

EVENTS/CAUSES

Maserati propels brand with title sponsorship of US Open Polo Championships

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By ERIN SHEA

Italian automaker Maserati is propelling the brand with its title sponsorship of the United States Polo Association's U.S. Open Polo Championships at the International Polo Club in Palm Beach, FL.

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The USPA Maserati 109th U.S. Open Polo Championships runs for four weeks, taking place on March 31 and April 7, 14 and 21. Maserati is likely to gain brand exposure during this event since these matches are the highest-rated polo tournament in North America.

“Similar to the sport of polo, Maserati represents passion, performance and sophistication,” said Andrea Soriani, director of marketing and communications for [Maserati North America](#), Englewood Cliffs, NJ.

Play ball

The four-week Open Championship tournament marks the end of the 10th anniversary season of the International Polo Club. The polo season in Florida lasts four months during the winter.

During the tournament, Maserati will have its full range of vehicles on the grounds. This will include the new 2014 Maserati Quattroporte sedan, which debuted in January.



Maserati Quattroporte

In addition, the Open Championships will feature a celebrity lineup ranging from singers for the National Anthem to actors for the coin toss.

The celebrity lineup includes Liz Callaway, Emmy Award-winning singer; Ann Hampton Callaway, Tony Award-nominated singer and actress; singer Brooke Eden; actress Bo Derek; actress Lauren Holly; model and actor Antonio Sobato Jr. and wife Cheryl Moana Marie; and musician Lee Greenwood.



Actress Bo Derek getting comfortable with a Maserati

The publicity surrounding this polo tournament will likely boost Maserati's presence within the affluent polo community.

“[This] is just about the perfect sponsorship for a brand like Maserati, a high-end automobile brand that is not nearly as well known as other high-end automobile brands such as Ferrari, Bentley and Rolls-Royce,” said Al Ries, founder and chairman of **Ries & Ries**, a Roswell, GA-based marketing strategy consultancy.

“The publicity generated by its polo sponsorship should help the sales of Maserati vehicles,” he said.

“The audience at polo events is rather small, but the publicity generated should reach a much larger audience.”

Good sport

Other luxury brands have sponsored athletic events and teams as a way to gain more brand recognition and attention.

For instance, Audi of America extended its sponsorship of the U.S. Ski Team for an additional five years and is flaunting its S and RS models at events during the 2012-13 competition season.

The automaker is the official vehicle of the U.S. Ski Team and supplies vehicle transportation for the athletes in U.S.- and Europe-based competitions ([see story](#)).

Also, BMW Group Canada is the official vehicle of the Canadian Olympic Team and is providing funding and support of the teams and the athletes. The sponsorship includes the next two Olympic games: the Winter Olympic Games in Sochi, Russia, in 2014 and the Summer Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 2016 ([see story](#)).

Richemont-owned Piaget sponsored a polo tournament this year as well.

Piaget celebrated its sixth year of sponsoring the United States Polo Association Gold Cup and its status as the official timekeeper of the International Polo Club in Palm Beach, FL, with a new timepiece ([see story](#)).

Polo event sponsorship could help Maserati gain more recognition since it is a smaller manufacturer than other larger automakers.

“Marketing a low-volume brand like Maserati is very difficult,” Mr. Ries said. “Advertising is very expensive today, so companies like Maserati are looking for other ways to promote their brands.

“Sponsorships are one way, but it is difficult to find a good sponsorship that will target your potential market,” he said.

“I commend Maserati for recognizing that this event would be idea for its brand.”

Final take

Erin Shea, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York

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