

# BREAKING NEWS



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## SYMETRA TOUR ANNOUNCES 2019 SCHEDULE

*PLAYERS ON THE “ROAD TO THE LPGA” WILL COMPETE FOR GREATER THAN \$4 MILLION IN TOTAL PURSES FOR FIRST TIME IN TOUR HISTORY*

**DAYTONA BEACH, Fla.** — The Symetra Tour has released the official 2019 “Road to the LPGA” schedule, featuring 24 tournaments—the most in a season since 1988—and \$4 million in purses, marking the first time in the 39-year history of the Tour that plateau has been surpassed.

To give perspective on this purse figure, it is up 27 percent from 2018. In addition, compared to the 15 events and \$1.62 million in purses offered by the 2013 schedule, the Tour has witnessed a 60 percent growth in tournaments and 150 percent increase for purses during that span.

“The Symetra Tour continues its consistent trend of upward growth, enhancing the opportunity we provide to players from around the world who aspire to play on the LPGA Tour,” said Mike Nichols, the Chief Business Officer of the Symetra Tour. “Not only are we once again raising purses in an effort to attract the best talent, but we continue to upgrade courses in an effort to provide players with an idea of what they will see when they graduate to the LPGA Tour.”

More than 340 players from 45 different countries hold Symetra Tour membership in 2019.

### PURSE OF \$300,000 SETS NEW STANDARD

A minimum of six tournaments this year will feature a purse of \$200,000 or more, including the first event in Symetra Tour history to offer \$300,000 in prize money.

The tournament setting this new standard will be held May 23-26 on the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail in Opelika, Ala. at the Lake Course of Grand National. This venue previously played host to the PGA TOUR’s Barbasol Championship from 2015-2017. Details for the title sponsor of this inaugural event will be revealed on Friday, March 22 during Bank of Hope Founders Cup week on the LPGA Tour.

Matching the 2016 Self Regional Healthcare Foundation Women’s Health Classic in Greenwood, S.C., which previously held the title of largest purse in Symetra Tour history at \$250,000, is this year’s season opener, the inaugural SKYiGOLF Championship hosted by Charlotte Harbor National Golf Club at Bobcat Trail in North Port, Fla. from March 7-10.

“To have a pair of new title sponsors exhibit an all-in approach is a testament to the current enthusiasm for the Symetra Tour and professional women’s golf,” Nichols said. “The \$300,000 purse sets the new benchmark, providing both future and current partners a new standard to which to aspire.”

With the two newcomers making a big splash, two other new events are also on the calendar. Formerly known as the POC MED Golf Classic, the Windsor Golf Classic returns April 5-7 to Windsor Golf Club after a one-year hiatus and is the second of two California events.

The other addition is the Janesville Golf Classic at Wisconsin's historic Janesville Country Club from Aug. 2-4. This inaugural event will showcase a unique format, as 30 LPGA Legends Tour members will compete in an 18-hole tournament on Sunday alongside Symetra Tour professionals after the 36-hole cut has been made. A Pro-Am event featuring these LPGA greats will be held on Monday, Aug. 5 following the completion of competition.

### **POTAWATOMI CUP BACK FOR SIXTH CONSECUTIVE YEAR**

A unique aspect to the Symetra Tour schedule is the Potawatomi Cup, which is back for a sixth straight year in 2019 and highlights the contributions of four member tribes from the Potawatomi Nation who host tournaments throughout the Midwest.

The events are split between June and August, with the eighth annual Four Winds Invitational opening the series from June 7-9 in South Bend, Ind. at Blackthorn Golf Club. Then, Sweetgrass Golf Club in Harris, Mich. hosts the ninth annual Island Resort Championship from June 21-23. Potawatomi Cup action picks back up Aug. 9-11 with the PHC Classic in Glendale, Wis. at Brown Deer Park Golf Course. Finally, the FireKeepers Casino Hotel Championship from Aug. 16-18 in Battle Creek, Mich. at Battle Creek Country Club concludes competition.

As well as the normal purse payout for each event, a total of \$40,000 in bonus money is available to players based on performance, including \$6,000 to the winner of the Potawatomi Cup. First through fifth place in each of the four tournaments receives a sum of unofficial prize money on top of their earnings. The winner will take home an additional \$3,000 and second place collects \$2,500. Furthermore, third place earns \$1,500 with amounts from there for the final two spots decreasing in increments of \$500.

