the lives of the alumni and students he championed so passionately."

In 2007, Wheeler encouraged then President of Belmont Abbey College, Dr. Bill Thierfelder to begin a Motorsport Management program. Patti Wheeler '86, his daughter, and Humpy guided the development of the program, which has remained at the forefront of motorsport education, blending academic rigor with strong industry connections. For nearly two decades, it has been one of the few programs in the nation, producing accomplished alumni who now hold key positions in racing at organizations such as NASCAR, numerous racing teams, tracks, and racing support organizations. In Fall 2025, the college expanded the program's impact by launching the nation's only Master of Arts in Motorsport Management, further strengthening its leadership in the field.

Dr. Trey Cunningham, Chair of the Motorsport Management program, highlighted Wheeler's impact: "Humpy was instrumental in shaping the lives of young adults aspiring to enter the motorsport industry. His vision was to create a pathway for students to turn their passion for racing into a profession, and that vision has become a reality for so many. Through his industry insight, storytelling, and unwavering support, Humpy inspired confidence and ambition in everyone he met. His legacy is the foundation of our program, and it will continue to drive our students forward for generations to come."

Wheeler's legacy extends well beyond Belmont Abbey College. As the former president and general manager of Charlotte Motor Speedway, he was renowned for his innovative promotions and contributions to the motorsports industry. His efforts earned him inductions into the North Carolina Sports Hall of Fame in 2004 and the International Motorsports Hall of Fame in 2006. In January 2026, he will be honored with the Landmark Award for Outstanding Contributions to NASCAR during the induction of the NASCAR Hall of Fame Class of 2026.

Abbot Placid Solari, O.S.B., reflected on Wheeler's lasting relationship with the Abbey, "Humpy and Pat Wheeler have been personal friends as well as generous benefactors of Belmont Abbey and Belmont Abbey College and many other worthy causes. Humpy grew up on the abbey campus and always remembered his roots here. He enjoyed an amazing and happy life and was blessed with a beautiful marriage and family. He was the entrepreneur's entrepreneur. I can imagine he is advising God about some new extravaganza to liven up heaven!"

Belmont Abbey College has been blessed by Humpy Wheeler's enduring support and guidance. His legacy will continue to inspire generations of students, faculty, and alumni.

The funeral is scheduled for Tuesday, August 26, at 11:00 a.m. at St. Gabriel Catholic Church. In lieu of flowers, the family has requested memorial donations be made in Wheeler's name to the Belmont Abbey College Motorsports Management Program. Visit bac.edu/futurestars to learn about how you can make a memorial gift in remembrance of Humpy.

For the official statement from the Charlotte Motor Speedway, please click [here](#). Watch this tribute [video](#) honoring Humpy Wheeler's extraordinary life and impact.

About Belmont Abbey College: Founded in 1876, Belmont Abbey College is a private, Catholic baccalaureate and liberal arts institution. Our mission is to educate students in the liberal arts and sciences so that in all things God may be glorified. Guided by the Catholic intellectual tradition and the Benedictine spirit of prayer and learning, we welcome a diverse body of students and provide them with an education that will enable them to lead lives of integrity, to succeed professionally, to become responsible citizens, and to be a blessing to themselves and to others. Our beautiful and historic campus is conveniently located just 10 miles west of Charlotte, N.C., and is currently home to more than 1500 students. For more information, visit <https://belmontabbeycollege.edu/>.