



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

***Seattle Pride Classic presented by Symetra* hosts 260 athletes, including 4 professional players, to celebrate pride and inclusion in hockey**

Third annual event on June 9, 10 & 11 aims to grow the sport, create the largest and most inclusive pride hockey tournament in the country

SEATTLE | Monday, June 5, 2023 — Nearly five times the size as their inaugural event in 2021, the Seattle Pride Hockey Association (SPHA) will host the *Seattle Pride Classic presented by Symetra* on June 9, 10 and 11 at the Kraken Community Iceplex. The 18-team hockey tournament will showcase over 260 LGBTQ+ and allied hockey players participating over three days at the home of the NHL's 32nd franchise, the Seattle Kraken. Organizers hope to build a model that is replicable across the country, create opportunities for LGBTQ+ athletes, and build a sense of community within the hockey world for participants and supporters. Spectators are welcome over the three-day event to celebrate pride and watch hockey free of charge.

"The growth, community support, and love for this event has been overwhelmingly positive" said Joey Gale, SPHA Vice President & co-founder. "Players told us in 2022 that this was the first time they have ever truly felt comfortable being themselves in a locker room or hockey-setting. With a special focus on trans athletes in 2023, we are laser-focused on creating an inclusive space for all those who are underrepresented in hockey."

Around two-thirds of the participants registered for this year's event identify as LGBTQ+. 40% of players identify as female, 15% as non-binary or trans, with the remaining 45% identifying as male. Nearly 3 in 10 players will be traveling from outside of Washington, spanning from coast to coast, including Canada.

Back for a second year, the *Alaska Airlines All Stars of Pride* game will start at 2:30 PM on Sunday, June 11 and is the marquee event of the tournament. Participants in this game are all nominated by their tournament peers based on those who elevated the experience and created inclusive space.

Several special guests from around the hockey community are showing their support as part of the tournament, including playing in the *Alaska Airlines All Stars of Pride* game. Luke Prokop, current Seattle Thunderbirds defenseman, two-time WHL Champion, and first openly gay player under contract with an NHL team, will join different teams on the ice throughout the weekend. Prokop will be joined by three other former pros, including Jessica Platt (former woman's Canadian professional, trans rights advocate), J.T. Brown (former NHL forward, TV analyst for the Seattle Kraken), and current Director of Social Impact, Growth, and Fan Development for the National Hockey League, Andrew Ference (former NHL defenseman, 2011 Stanley Cup Champion).

Everett Fitzhugh (Seattle Kraken radio broadcaster) and Tom Helm (Seattle Thunderbirds public address announcer) will be on the mic announcing the tournament's championship games on Sunday, celebrating the tournament teams who will hoist the championship trophies — the Empowers Cup and the Symetra Cup.

Symetra is the first founding partner of the Seattle Pride Hockey Association, returning for their third consecutive year championing the event. Symetra was the presenting sponsor for the first-ever Seattle Pride Classic in 2021.

"Symetra is proud to once again present the Seattle Pride Classic—and incredibly excited to see this annual celebration of diversity, inclusion and hockey emerge as one of the region's signature Pride events. The tournament's welcoming atmosphere and focus on inclusivity feels especially important this year. We wish all the participants and spectators a great competition and can't wait to see which teams will hoist the Empowers Cup and Symetra Cup!" said Trinity Parker, SVP, chief marketing officer.

The tournament is divided into two conferences — the Trailblazers Conference includes one division of six intermediate teams, and the Queer Icons Conference includes two divisions of six teams each with a more friendly style of play. The tournament features a total of 18 teams.

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About Seattle Pride Hockey Association

The Seattle Pride Hockey Association (SPHA) is a 501(c)(7) nonprofit organization on a mission to grow the sport of ice hockey through diversity and inclusion. SPHA welcomes players, fans, and anyone with an open mind and a love for hockey who wants to be part of it. SPHA hosts events and tournaments throughout the Greater Seattle area, and works with the National Hockey League and Seattle Kraken to ensure that hockey is for everyone. Learn more at seattlepridehockey.org.

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