“It is such an awesome feeling to partner with the Symetra Tour and watch these talented women pursue their dreams of reaching the LPGA Tour,” said Matt Wesaw, the Chairman for the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians who host the Four Winds Invitational. “We couldn't be more proud of the quartet of events that have come together to make the Potawatomi Cup such an anticipated component of the Symetra Tour season.”

Furthermore, 2019 will mark the first year the Island Resort Championship serves as the official United States qualifier for The Evian Championship. Since the inception of this relationship in 2016 when the FireKeepers Casino Hotel Championship was the springboard, the qualifier annually sends the top-two finishers to the LPGA Tour's prestigious major championship. The Island Resort Championship takes the reins from the PHC Classic, which provided the exemptions over the last two seasons.

“There is great pride among our staff and the Harris community in making the Island Resort Champi-

onship one of the best and most welcoming stops on the Symetra Tour,” said Tony Mancilla, General Manager for Island Resort & Casino. “It is great to see the dedication we have shown in making our event stand out has not gone unnoticed and this will take it to another level.”

## **INSURANCE OFFICE OF AMERICA CONTINUES TITLE SPONSOR PORTFOLIO**

One year after expanding their partnership with the Symetra Tour from two events to three, Insurance Office of America (IOA) will once again host three tournaments, demonstrating their continued commitment to women’s professional golf.

The IOA Championship presented by Morongo Casino Resort & Spa will be the first of the two California tournaments, returning to Morongo Golf Club at Tukwet Canyon in Beaumont for a fourth time from March 29-31. Then from May 9-11, Atlanta National Golf Club in Milton, Ga. welcomes the second annual IOA Invitational. Rounding out the trio is the IOA Golf Classic in Longwood, Fla., from Sept. 27-29 at Alaqua Country Club.

“Our relationship with the Symetra Tour is one of a kind and has provided opportunities to showcase our brand and values, especially dipping into the LPGA Tour spectrum through the inaugural Diamond Resorts Tournament of Champions as the presenting sponsor in 2019,” said IOA co-founder and chairman John Ritenour. “It makes perfect sense to continue in this journey together, giving the next generation of future LPGA Tour stars a chance to make their name known.”

## **SAYING GOODBYE TO AN OLD FRIEND**

When the Symetra Tour arrives at Hickory Point Golf Course in Decatur, Ill. this June, it will be the curtain call for an event that has hosted “Road to the LPGA” professionals for 35 of the Tour’s 39 years of existence.

“I’ve been adamant that when the time came for Decatur to bid farewell that we do it in a proactive way so that we can celebrate the community’s contribution to the growth of this Tour,” said Nichols. “The last thing I wanted to do was have it end with a press release in the middle of winter. In the near future, we will be making announcements about some special activities to make this an unforgettable week saying not only goodbye, but thank you.”

The 35th annual Forsyth Classic presented by the Decatur Parks District will be contested June 14-16.

## **15 STATES TO WELCOME SYMETRA TOUR WITH OPEN ARMS**

On the “Road to the LPGA” in 2019, the Symetra Tour will swing through 15 states and six are set to host multiple events including Alabama, California, Indiana, Michigan and Wisconsin, while Florida leads the way with four.

“Being able to take the Tour from coast-to-coast is one of our proud achievements and has raised the profile of the Symetra Tour and its players,” Nichols said. “We are greatly looking forward to each stop and the chance for fans to follow the next wave of bright, young female golfers.”

Following the SKYiGOLF Championship, the Tour jogs up I-75 for the 11th annual Florida's Natural Charity Classic from March 15-17 in Winter Haven, Fla. at the Country Club of Winter Haven. Meanwhile, the Murphy USA El Dorado Shootout at Mystic Creek Golf Club in El Dorado, Ark. is moving up to April 26-28 from its typical early September slot.

Tour entitlement partner Symetra is set to host two events once again. The first is the eighth edition of the Symetra Classic, to be contested May 15-17 for a second straight year in Davidson, N.C. at River Run Country Club. In addition, the Symetra Tour Championship will conclude the season from Oct. 3-6 at LPGA International in Daytona Beach.

