



## Tennis fashion is exploding at the US Open. Luxury brands want in

NEW YORK (AP) — Before New York Fashion Week kicks off in Manhattan, some of the incoming brands are making an early first stop elsewhere — out in Queens, on the blue hard courts of the U.S. Open , where play continues through next weekend.

Just four days separate the two crosstown spectacles, which are beginning to have more in common than ever before.

In a sport where brands like Nike and Adidas were once the only players, the logos of Gucci and Miu Miu have started to weave their way in. Tennis fashion has been surging, and the luxury fashion industry doesn't want to feel left out.

Luxury fashion partnerships in the tennis world historically have been somewhat sparse. They've been testing the waters in recent years, and lately, the deals have been flowing — Bottega Veneta with Lorenzo Musetti , Burberry with Jack Draper , Canali with Stefanos Tsitsipas and Dior with Zheng Qinwen have all come since January.

Coco Gauff wore tennis dresses partially designed by Miu Miu for three tournaments this summer — “Fashion helps bring casual fans to the sport,” she said — and top-ranked Jannik Sinner often has carried a Gucci tennis bag onto the court since their partnership began in 2022.

The collaborations are multiplying. And they're causing a buzz.

When Musetti debuted as a Bottega Veneta ambassador, the brand's first athlete, by wearing their white jacket at Wimbledon this summer, both the sports and fashion worlds were taken.

“It was really cool because every magazine, every fashion magazine was talking about it,” Musetti said with a smile a few days before he started play in New York. “I think the tennis courts can also be a stage.”

Tennis' increasing cultural capital has made the sport just that — a stage — for players and fans alike. But luxury fashion brands are flocking in for more than just its recent popularity.

“Tennis is a marketer's dream, because it crosses so many demographics and still has prestige,” said Meeta Roy, an associate professor of fashion business at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York who previously worked in the luxury fashion industry.

“That (is) the challenge of the luxury brand business model as it exists today: How do you keep your core high net worth individuals? But also, so much of the revenue is driven by those that are interested in accessible luxury. Oftentimes, you have a two-tiered marketing strategy for the different groups. ... But tennis is this place where it can all exist together,” she said.

The sport's historical association with the wealthy, coupled with its skyrocketing general popularity, is making its courts the perfect marketing opportunity for the luxury space.

It doesn't hurt that the pro tour runs through many major cities across the globe, and there's also the simple fact of “quite a lot of sex appeal,” according to Stuart Brumfitt, editor of tennis lifestyle magazine Bagel and a former associate editor at British GQ.

“With this younger era (of players), they've all got huge social media followings. ... They've got a lot of reach,” he said. “Because it's an individual sport, they don't get lost in the team. If (a brand) backs that person, they get all of their audience.”



It's that diverse reach that makes the U.S. Open rival the other big show in town — New York Fashion Week, which begins on Sept. 11 — from a marketing perspective.

“Anyone who's looking at content from a brand's runway shows, they're already a fan of the brand. But when Musetti is busting out the (Bottega Veneta jacket) for the world, that's a completely different audience,” Roy said. “It's all about attracting the nontraditional fashion customer.”

In her words: “Everyone loves a good show.”

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AP tennis: <https://apnews.com/hub/tennis>

