



## A VOYAGE INTO THE WORLD OF ROLEX

Hans Wilsdorf was firmly convinced of a person's ability to innovate and strive for excellence. More than 100 years after the creation of the brand, the founder's philosophy is more present than ever, from the manufacturing of the company's watches to its commitments worldwide.



**HANS WILSDORF, 1945**  
Rolex founder and visionary  
entrepreneur.

“The opposition I encountered seemed insuperable.” At the turn of the 20th century, a visionary entrepreneur based in London was on the verge of success. His aim? To introduce the watchmaking world of the day to an as-yet-unknown dial signature: Rolex. A new name, invented in 1908, it would become one of the world’s most respected brands in the space of a few decades. As Hans Wilsdorf recounted in his memoirs of the early days of his company, the opposition he faced seemed insurmountable at first.

The entrepreneur started out with very little, but he did possess invaluable qualities: vision, hope for the future, perseverance and an extraordinary ability to work. An orphan at the age of 12, with nothing other than his determination to help him overcome challenges, Hans Wilsdorf went on to invent the world’s first waterproof self-winding wristwatch with a Perpetual rotor – a watch that has become a benchmark in terms of quality and prestige.

“Too complicated, too fragile, ill-adapted” – the wristwatch was met with scepticism in Edwardian England, then the sporting country par excellence. Yet, relying on his intuition, firmly-held beliefs and determination to push boundaries, Hans Wilsdorf managed to achieve his bold objective of establishing the Rolex watch – the Oyster Perpetual – as the archetype of the waterproof timepiece: precise, robust and able to withstand all conditions.

But Hans Wilsdorf was not simply a visionary who, through his watchmaking knowledge, spirit of enterprise and ability to think differently, endowed Rolex watches with their fundamental technical and aesthetic characteristics and set the way for his company’s long-lasting success. His constant quest for perfection was accompanied by a profound generosity and unshakeable faith in human potential – in our capacity to both innovate and overcome difficulties. Hans Wilsdorf was a compassionate man always prepared to challenge himself and who encouraged others to give their all.

Draw from traditions to drive innovation. Push back the limits to inspire. These convictions enabled Rolex to create an exceptional product – a watch that brings together considerable expertise and has accompanied a great many human adventures in widely diverse fields.

#### UNITING EXPERTISE

An integrated and independent company, Rolex has manufacturing resources that encompass a wide range of skills and knowledge. Watchmakers, engineers, designers and other specialists work closely together from the design to the manufacturing of the watches. Rolex’s company culture is based above all on human values, which place both expertise and soft skills at the heart of the brand’s different activities.

Rolex is host to a variety of professions, brought to life by employees who are experts in their fields. This diversity comes from the company’s complete control over its essential components, from the casting of gold alloys to machining, finishing and assembly of the movement, case, dial and bracelet elements, as well as gem-setting.

As the world’s first waterproof wristwatch, the original 1926 Oyster played a pioneering role in the development of the modern timepiece.





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The brand is able to constantly reinforce its quality requirements thanks to its exclusive equipment. Its know-how is also made available right across the world thanks to an exceptional after-sales service network.

To ensure the brand's expertise exists into the future, Rolex has its own unique Training Centre. Dedicated to the pursuit of excellence and the development of its employees, the centre, located in Geneva, provides training to employees and instructs apprentices. The company aims to pass on to younger generations its pride in its skills and mastery of its knowledge.

Hans Wilsdorf wanted to ensure both the commercial success of Rolex and the well-being of its employees. The Training Centre perpetuates this philosophy by passing on the company's heritage through the training and development of each individual. It therefore affirms the brand's position as a role model and source of inspiration for the present generation and for generations to come.

#### **A WATCH UNLIKE THE REST**

Nearly a century ago, Hans Wilsdorf created the most precise and reliable wristwatch in the world. Thanks to uncompromising requirements, today the brand still produces watches at the forefront of technology and continues to improve them over time.

The Oyster Perpetual collection was built on the success of the original Oyster model, patented by Rolex and launched in 1926. As the world's first waterproof wristwatch, it played a pioneering role in the development of the modern timepiece. Over the years, the Oyster became the proud bearer of many other innovations – such as self-winding by means of the Perpetual rotor (1931) – that defined the identity of the models in the collection and forged Rolex's reputation for excellence, of which chronometric precision and reliability are among the cornerstones.

After acquiring its definitive form in the early 1940s, the Oyster gradually evolved into a collection of watches that integrated new functions and innovative technologies. All of the collection's models share fundamental features and a strong visual identity that makes them instantly recognizable. Today the collection consists of 12 ranges, split into two categories: Classic watches such as the Datejust, the Day-Date and the Sky-Dweller, and Professional watches, including the Explorer, the Submariner and the GMT-Master II, designed for specific activities. Rolex watches have proven their reliability in the most extreme conditions, from the deepest reaches of the ocean to the top of the highest mountains, in the air and on the racing circuit.

To ensure the quality of its products, Rolex designs and produces in-house the essential components of its watches (casting of gold alloys, assembly of the movement, case, dial and bracelet, machining and finishing). As the pioneer of the wristwatch, the company is at the origin of numerous major innovations in the watchmaking industry and has filed over 500 patents in the course of its history.



#### COMMITMENT TO MAKING THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE

Throughout its history, Rolex has partnered with events, institutions and individuals whose commitment and actions are a source of inspiration. Guided by the vision of its founder, the brand was quick to support and accompany initiatives that aligned with its own values – the quest for excellence, pushing the boundaries and the passion for elegance.

