

PRESS RELEASE



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RBC HERITAGE PRESENTED BY BOEING TEAM UP WITH ERNIE ELS TO TURN GOLF BLUE THIS APRIL IN SUPPORT OF AUTISM AWARENESS

RBC Heritage teams up with Ernie Els' Foundation, Els for Autism, to turn golf blue this week to raise awareness and show support to those affected by autism.

Jupiter, Fla. (April 16, 2014) The RBC Heritage Presented by Boeing has stepped up to support Els for Autism this April to recognize Autism Awareness Month at the PGA TOUR stop at Hilton Head Island, SC, April 14-20. Tournament organizers as well as Els' sponsors have teamed up with Els for Autism on a number of initiatives to help drive awareness of a disorder that now affects 1 in 68 children in the U.S. and 1 in 42 boys as well as show support to the estimated two million individuals affected by autism and their families.

The RBC Heritage Presented by Boeing has designated **Friday, April 18**, as the tournament's **Autism Awareness Day or 'Blue Out Day'**. PGA TOUR Professionals, caddies, spectators and media will all be asked to wear blue on Friday and join World of Golf Hall of Famer and four-time Major Champion, Ernie Els in showing support for those affected by autism spectrum disorder.

Blue and white autism awareness ribbon pins will be available to players and caddies at the 1st and 10th tees on Friday. Pins will also be available to members of the media via the tournament's Media Center on Thursday and Friday of the tournament. A number of lucky spectators wearing blue on Friday will be rewarded with their own autism awareness pin by roaming Els for Autism representatives at the tournament. In 2013 the winner of the RBC Heritage, Graeme McDowell, wore the blue and white autism awareness ribbon pin for the entire week!

Spectators can also keep a look out for Ernie's custom blue April autism awareness kit. Els' signature lion headcover has been turned blue for the month of April, Ernie's sponsor I-ONICS has produced a special blue charity wrist-band and long-term sponsor SAP will be giving up their spot on the front of Ernie's hat

to Els for Autism on the Friday of the tournament. The SAP logo will be temporarily replaced by the Els for Autism Awareness Puzzle Piece Ribbon that will be embroidered onto the front of the hat. Els for Autism will be giving away some of Ernie's blue kit to one lucky winner at the end of the tournament via their Twitter page - @ElsForAutism. In the meantime, fans can find out how to secure their own Els for Autism blue and white puzzle autism awareness ribbon pin, the I-ONICS charity wristband, as well as a very limited supply of the custom blue lion headcovers, by visiting: www.elsforautism.com/GoBlue.

"I am delighted that once again RBC Heritage Presented by Boeing is joining with us this April to help promote autism awareness and show support to the millions of individuals affected." Said Els for Autism Founder, Ernie Els.

He added: "As many of you will know the prevalence stats have very recently gone from 1 in 88 children affected in the U.S. to 1 in 68 children and 1 in 42 boys. With this kind of figure in play autism cannot be ignored – everyone needs to sit up and take notice. One of the key things we are doing this month, with the help of partners like RBC, the Heritage Foundation, Boeing, SAP and my other sponsors, is using golf as a platform to promote not only awareness but the importance of early detection. The earlier we can diagnose our kids and secure the help that they need, the better chance they have of leading productive and rewarding lives. So please join with us this week to show support and help spread awareness."

RBC Heritage Tournament Director, Steve Wilmot said: "The RBC Heritage Presented by Boeing and the Heritage Classic Foundation are honored to help Ernie spread autism awareness. We hope all spectators join us by wearing blue on Friday."

Throughout the month of April, Els for Autism will raise awareness and educate fans and supporters via its social media outlets by sharing educational facts about autism, promoting how the PGA TOUR and our sponsors are turning golf blue, and conducting special giveaways.

Follow the conversation:

TWITTER: @ElsforAutism #RBCEls #GoBlue

FACEBOOK: /ErnieEls

WEBSITE: www.ElsforAutism.com/GoBlue

- ENDS -

CALLS TO ACTION:

