

SPORTS

Luxury brands look to race ahead of competition at Kentucky Derby

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Sentient Jet returns as a sponsor of the Kentucky Derby. Image credit: Sentient Jet

By SARAH RAMIREZ

Luxury brands and equestrian enthusiasts alike will be enjoying horse racing during the 145th Kentucky Derby at Louisville's Churchill Downs Racetrack this weekend.

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Baccarat, Longines and Sentient Jet are among the brands hoping to reach affluent attendees at one of horse racing's most famous events, known as "The Greatest Two Minutes in Sports." Because of the sport's prestige, many luxury brands celebrate horse races with sponsorships and experiences.

Derby delights

This year's Kentucky Derby will take place on May 4 in Louisville, KY, bringing luxury marketers and affluent attendees to an underserved region.

For the third straight year, private aviation firm Sentient Jet will host an invitation-only Derby Day Breakfast with chef Bobby Flay. Held on the morning of the race, the breakfast menu includes Kentucky-inspired dishes and drinks such as blue corn crepes and strawberry rhubarb margaritas.



Baccarat released a special gift set for the Kentucky Derby. Image credit: Baccarat

Sentient Jet will also offer private flight access to the races as the preferred private aviation partner of the Kentucky Derby, Kentucky Oaks and Churchill Downs Racetrack.

Leading up to the Derby, Sentient Jet welcomed a group of U.S. veterans to Churchill Downs as part of the firm's partnership with the nonprofit Home For Our Troops. The veterans will also be guests of honor at the Derby Day Breakfast.

French crystal maker Baccarat has become a sponsor of the Kentucky Derby.

In honor of the partnership, the brand has created a highball gift set for the Kentucky Derby for attendees to enjoy the race's iconic mint julep cocktail. Each set includes six glasses with a different creative pattern and engraved with the official logo of the Kentucky Derby, as well as a recipe card for a Woodford Reserve Classic Mint Julep.

The bourbon distiller enlisted Louisville artist Keith Anderson to design its limited-edition 2019 Woodford Reserve Derby bottle. The 20th annual edition of the bottle features horses racing across the label.



Longines' official watches for the 2019 Kentucky Oaks and 2019 Kentucky Derby. Image credit: Longines

Swiss watchmaker Longines returns as the official timekeeper of the Kentucky Derby, continuing a long tradition with equestrian sports. A navy Conquest V.H.P. Chronograph "Very High Precision" was selected as the race's official timepiece.

The Derby's winning team will be toasted with Woodford Reserve bourbon in Baccarat glasses, and they are also expected to receive Longines watches.

Luxury in sports

Horse racing is just one of several sports geared towards upscale audiences, and luxury marketers tend to flock to these special events.

Mercedes-Benz, Rolex and Ralph Lauren are among the luxury brands that forged or continued their relationships with the United States Tennis Association last year, seeking out affluent fans of the sport. Mercedes-Benz has sponsored the U.S. Open since 2010, while Swiss watchmaker Rolex announced a partnership with the USTA in 2018 ([see story](#)).

Luxury brands from various sectors will also leverage more mainstream, large-scale sporting events to reach broad audiences.

Earlier this year, luxury fashion labels, hospitality companies and upscale beverage and automotive companies all participated during the Super Bowl festivities in some manner.

In another display of its sports enthusiasm, Sentient Jet offered special in-flight experiences for guests traveling to the Super Bowl in Atlanta, GA. The firm also connected its most valuable clients with the best available ticketing and hotel options for a well-rounded experience ([see story](#)).