

## Teamwork

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# Ahead of the competition

The traditional association between elite sport and precision timekeeping is yielding a wealth of watches. *By Alan Seymour*

Whether it's keeping tabs on Sha'Carri Richardson's blistering sprints or the lengthy rallies between Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic, timing is key in major sports events. From the first modern Olympics of 1896 and its unsynchronised judge's stopwatches to this summer's Commonwealth Games in Birmingham, where track events will be documented to fractions of a second by Longines, timekeeping and sport are inextricably linked.

Today, through elite sporting events that are watched globally, watchmakers can field-test and showcase their latest innovations and promote awareness of their products to millions. And timing partnerships are now an integral part of many brands' cultural identities. Think Rolex and Heuer/TAG Heuer and their long-standing associations with motorsport, which has led to two highly memorable watch models in the Cosmograph Daytona and Monaco respectively.

The rise of the superstar athlete in the 1980s saw a lot of brands focus on individual competitors, adopting them as ambassadors – for example, boxer Anthony Joshua by Audemars Piguet, and tennis's Rafael Nadal by Richard Mille. Other companies, however, have chosen to sponsor entire tournaments and embrace their many challenges.

## 1. POLO CARTIER

Founded in 1960 and sponsored by “the jeweller of kings and king of jewellers” since 2012, the three-week Cartier Queen's Cup is hosted by Guards Polo Club in Windsor and is the pinnacle of the UK polo season, attracting the world's best players and finest ponies. Teams from around the globe compete for the eponymous trophy, with previous champions including Prince Charles. Winners are presented with Cartier creations, which have included Tank watches, although there is no specific commercially

available model linked to the event. *Tank Must Extra Large, £3,150; cartier.com*

## 2. FOOTBALL HUBLOT

As well as its involvement with cricket and boxing, Hublot has held the Official Timekeeper position for numerous FIFA and UEFA events, and in 2022 will have a presence at both the UEFA Women's Euros here in the UK and the FIFA World Cup in Qatar. During the 2020 Euros (delayed until 2021 due to the pandemic), the brand kitted out referees with special connected watches running goal-line and VAR technology. And, after partnering with the UK Premier League in 2020, Hublot also released a Big Bang celebratory timepiece. *Big Bang e Premier League, £4,300; hublot.com*

## 3. HORSE RACING LONGINES

The high-stakes world of horse racing demands precision timekeeping, and this is an area that Longines has been addressing since 1878. The brand's connection to the world of equestrianism began when it debuted pocket-watch chronographs specifically designed to time equine competitions. Today, Longines is the Official Partner, Timekeeper and Official Watch Supplier for Royal Ascot. In addition to awarding watches to the winning owners, trainers and jockeys of certain races, in 2021 a model from the DolceVita collection was announced as the year's Official Watch of Royal Ascot. *DolceVita, £2,840; longines.com*

## 4. OLYMPIC GAMES OMEGA

This year saw Omega continue its 90-year partnership with the Olympics at the 2022 Winter Games in Beijing. As Official Timekeeper, it supplied a team of 300 people and 200 tonnes of equipment. Alongside the expected stopwatches and clocks, the brand provides motion-sensor cameras and real-



Winning partnership: Longines' long-held association with horse racing includes being Official Partner, Timekeeper and Official Watch Supplier for Royal Ascot

time speed-detecting antenna technology, too. It is now a tradition for Omega to mark each Games with a celebratory watch, with the Seamaster Diver 300M Beijing Special Edition being the latest example. *Seamaster Diver 300M Beijing Special Edition, £5,520; omegawatches.com*

## 5. TENNIS ROLEX

Rolex is a familiar name on many sporting circuits, from Formula 1 to equestrianism, golf and sailing, but one of its biggest connections is with tennis, where it serves as a partner to all four Grand Slam tournaments. Wimbledon stands out as possibly the most significant of the four competitions as it was the first of the quartet to join up with Rolex in 1978. The brand provides the clocks on all the courts, as well as around the club. And for those who fancy a touch of British summer on their wrist, there is a 41mm bi-colour Datejust with familiar green Roman numerals that has been nicknamed “The Wimbledon” by collectors. *Datejust 41mm Everose Gold and Steel, £11,100; rolex.com*

## 6. CYCLING TISSOT

Like its Swatch Group stablemate Omega, Tissot is trusted with far more than just timekeeping for its long-standing Tour de France partnership. Alongside bike-mounted transponders, paired sensors and photo-finish cameras, which take 10,000 images a second, the brand documents all the twists and turns of the event's timing. This year's official watch, the T-Race Cycling Tour de France Special Edition 2022, is a sporty chronograph with a gravel-textured dial, inspired by the design of a racing bike. *T-Race Cycling Tour de France Special Edition 2022, £470; tissotwatches.com*

## 7. RUGBY TUDOR

Rugby is a sport aligned with many watch brands: 2020 saw Bremont partner with England Rugby and Twickenham Stadium, while this year Breitling became the Official Timing Partner of the Six Nations Rugby games. Tudor, meanwhile, has been a sponsor of all Rugby World Cup competitions since 2017. The brand also has a partnership

with the New Zealand national rugby team, a relationship marked by the limited-edition Black Bay Chrono Dark, a watch whose production numbers equal the amount of players who have worn the famous All Blacks jersey (1,199 by the last count). *Black Bay Chrono Dark, £4,700; tudorwatch.com*

## 8. OFF-ROAD RACING ZENITH

Acting as both Official Timing and founding partner, Zenith is in the driving seat for one of the latest eco-conscious sports: the Extreme E off-road electric racing championship. To celebrate the new partnership, this year the brand launched a watch dedicated to Extreme E. Housed in a 45mm carbon and microblasted titanium case, the Defy Extreme E “Desert XPrix” is a 1/1000th second chronograph that made its debut at the Neom, Saudi Arabia race in February. The next event is scheduled for 8-10 July in Sardinia, where Zenith will launch a new Defy Extreme E model. *Defy Extreme E “Desert XPrix” 1/1000th second chronograph, £22,700; zenith-watches.com*