

SPORTS

With eyes on luxury, U.S. Open tees off in Los Angeles

June 19, 2023



High-ticket sponsorships, like that of the U.S. Open, are hot commodities in the world of marketing, especially among luxury brands. Image credit: United States Golf Association

By ZACH JAMES

As clubs are readied and crowds converge amid the city of angels, luxury is at the center of it all.

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For the first time in 75 years, Los Angeles County hosted the U.S. Open, the penultimate event of the PGA Tour's season. In the lead-up to the event's June 15 start, high-ticket sponsorships from the likes of Swiss watchmaker Rolex and credit provider American Express proved hot commodities.

"The key to successful advertising campaigns is consistency and repetition," said Christos Joannides, founder and creative director of **Flat 6 Concepts**, Los Angeles.

"Smaller one-time sponsorships may have a positive impact [on] a company during the tournament, however, people are fickle," he said. "Once the [event] is over the brand also disappears."

Marketing master class

The Open is the hallowed grounds of many partnerships, from Lexus to Corona, but one luxury brand stands above the rest, with decades of patronage upholding the tradition of the game.

Since 1980, Rolex has maintained a fruitful relationship with the PGA Tour. The sponsorship begets questions as to how longstanding commitments can impact a business, versus engaging in several shorter, potentially less expensive options.

"When a company sponsors a major event for a long period of time, it undoubtedly becomes synonymous with that event," Mr. Joannides said.

The [@usopengolf](#) starts today at the Los Angeles Country Club the first time a Major has been staged at this stunning venue. At this revered event, accuracy is everything. Success requires precision, consistency and resilience. More <https://t.co/4NadCeUHoV> [#USOpen](#) [#Perpetual](#)

pic.twitter.com/6i5NHXGYIE

ROLEX (@ROLEX) June 15, 2023

"Beyond the international name recognition, it conveys steady leadership and trust, and that's what all [companies] strive for."

As the league's official timekeeper for more than 40 years, Rolex has earned special privileges. In 2020, the luxury watchmaker was granted an hour of branded commercial-free time at the end of each day of the golf tournament.



The iconic Rolex clock stands tall at all golf courses which hold major PGA Tour events. Image credit: Rolex

In 2017, the brand unveiled its own series as a leg of the European PGA Tour, granting Rolex an even greater footprint across the sport, the result of decades of investment, work and loyalty to the league.

The watchmaker is involved in and sponsors several global sports, including yacht racing ([see story](#)), tennis ([see story](#)), women's ice climbing ([see story](#)), motor racing and equestrian exhibitions.

Rolex stands as an example of what a luxury brand can accomplish with a sharp focus and enduring marketing pursuits.

Conflicting interests

Of the U.S. Open's current partners, American sportswear brand Peter Millar is the greenest, only just beginning their representation with the event as last year's official outfitter.

"For a sponsorship of a major event like the U.S. Open to be effective for any company, and especially a new one like Peter Millar, I believe it should be followed by a full-fledged marketing campaign emphasizing quality and [a] commitment to the sport of golf and the U.S. Open for at least the next 10 years," Mr. Joannides said.

One more sleep. [#USOpen pic.twitter.com/vwHBaSC1fc](https://pic.twitter.com/vwHBaSC1fc)

Peter Millar (@petermillar) June 15, 2023

"I live just 10 minutes away from where the Los Angeles Country Club is located, and where the U.S. Open is currently being held and I have yet to see any sort of marketing by Peter Millar anywhere," he said. "As someone who has never heard of [the brand], I feel there are quite a few opportunities missed here."

The closest Peter Millar retail location is located one hour outside of LA in the city of Newport Beach.

As part of the promotion, the North Carolina-based label has released a series of 2023 U.S. Open branded tops, ranging in style from pullover jackets to polos.

While the Open's return to Los Angeles is a momentous occasion for the gold community in the region, competition host LA Country Club has its sights set higher than the greens.

Sports events, especially those in California, are a stone's throw away from the homes of celebrities, influencers and the like. This year's venue has made the polarizing move to bar A-listers from unplanned entries, in a bid to avoid the levels of logistical disruption that typically accompany these drop-ins.

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