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THE THUNDERBIRDS HOST 30TH ANNUAL JGAA THUNDERBIRD INVITATIONAL AT PAPAGO GOLF CLUB

Wheaton Ennis clinches Boys Championship division by two strokes, Lena Durette wins first JGAA event since 2019.

PHOENIX, Ariz – - The Thunderbird Invitational came to a close yesterday, after two days of intense competition at Papago Golf Club. The Thunderbirds, charitable giving arm and hosts of the WM Phoenix Open, has been a huge supporter of junior golf in the state, including the Junior Golf Association of Arizona. The civic organization hosts a multitude of junior amateur events across the Valley including the Thunderbird Invitational, now in its 30th year. The first-round action of the Thunderbird Invitational sponsored by The Thunderbirds began March 9 with Wheaton Ennis of Litchfield Park catching fire on the front nine after a four-under 32, en route to a 68. However, Ethan Butters of Chandler, Henry Dall of Scottsdale and Tyler Anderson of Phoenix had themselves an equally impressive first round with scores in the high 60s to remain within striking distance. Ennis started out the final round a bit shaky with two bogeys in the first four holes but managed to pull away from the bunch after a noteworthy eagle 3 on the par-5 10th hole. Owen Bolles of Chandler and Henry Dall of Scottsdale stayed in contention throughout the final round but couldn't quite catch up to Ennis. The momentum was in his favor after sinking the eagle putt and he finished the back nine at two-under par to wrap up the tournament at six-under par (68-70-138). The future Texas A&M Aggie is putting together a solid start to the 2024 season, with a runner up at the Warren Schutte Invitational and now his first title of the year. Owen Bolles of Chandler and Henry Dall of Scottsdale ended up tied for second place at four-under par. Ajay Morris of Avondale, Ethan Butters of Chandler and Tyler Anderson of Phoenix all tied for fourth place at three-under par.

In the Girls Championship division, Lena Durette of Scottsdale, who competed in the PURE Insurance at Pebble Beach last year, showed dominate consistency throughout the weekend. Durette got off on the wrong foot to start the opening round after collecting four bogeys leading to a three-over 39. It was a tale of two nines though, as she carded an eagle on the par-5 10th hole and two birdies which led to a three-under 33 on the back nine. After day one, there were seven players within five shots back of the top spot. The emergence of Lena Durette out of Scottsdale came out in full force as she recorded the only final-round score in red figures with five birdies on the way to a one-under 71. The Scottsdale resident stayed persistent and consistent throughout the event after carding back-to-back rounds in the low 70s (72-71) to win by a massive five strokes. The victory marks her first in the JGAA Girls Championship division and first overall win since 2019. Jayden Jevnick out of Cave Creek took solo second after finishing at four-over par with rounds of 74-74. Alexis Vakasiuola of San Tan Valley and Kaitlyn Helm of Litchfield Park tied for third place at five-over par.

"We couldn't be happier with how the Thunderbird Invitational turned out this year," said Scott McNevin, Executive Director of JGAA. "Congratulations to our winners and thank you to The Thunderbirds and Papago Golf Club for hosting an incredible tournament!"

About The Thunderbirds/Thunderbirds Charities

Thunderbirds Charities is a non-profit organization formed in 1986 to distribute monies raised through the WM Phoenix Open golf tournament. The mission of Thunderbirds Charities is to assist children and families, help people in need and improve the quality of life in Greater Metropolitan Phoenix. For more information on Thunderbirds Charities visit www.thunderbirdscharities.org.

The Thunderbirds were founded in 1937 with the mission of promoting the Valley of the Sun through sports. The Thunderbirds consist of 55 "active" members and more than 280 "life" members who have helped the tournament eclipse \$190 million in charitable giving since its inception in 1932. For more information on The Thunderbirds visit www.WMPhoenixOpen.com/more-about-the-thunderbirds/.

About the JGAA

The Junior Golf Association of Arizona is a 501(c)(3) organization with the mission to educate, motivate and inspire Arizona's youth through golf and all the valuable lessons and life skills inherent to the game. In addition to hosting competitive events, the JGAA develops programs for local schools, assists golf courses with their junior programs, conducts college prep seminars and etiquette clinics. The Junior Ambassador and Guest Speaker Programs give JGAA students the opportunity to learn, develop and adopt successful habits and practices – both on and off the golf course – from a collection of prominent, civic-minded community and business leaders. The JGAA also awards two scholarship funds annually to high school senior members of the JGAA for their college education – the Tres Arnold and the John Wolfinger Memorial College Scholarships. The JGAA's strong belief in teamwork and cooperation has

guided the organization for more than 30 years and is instilled in all of its members. **For more information JGAA, visit www.jgaa.org or call 602-944-6168.**

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