

ADVERTISING

Rolex signs Tiger Woods, former face of Tag Heuer, as brand ambassador

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By KAYLA HUTZLER

Swiss watchmaker Rolex has signed on as its newest brand ambassador professional golfer Tiger Woods, who was dropped by fellow Swiss watchmaker Tag Heuer this past summer.

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Rolex said Mr. Woods still has a long career ahead of him and will continue to make history in the golfing world. Mr. Woods came under public speculation two years ago when indiscretions surrounding his personal life were brought to light, and has since been dropped by most brands.

"There is always a loss of control when you tie a corporate brand to the behavior of a celebrity," said Samantha Ettus, a branding expert at [Experts Media](#), Los Angeles. "[But] Rolex made a great decision,

"They are a brand that aims to connote luxury and an expensive lifestyle," she said. "Their brand is not tied to anything wholesome or family-oriented.

"Would he be the right choice for Cheerios now? No. Rolex? Yes."

Ms. Ettus is not affiliated with Rolex or Tag Heuer, but agreed to comment as a third-party expert.

Rolex could not be reached for comment.

Par for the course

Rolex's choice of Mr. Woods may come as a bit of a shock, since most of his branded endorsements were dropped or have failed to be renewed since the public scandal last year over his numerous affairs came to light.

The watchmaker is branding the collaboration as a "Partnership for a new challenge."

Rolex believes that Mr. Woods has a long golf career ahead of him and that the two are equally dedicated to a better future.

"This association pays tribute to the exceptional stature of Tiger Woods and the leading role he plays in forging the sport's global appeal," Rolex said in its official announcement.

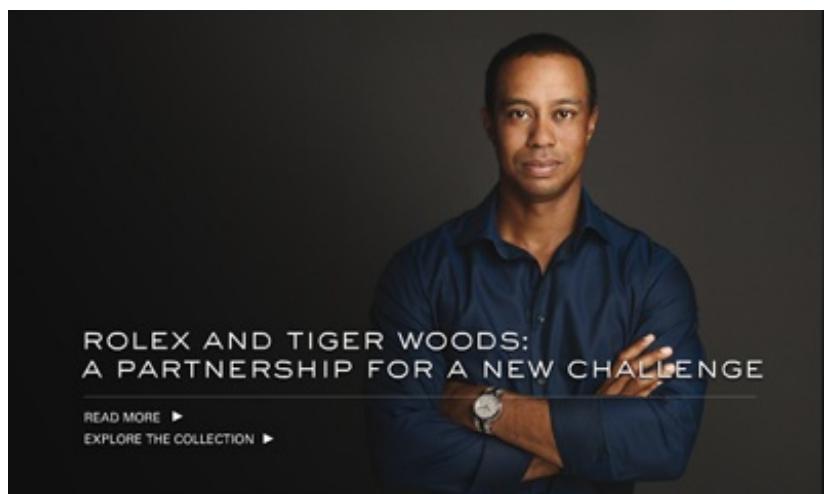
"It also constitutes a joint commitment to the future," the statement said. "Rolex is committed to accompanying him in his new challenges."

Mr. Woods will be joining other celebrated athletes such equestrian Zara Phillips, Le Mans winner Tom Kristensen, skiing legend Lindsay Vonn, tennis champion Roger Federer and yachting champion Paul Cayard.

Rolex is also no amateur in the world of professional golfing.

The watchmaker supported Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus and Gary Player, the "big three" golfers of the 1960s.

Rolex chooses its athletic ambassadors based on their talent, perserverance and ability to communicate their passion for their sport, according to the brand.



Well put

The endorsement announcement comes a mere three months after Mr. Woods was dropped by fellow watchmaker Tag Heuer.

The news seemed to have jolted competitor Tag Heuer, which released an official statement regarding the Rolex partnership with its former ambassador.

"Tag Heuer's decision not to renew Tiger Woods contract has been carefully weighted

based on worldwide quantitative market research clearly suggesting that such a partnership, despite its past success, was not appropriate any longer from a consumer standpoint," Jean-Christophe Babin, president/CEO of Tag Heuer, said in the release.

"With Maria Sharapova, Suzann Pettersen, Lewis Hamilton, Jenson Button, Sebastien Ogier and the Audi sport drivers, Tag Heuer has the best 'dream team' of winning, aspirational and exemplary sports ambassadors, and is more than ever convinced of having made the right decision to free Mr. Woods of any obligation whatsoever," the release stated.

"We congratulate and respect the new watch partner for their bold decision."

Indeed, Mr. Woods had also been dropped by sponsors such as Buick and Gatorade that quickly pulled their advertisements and canceled their contracts because they did not want to be associated with the athlete when his disreputations were out in the open.

However, given that there is no emphasis on family or morals in the Rolex history, this endorsement could possibly work well for the brand.

"They probably got him at a discount, and if you look at history, every public figure who is knocked down is then built back up again by the same media machine that knocked him down," Ms. Ettus said. "Many celebrities have propelled brands to success.

"The danger is in thinking that you need a celebrity to be successful or that you will automatically be successful if you have a celebrity attached," she said.

"A celebrity endorsement is just one of many ingredients for success."

Final Take

Kayla Hutzler, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York