Seven other tournaments return to the Symetra Tour schedule in 2019 including the Valley Forge Invitational in Pottstown, Pa. (Raven's Claw Golf Club from May 31-June 2), Prasco Charity Championship in Maineville, Ohio (TPC River's Bend from June 28-30), Donald Ross Classic in French Lick, Ind. (Donald Ross Course at French Lick Resort from July 11-14), Danielle Downey Credit Union Classic in Rochester, N.Y. (Brook Lea Country Club from July 18-21), Sioux Falls GreatLIFE Challenge in Sioux Falls, S.D. (Willow Run Golf Club from Aug. 29-Sept. 1), Garden City Charity Classic in Garden City, Kan. (Buffalo Dunes Golf Club from Sept. 6-8) and the Guardian Championship in Prattville, Ala. (Capitol Hill Golf Club from Sept. 20-22).

Every year since 2008, the top-10 players on the Symetra Tour official season money list are awarded LPGA Tour membership. That will happen once again in 2019 as players will compete for a spot in the Volvik Race for the Card, hoping to join the 147 graduates before them that have made the leap to the big stage.

Individuals who finish Nos. 11-30 will advance to Pinehurst Resort in Pinehurst, N.C. for the second annual LPGA Q-Series presented by Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina. From Oct. 23-26, the first week of Q-Series will be played on the George and Tom Fazio-designed Pinehurst Course No. 6. The second week of competition will be on the Jack Nicklaus-designed Pinehurst Course No. 9 from Oct. 30-Nov. 2.

## **SYMETRA TOUR MILESTONES**

*1983:* "Road to the LPGA" launches as the Tampa Bay Mini Tour with eight events

*1999:* "Road to the LPGA" awards three LPGA Tour cards for the first time

*1999:* "Road to the LPGA" surpasses \$1 million threshold in total prize money for the first time

*2003:* "Road to the LPGA" awards five LPGA Tour cards for the first time

*2007:* LPGA Tour officially acquires the "Road to the LPGA" in July

*2010:* "Road to the LPGA" awards 10 LPGA Tour cards for the first time

*2012:* Symetra assumes naming rights to the "Road to the LPGA" at the beginning of the season

*2012:* Mike Nichols named Chief Business Officer of the Symetra Tour in July

*2013:* Symetra Tour plays 15 events for \$1.62 million in total prize money

*2014:* Symetra Tour surpasses \$2 million threshold in total prize money for the first time

*2016:* Symetra Tour surpasses \$3 million threshold in total prize money for the first time

*2019:* Symetra Tour surpasses \$4 million threshold in total prize money for the first time; 24 tourna-

ments is the most in a season since 1988 when the average purse was just \$22,000

## **ABOUT SYMETRA TOUR**

The Symetra Tour is the official qualifying tour of the LPGA Tour and enters its 39th competitive season in 2019. With the support of its entitlement partner Symetra, the Tour's mission is to prepare the world's best young women professional golfers for a successful career on the LPGA Tour. Since Symetra's inaugural sponsorship year in 2012, the Symetra Tour has grown from 16 tournaments and \$1.7 million in prize money to \$4.0 million in prize money awarded over the course of 24 tournaments. With more than 600 alumnae moving on to the LPGA, former Symetra Tour players have won a total of 437 LPGA titles. Follow the Symetra Tour on the web at [www.SymetraTour.com](http://www.SymetraTour.com), [Facebook.com/Road2LPGA](https://www.facebook.com/Road2LPGA), [Twitter.com/Road2LPGA](https://twitter.com/Road2LPGA), and [YouTube.com/Road2LPGA](https://www.youtube.com/Road2LPGA).

## **ABOUT SYMETRA**

Symetra Life Insurance Company is a subsidiary of Symetra Financial Corporation, a diversified financial services company based in Bellevue, Washington. In business since 1957, Symetra provides employee benefits, annuities and life insurance through a national network of benefit consultants, financial institutions and independent agents and advisors. Symetra began its partnership with the Road to the LPGA in 2010 as the title sponsor of the Symetra Classic. It secured naming rights for the Symetra Tour in November 2011. In addition to its title sponsorship of the Tour, which runs through 2021, Symetra sponsors two events on the tournament schedule—the Symetra Classic and the season-ending Symetra Tour Championship. For more information about Symetra, visit [www.symetra.com](http://www.symetra.com).

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