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University of Arkansas Women Golfers Embark on the Road to the #NWACHampionship

The Walmart NW Arkansas Championship presented by P&G guarantees one Razorback student athlete an opportunity to play in the 2015 and 2016 LPGA events in Rogers, Ark.

ROGERS, Ark. – The Walmart NW Arkansas Championship presented by P&G and the University of Arkansas Women’s Golf Team announced a partnership today to guarantee one student-athlete a Sponsor’s Exemption in the 2015 and the 2016 LPGA events. In addition, two qualifying spots will be reserved for the Razorback Women’s Golf Team for the tournament’s qualifying event. The tournament is scheduled for June 22 – June 28 this year with the qualifier round taking place on Monday, June 22.

“Since the inaugural Walmart NW Arkansas Championship presented by P&G in 2007, Razorback golfers have received a sponsorship exemption or Monday qualifier spots each year,” said Harry Hardy, tournament director. “This year, we’re making the partnership official by working with the University of Arkansas coaching staff to implement criteria formalizing the process of selection for the sponsor’s exemption and qualifier spots. Our hope is to not only give female college athletes the chance to excel on a professional level, but also make the University of Arkansas a more desirable college to up and coming golfers.”

The criteria for selection include team rankings and academic standing for the golfers. The top ranked University of Arkansas player as of May 1 will be eligible for the sponsor’s exemption. The qualified player must write an official letter requesting invitation and be in good academic standing with the University. The second and third best stroke averages from the team’s competitive season will have an opportunity to Monday qualify for the official LPGA event.

“This is a very exciting opportunity for student athletes at the University of Arkansas,” said Shauna Estes-Taylor, head coach of the Razorback Women’s Golf Team. “We are the only collegiate golf program in the country to have a guaranteed spot for their players in a professional tournament such as the Walmart NW Arkansas Championship presented by P&G.”

The tournament’s title sponsor, Walmart, has supported the initiative as women’s empowerment is a key effort for the company.

“As the world’s largest retailer, Walmart believes it is our responsibility to help women realize their potential,” stated Gisel Ruiz, Executive Vice President of Walmart International People Division. “Helping these young women recognize their potential on the golf course and in life is certainly something we as a company take pride in and look forward to witnessing over the months ahead.”

Each year, the tournament has the opportunity to give out two sponsor’s exemptions. Past exemptions have included Stacy Lewis in 2007, when she played as an incoming senior at the University of Arkansas and unofficially won the event, which was shortened due to rain. In addition, former University of Arkansas golfer Emily Tubert has played in the event twice as a sponsor’s exemption, and in 2014 made her professional debut at the tournament.

The tournament has partnered with KNWA & Fox 24 to keep fans updated on the Road to #NWACHampionship. Viewers can tune in to Razorback Nation to find out who is leading the race throughout the spring season and follow the University of Arkansas Women’s Golf Team on its quest to compete in the Walmart NW Arkansas Championship presented by P&G. Updates on the Razorback Women’s Golf Team are also available at www.razorbackgolf.com.

*The **Walmart NW Arkansas Championship presented by P&G** has become a premier stop on the LPGA Tour. On June 22-28, 144 of the world’s best LPGA professionals will tee it up at Pinnacle Country Club competing for a \$2,000,000 purse and a chance to be named Champion of the 2015 Walmart NW Arkansas Championship presented by P&G. For more information on the Walmart NW Arkansas Championship, please visit www.nwachampionship.com.*

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