



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MICHELLE PIYAPATTRA AND ERICA SHEPHERD RECEIVE SPONSOR EXEMPTIONS FOR THE 2023 FOUR WINDS INVITATIONAL

*Ms. Piyapattra is from Eastvale, Calif. and is a Graduate of Columbia University
Ms. Shepherd is from Greenwood, Ind. and is a Recent Graduate of Duke University*

SOUTH BEND, Ind. – July 31, 2023 – The Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians and its Four Winds® Casinos are pleased to announce that Michelle Piyapattra and Erica Shepherd have received sponsor exemptions to play in the 2023 Four Winds Invitational. Sponsor exemptions are used to give amateurs and up-and-coming players the opportunity to play in tournaments and compete against professionals. The Four Winds Invitational is part of the Epson Tour, which entered its 43rd year of structured competition in 2023 and is the most established women’s qualifying tour in the world as the one “Road to the LPGA.” The tournament will take place from Thursday, August 10 through Saturday, August 12 at South Bend Country Club.

Michelle Piyapattra is from Eastvale, California and played Division I golf at Columbia University in New York. During her four years there, she won six individual titles, including the Ivy League Conference tournament, she also earned First-Team All-Ivy three times as well as Ivy League Player of the Year her sophomore year. She double majored in Political Science and Anthropology and during her senior year, won her first professional event on the Canadian Tour as an amateur. The win gave her an exemption into the 2014 CP Canadian Women’s Open where she had her pro debut. Since then she has maintained full-status on the Epson Tour and at the Four Winds Invitational last year, she finished T21. She enjoys coming back to South Bend and seeing her host family and volunteer caddy who are members at South Bend Country club. She has also participated in multiple Four Winds Invitational pro-ams and junior clinics during the week of the tournament. She is currently the assistant women’s golf coach at Cal State Fullerton and works for FORE Hire, which is a company committed to creating opportunities for players, people, and organizations through golf.

Ms. Shepherd is from Greenwood, Indiana and is a recent graduate of Duke University. As a member of the Blue Devils golf team for four years, she totaled a 73.12 stroke average to go along with one individual victory, six top-5, 10 top-10 and 16 top-20 finishes. She collected 39 rounds of even or under par and 10 rounds in the 60s. She also turned in her third straight top-15 finish in a NCAA Regional – T14 in 2023, T11 in 2022 and T13 in 2021, becoming just the 11th Blue Devil to collect three or more top-15 finishes in the NCAA Regional. Ms. Shepherd competed in all four Augusta National Women’s Amateur (ANWA) events and made the cut in three of her four appearances.

Commenting on the sponsor exemption selection, Scott Brewer, Senior Vice President of Government Affairs and Community Relations/Security for Four Winds Casinos said, “The Pokagon Band of Potawatomi and its Four Winds Casinos are proud to have selected Michelle Piyapattra and Erica Shepherd as our sponsor exempt players for the 2023 Four Winds Invitational. Both are rising stars and represent the high level of talent competing on the Epson Tour. We wish them both the best of luck for this year’s tournament.”

Greg Helmkamp, General Manager and Head Golf Professional at South Bend Country Club added, “Both Michelle and Erica have a passion for the sport and proven tournament performance to compete with the best players on the Epson Tour. In addition to distinguished collegiate careers, Erica has had the opportunity to compete and make the cuts at four LPGA and two Epson Tour events as an amateur, and Michelle was in contention going into the final round of the Four Winds Invitational last year. We look forward to welcoming them both to South Bend Country Club, along with the rest of the field, for a very competitive tournament this year.”

Ms. Piyapattra said, “I really wanted to play in this year’s event since I was in contention the final round last year and just wasn’t able to make a move on the last day. Also, I thought last year’s event would be my last, but now as a college coach I had a week free from recruiting and wanted to come back to play in South Bend where I have community ties.”

Ms. Shepherd said, “It means so much to me to start my professional golf career in the state that I grew up in. Playing in the 2023 Four Winds Invitational will provide me with invaluable experience as I prepare for Q-school in late August.”

More information on Ms. Piyapattra’s collegiate career at Columbia University can be found by clicking on the following link: <https://gocolumbiaions.com/sports/womens-golf/roster/michelle-piyapattra/4193>.

More information on Ms. Shepherd’s collegiate career at Duke University can be found by clicking on the following link: <https://goduke.com/sports/womens-golf/roster/erica-shepherd/18683>.

Volunteers are still needed to fill a variety of roles at the 2023 Four Winds Invitational. Volunteer roles include assisting with scoring duties and serving as building attendants, caddies, cart drivers, driving range attendants, food and beverage servers, marshals and spotters, parking attendants, standard bearers, shuttle drivers, and more. For more information and to complete the volunteer application, please visit <http://fourwindsinvitational.com/volunteer/> or contact Ronna Nowinski, Four Winds Invitational Volunteer Coordinator at fwivolunteer@southbendcc.com.

About the Four Winds Invitational

The Four Winds® Invitational was established in 2012 as part of the Road to the LPGA® and is sponsored by the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians and its Four Winds® Casinos. The tournament features a field of professional women golfers from around the world. More information is available at: <http://fourwindsinvitational.com/>.

About The Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians of Michigan and Indiana

The Pokagon Band of Potawatomi's sovereignty was reaffirmed under legislation signed into law by President Clinton in September of 1994. The Pokagon Band is dedicated to providing community development initiatives such as housing, education, family services, medical care, and cultural preservation for its more than 6,000 citizens. The Pokagon Band's ten-county service area includes four counties in Southwestern Michigan and six in Northern Indiana. Its main administrative offices are located in Dowagiac, Mich., with a satellite office in South Bend, Ind. In 2007, it opened Four Winds Casino Resort in New Buffalo, Mich., followed by Four Winds Hartford in 2011, Four Winds Dowagiac in 2013 and Four Winds South Bend in January 2018. The Pokagon Band operates a variety of non-gaming businesses through its investment enterprises, Mno-Bmadsen and the Pokagon Development Authority. More information is available at www.pokagonband-nsn.gov, www.fourwindscasino.com and www.mno-bmadsen.com.

About the Epson Tour

The Epson Tour is the official qualifying tour of the LPGA Tour, the world's leading competitive destination for female professional golfers. With the support of entitlement partner [Seiko Epson Corporation](http://www.seikoepson.com), the Tour, entering into its 43rd competitive season in 2023, aims to prepare the world's best female professional golfers for a successful career on the LPGA Tour. In the last decade, the Epson Tour has grown from 15 tournaments and \$1.6 million in total prize money to hosting more than 20 events and awarding \$4.9 million in 2023. With more than 600 graduates and alumnae moving on to the LPGA Tour, former Epson Tour players have won 466 LPGA titles.

Follow the Epson Tour at www.epson.com, as well as on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/epson), [Twitter](https://twitter.com/epson) and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/epson).

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