This is how Rolex created the Testimonee concept in 1927 with British swimmer Mercedes Gleitze, who demonstrated the waterproofness of the brand's watches. Since then, Rolex has teamed up with a large number of exceptional partners, supporting the initiatives of major organizations as well as personal projects of its Testimonees.



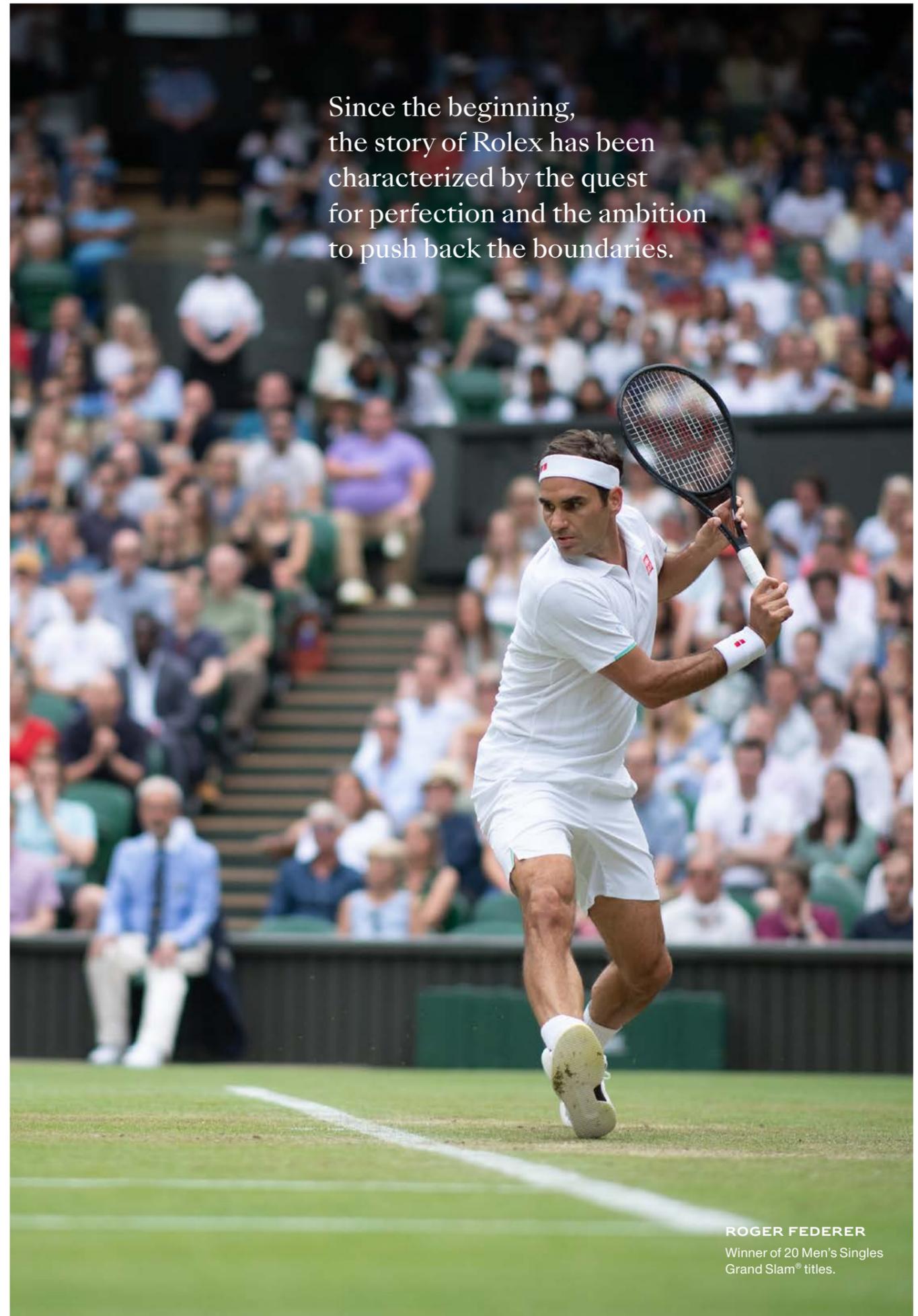
**Sylvia Earle**, legendary marine biologist and Rolex Testimonee since 1982.

**Sir David Adjaye** (right) and his protégée **Mariam Kamara**, 2018-2019 Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative – Architecture.

For Hans Wilsdorf, the world was also a living laboratory. In the 1930s, Rolex tested its watches in real-life conditions. Explorers subjected them to some of the most extreme conditions in the least hospitable corners of the globe. But, over time, these expeditions also highlighted the fragility of the planet's ecosystems and the need to preserve them. Rolex therefore gave its full support to the adventurers who went on to become pioneers in protecting the environment.

Today, Rolex is linked to more than 100 major international events ranging from The Championships, Wimbledon, to La Biennale di Venezia and the Oscars® ceremony, while also enjoying close ties with more than 80 renowned institutions, such as The R&A, the Teatro alla Scala in Milan and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. The brand also has more than 140 Testimonees, including tennis legend Roger Federer, marine biologist Sylvia Earle and filmmaker Martin Scorsese. In addition, two programmes were created: the Rolex Awards for Enterprise and the Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative. The former supports individuals with innovative projects in response to major challenges, while the latter champions excellence in the arts and culture to ensure the world's artistic heritage is passed on to the next generation.

Since the beginning, the story of Rolex has been characterized by the quest for perfection and the ambition to push back the boundaries. To strive to do better, to never give up, to think differently. Thanks to its founder Hans Wilsdorf, who believed in human potential above all, the brand has continued to innovate and grow, thereby guaranteeing its long-lasting success. 🏆



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**ROGER FEDERER**  
Winner of 20 Men's Singles  
Grand Slam® titles.