- **FOLLOW THE CONVERSATION** – Follow @ElsforAutism #RBCEls #GoBlue
- **GET PREPARED & KNOW THE FACTS** - Els is hoping that viewers and spectators will learn the facts about the early warning signs of autism.
 - Recent studies show that most children are diagnosed after age 4, despite the fact that ASD can be diagnosed much earlier.
 - Symptoms can often be detected by 18 months of age or earlier. When parents first suspect that early signs of autism may be present, they should discuss these concerns with their pediatrician and ask for an autism screening.
 - Research indicates that early identification and intensive early intervention can result in significant positive outcomes for many children with ASD.
 - To learn more go to www.elsforautism.com/GoBlue
- **SPECTATORS** – Can show their support by wearing blue to the tournament on Friday April 18.
- **VIEWERS/FANS** - Can show their support by securing and wearing an autism awareness pin, as worn by Ernie and his fellow PGA TOUR players by making a \$10 donation. There are also a couple of other items that Ernie is sporting at the tournament that supporters can get their hands on including an **Els for Autism blue charity wristband** and a very limited number of **custom-made BLUE lion headcovers**. For more details visit: www.elsforautism.com/GoBlue
- **AMATEUR GOLFERS** – Can get involved by signing up a team in the 2014 Els for Autism Golf Challenge series. Harbour Town Golf Links will be hosting an Els for Autism event on **September 8th, 2014**. General public can sign up two person teams by visiting www.e4aGolf.com. Finalists will join Ernie Els at the Series Finale in Las Vegas in October this year.

ABOUT THE ELS FOR AUTISM FOUNDATION

- The Foundation was established in 2009 by Liezl and Ernie Els shortly after their son, Ben (11), was diagnosed with autism.
- Els for Autism is committed to helping people on the autism spectrum fulfill their potential to lead positive, productive and rewarding lives.
- The Foundation is in the middle of a catalytic project; the establishment of a state-of-the-art Center of Excellence with a local, national and global reach.
- Groundbreaking for the Center of Excellence took place on March 10, 2014 in Jupiter, Florida.
- Once completed The Els Center of Excellence will provide a uniquely designed on-site educational program for 300 children on the autism spectrum ages 3-21. It will also bring together the critical components of early intervention, transition to adulthood, medical and professional services, and adult services all on one campus. At its heart will be a multi-faceted global outreach program that will make best practices in education and therapy available to children, families and autism experts both in the U.S. and internationally.
- The Groundbreaking for the Center marked the start of construction of the Lower School and Center of Excellence Auditorium building that will be at the heart of the global outreach programs. The goal is to have these in operation by August 2015. In the meantime, the capital campaign continues to ensure a continuous build schedule for the Upper School, the sports facilities, the medical and professional component and the adult services program.
- Els for Autism is a US 501(c)(3) public charity (EIN #26-3520396).

- Foundation website: www.elsforautism.com
- Twitter: [@ElsforAutism](https://twitter.com/ElsforAutism) #RBCEls #GoBlue
- Facebook: [/ErnieEls](https://www.facebook.com/ErnieEls)

ABOUT AUTISM AWARENESS IN APRIL

- In 2008, The United Nations General Assembly unanimously [declared April 2 as World Autism Awareness Day \(A/RES/62/139\)](https://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2008/08-04-080411.html) to highlight the need to help improve the lives of children and adults who suffer from the disorder so they can lead full and meaningful lives.
- In 2013, South Carolina Governor, Nikki Haley, proclaimed Friday, April 19, 2013 “Els Autism Awareness Day.”
- This year’s Autism Awareness month follows the recent release of new prevalence statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that estimates 1 in 68 children in the U.S. and 1 in 42 boys has an autism spectrum disorder (ASD), a 30% increase from 1 in 88 children two years ago.

OTHER ELS FOR AUTISM INITIATIVES IN APRIL

- PGA TOUR Players and caddies will ALSO be asked to wear a blue and white autism awareness ribbon pin at **The Zurich Classic of New Orleans. (April 21-27, 2014)**
- Players, caddies, spectators and media will be asked to wear blue on the tournaments’ Blue Out Day; **Saturday April 26.**
- Swiss watchmaker Breitling, Els’ official watch sponsor, will be donating 20% of proceeds from the sale of any timepiece with a blue dial at their U.S. Boutiques for the entire month of April to the Els for Autism Foundation.
- Els for Autism will raise awareness and educate fans and supporters throughout the month of April via its social media outlets by sharing educational facts about autism, promoting how the PGA TOUR and sponsors are turning golf blue, and conducting special giveaways.

PHOTOGRAPHY:

The following photography can be downloaded for editorial use:

- April Autism Awareness Specific: <http://www.elsforautism.phanfare.com/6289152>
- Generic Els for Autism: http://www.elsforautism.phanfare.com/5948584_6797112

DONATIONS:

- To **donate by check:** make out checks to Els for Autism and address to: Els for Autism, 3900 Military Trail, Suite 200, Jupiter, FL 33458
- To donate online visit: www.ElsForAutism.com