

ADVERTISING

## Richard Mille ups brand exposure via Lotus F1 team sponsorship

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By ERIN SHEA

Swiss watchmaker Richard Mille is sponsoring British automaker Lotus' Formula One racing team to increase exposure of its brand.

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**Luxury Daily**

The watchmaker will serve as the official timing partner of the Lotus F1 team for the 2013 and 2014 seasons. Since many watchmakers have partnered with sports teams, brands need to find ways to stand out from the crowd to get noticed.

“From the very inception of the brand in 2001, Richard Mille endeavored to apply the techniques and materials found in the most innovative sectors, primarily F1 race car development, to watchmaking, with the goal of creating an extreme timepiece, without compromise or gimmicks,” said John Simonian, CEO of [Richard Mille Americas](#), Beverly Hills, CA.

“The first watch and many more watches in the collection incorporate design principles and materials that proved their value in F1 race car designs,” he said.

“Mr. Mille and Lotus F1 leaders share the same values, and both push the boundaries of innovation and technique.”

Securing a spot

As the official timing partner, Richard Mille will have branding on the team's vehicle and the driver's attire.



### *Lotus vehicle*

The watchmaker is joining Lotus' other brand partners such as Renault and Henri Lloyd. The Lotus F1 team has a number of sponsors even though it has only been racing in F1 since 2012.

In addition to the sponsorship, Richard Mille will also be creating a limited-edition watch to commemorate the partnership.

The timepiece will be made out of lightweight materials to resemble the team's F1 vehicle.

To promote the partnership, Richard Mille posted images on its Facebook page and changed its cover image to show off the Lotus racing vehicle.



### *Richard Mille Facebook*

By placing the brand's name on the Lotus vehicle, Richard Mille will likely gain exposure from its target audience.

"To me this seems to be a very shrewd marketing move for Richard Mille," said Brad Porter, CEO of **B.E. Porter**, Beverly Hills, CA. "By partnering with a high-end British

company, the watchmaker is expanding the scope of its branding while maintaining the benchmark of prestige, precision and excellence.

"The brand has a very specific clientele, which the cross-hairs of the Lotus label are already directly aimed at," he said.

"The move is good for the Lotus F1 team as well, and will only add to their gravitas."

### Keeping time

Watchmakers can increase their exposure by being official timekeepers of sporting events or teams. Many luxury watchmakers have partnered with a variety of different teams depending on their target audience.

For instance, Swiss watchmaker Hublot boosted brand visibility by becoming the official timekeeper of the Los Angeles Lakers National Basketball Association team.

Hublot presented a wall clock to the Lakers to symbolize the partnership during halftime at the Lakers versus the New Orleans Hornets game Jan. 29 at the Staples Center in Los Angeles.

The watchmaker has existing sports partnerships such as those with Manchester United Football Club, Fédération Internationale de Football Association, Jamaican sprinter Usain Bolt, the Miami Heat basketball team and Heat player Dwayne Wade ([see story](#)).

Furthermore, Richemont-owned 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 special timepiece.

The Polo FortyFive Black was released as a celebration of the Gold Cup sponsorship and the 10th anniversary of the International Polo Club in Palm Beach ([see story](#)).

Since many watchmakers use sporting events to promote themselves, brands will have to continue to get creative to keep consumers and event attendees engaged.

"Richard Mille and the Lotus F1 team are proceeding down a proven path with this association," said Ian Foley, a Portola Valley, CA,-based digital marketing strategist.

"The question is what will Richard Mille produce that is uniquely different compared to other watch luxury brands and sports property tie-ups," he said.

### Final take

*Erin Shea, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York*

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