

MARKETING

At Wimbledon 2023, luxury labels come out to play

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A rising number of heritage brands are attempting to align activations with the world's oldest tennis tournament this year. Image credit: Ralph Lauren

By AMIRAH KEATON

Attempting to align efforts with the world's oldest tennis tournament, a rising number of global maisons are vying for the attention of affluent consumers during the program.

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The Wimbledon Championships touts an undeniable level of prestige, the exclusive sporting enterprise speaking to the essence of British heritage. This most recent competition round seemed to spark innovative approaches from established names and newcomers alike, with current market conditions and the ability to connect with high-net-worth attendees heightening Wimbledon's appeal to a wide range of off-court players.

Heritage wins

Luxury maisons with a founding timeline similar to that of the tournament the competition's inaugural edition took place in 1877 are often first in line to participate on this front annually.

The 2023 Wimbledon Championships proved to be no exception, as evidenced by the main stage sponsorships and branded pop-ups that took place from July 3 to July 16 this season, as the event's usual suspects continue to rely on the outsized visibility, opting to use the competition's platform to resonate with luxury crowds once more.

One such example is a brand from which audiences have come to expect participation.

Rolex has served as Wimbledon's official timekeeper since 1978

The tournament's official timekeeper since 1978, Swiss watchmaker Rolex has long played an instrumental role in shaping the live event's look and feel, with the presence of branded clocks and scoreboards serving as reminders of its involvement to viewers worldwide.

A name synonymous with athletic achievement, Rolex cements its place as an authority through the distribution of curated digital content.

A beacon of sporting excellence since the inaugural edition in 1877, @Wimbledon starts today. On the grass courts at SW19, adversaries across the net become essential partners in the pursuit of excellence, pushing each other to the limit. More <https://t.co/eZKQqYV4tT> #Perpetual pic.twitter.com/w1QuHwSLpI

ROLEX (@ROLEX) July 3, 2023

The company's "Excellence in motion" series tells stories of Wimbledon wins throughout history, taking the opportunity to plug a special-edition Oyster Perpetual Datejust model while prompting customers to "make a date of the day" with purchase.

Its chronographs have adorned the wrists of many a champion, though it is no longer one of the only brands employing endorsement strategies.

For the occasion, Italian fashion label Gucci outfitted one of its own.

Designing travel wear embellished with the star's initials, Italian tennis player Jannik Sinner is seen carrying a custom monogrammed duffel bag complete with the house's signature GG monogram and Web stripe.

.@janniksin is seen with his custom #Gucci duffel bag at this year's @Wimbledon. Photography by #GregWilliams. pic.twitter.com/MD9JeqjLDn

gucci (@gucci) July 4, 2023

Gucci accompanied the moment with dedicated campaign shots, garnering extended engagement online while taking advantage of a growing desire for "tunnel fashion," a term encompassing the outfits that the talents wear on their way to and from the locker room pre- and post-match.

Multiyear agreements surpass the apparel sector, as automotive marques have looked to get in on the action.



The promotion of Jaguar's all-electric performance SUV, "I-PACE," is central to the automaker's partnership with Wimbledon. Image credit: Jaguar U.K.

In 2021, the official car of The Championships announced plans to renew its contract with Wimbledon for a term of five more years.

"When it comes to global sporting events, Wimbledon is truly unmatched," said Anthony Bradbury, marketing director at Jaguar Land Rover U.K., in a statement.

"Like Wimbledon, we are looking to push the boundaries of innovation to do things in an exciting and unexpected way."

Helping @Wimbledon achieve the goal of net-zero emissions by 2030. #Wimbledon

pic.twitter.com/j30rrluuqY

Jaguar (@Jaguar) July 3, 2023

The promotion of Jaguar's all-electric performance SUV, "I-PACE," is central to the arrangement, ultimately helping to platform the automaker's electrification mission.

Each founded around the turn of the 20th century, Rolex, Gucci and Jaguar took center stage at the contemporary event, though the appeal of an established set of practices, and the elements of exclusivity that permeate through culture as a result, further credentials the competition for those newer to the market.

Newcomers explore competition codes

Distinctive codes that date back centuries set the competition apart from other Grand Slams ([see story](#)), factoring into its value for those interested in capitalizing on Wimbledon's age-old codes.

For starters, unlike most tennis tournaments, Wimbledon is played on a traditional grass surface, the only Grand Slam of its kind in operation today.

The surface requires specific techniques from those who grace the court, who tend to be faster and more advanced than their counterparts.

Beginning in 1910, each installation of Wimbledon has featured support from members of the royal family, who serve as Patron of London's All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club.

Hosting matches, the U.K. venue itself imposes a number of legacy rules and regulations, holding guests accountable to a strictly enforced dress code of all-white, one dating back to the 1800s.

The preservation of Wimbledon's original traditions is, to a large extent, the very force driving engagement from younger luxury brands looking to revel in the tournament's wake, sparing no expense to connect with consumers on the ground at Wimbledon 2023.

[View this post on Instagram](#)

A post shared by Ralph Lauren (@ralphlauren)

U.S. fashion brand Ralph Lauren's love affair with American style began just 56 years ago. The Official Outfitter of The Championships' influence can still be seen on the court today Wimbledon ballperson, lineperson and umpire staff members don the label's signature Polo logo as part of the deal.

Last week, the brand launched "Caf at Ralph Lauren," a temporary offering positioned adjacent to Wimbledon proceedings. The New Bond Street activation exhibited retail selections. An experiential food and beverage tie-in rounded out the in-person attraction.

Other newcomers are following the blueprint of those that have also remained active at the tournament.



The Swiss watchmaker now calls American tennis player Tommy Paul a "friend of the brand." Image courtesy of De Bethune

Founded in 2002, Swiss watchmaker De Bethune this year backed a men's sporting professional as he reached his first Grand Slam semifinal ([see story](#)). The house announced its alignment with American tennis player Tommy Paul on Day One of Wimbledon.

Framed by an ultralight 39 mm titanium case, De Bethune's "DB28 LTC" dial's design reflects the tournament's colors of green and purple.

Originating in 1968, Preferred Hotels & Resorts even invited the public to partake in a quintessential English practice.

Embrace the spirit of the Great British Summer at The Guardsman. Moments from Buckingham Palace this is a quintessentially British bolt hole in the heart of London. The finishing touch? Their Wimbledon-inspired afternoon tea, ideal for reviving the spirits <https://t.co/DuiyZHBE4Z>
pic.twitter.com/jPpexOFdB8

Preferred Hotels (@preferredhotels) July 10, 2023

The luxury hospitality group's "Wimbledon-inspired afternoon tea" marks one example of an off-site instance of marketing that still manages to leverage the event with a specific segment in mind ticket prices for preferred court seats can average thousands, ensuring attendance from well-resourced locals and travelers looking to celebrate in style.

Whether reinforcing what exists of their legacies thus far or doubling down on a centuries-long storytelling exercise, Wimbledon provides luxury brands with the chance to surprise and delight this target demographic.

Surrounding athletes, celebrities and other influential figures of now further enhances the image of participants, encouraging long-term commitments spanning decades and ensuring longevity in the face of today's changing market.