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Snapshot, 1976: The calm before the storm in Japan

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In the paddock at Fuji ahead of the 1976 title-deciding Japanese Grand Prix, spirits between the season's great rivals Niki Lauda and James Hunt are high, for now at least...

After an epic, season-long duel between the playboy Brit and the clinical Austrian – during which Lauda scraped with death after an awful accident at the Nürburgring – the championship has, unbelievably, come down to the final round in Japan. Not that the importance of the forthcoming race (or the biblical rain) has dented spirits between Hunt, Lauda, Ronnie Peterson and Bernie Ecclestone, who share a moment shielded from the weather under an umbrella. None of the drivers can possibly envisage how the day will pan out – that Lauda will withdraw prematurely deeming his life more valuable than the title, allowing James Hunt to clinch the title by just one point after, arguably, the drive of his life.

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