

Golf Update for the KML, Summer 2021

written by Tom Oliver | October 17, 2021

With the focus on being a resort-oriented golf course as an amenity for Lodge guests, along with being accessible to the general public, the overall condition of the golf course continued to improve again this year (*reports, throughout the season, from many long-time patrons such as "the course is in the best condition they I've ever seen" have been common all season*). The Outdoor Activity Center (OAC), was staffed every day of the season and there was only one day (21 September) that the course was closed, due to extreme weather. We continued to have over 3,000 rounds per year, while providing 15-minute tee-time intervals so that individuals do not feel rushed – one of our biggest compliments is that golfers are able to enjoy a quality wilderness experience at the top of the Keweenaw.

The golf course opened on June 1st, with the OAC operating 8am – 6pm for the entire season. Golfers were able to either check in for their tee time at the OAC or make tee times via our online tee time system (provided by Lightspeed Golf).

We managed the operations throughout the season so we could provide optimum customer service. With our first tee time each day being 8am, and our last tee time 6pm, we were able to staff the activity center with team members that could answer questions about the golf activities, as well other activities (e.g., biking and hiking).

The OAC staff catered to our qualities in being a historic wilderness resort that focuses on providing an outdoor experience. We have incorporated being fun, joyous, and adventuresome by introducing alternative forms of golf to the

Keweenaw (e.g. *FlingGolf* and *Disc Golf*, and we continue to look into adding *footgolf* to the golf repertoire), we have freshened up our merchandise offerings, and enhanced the experience for our customers overall.

ngg_shortcode_0_placeholder

Resort Golf Course

Starting in the 2020 season, we made the decision to be a resort-oriented golf course. This meant no longer holding tournaments, having memberships available, or golf cart storage. This decision was made so we did not have resources being diverted from our primary reason of operations – being a resort (as opposed to a country club). This allowed us to focus on our primary target market – the guests that stay at the resort.

As with 2020, this year we continued to see people stay in cabins, and have both their golf clubs and their bikes with them. They would ride in the morning, and play 9-holes in the afternoon. Or they would play golf one day, and ride and/or hike the next day. Having biking and hiking trail access from the property, and a golf course out their cabin door, allows Lodge guests to easily take advantage of what the Keweenaw and the Lodge have to offer without having to use their cars.

Number of Rounds

This year we had 3,139 rounds. This is a decrease of 265 rounds from 2020, where we experienced 3,404 rounds – an 8% decline, after seeing a 17% increase in 2020 over 2019. The most rounds played in a single day this year was 66, with our average number of rounds per day being just over 23. Based on the data available for the past three seasons, we are trending upwards toward our goal of hosting 30-50 rounds per day, with 15-minute

tee time intervals – giving us the ability to provide a quality wilderness experience for our guests.

EZ-GO ELiTE Golf Cart Fleet

We introduced a new fleet of fifteen E-Z-GO RXV ELiTE carts this year, bringing golfers a new experience for getting around the course at the Keweenaw Mountain Lodge. These carts are powered with Samsung SDI Lithium Technology batteries, providing golfers excellent mobility without sacrificing the wilderness golfing experience. Each EZ-GO ELiTE was also equipped with GPS technology which allowed us to prevent the carts from driving on greens, tee boxes, or through the rough, which helped us maintain the condition of those sensitive areas, as well as the carts themselves. [read more about our fleet, here]

Club Car Tempo Walks

This season, we also brought in a new technology to focus on how the sport was started – walking a round of golf. Our Tempo Walks (Club Car's robotic caddie) brought an old experience for getting around the course at the Keweenaw Mountain Lodge back to life. Enjoying the game of golf with a nice stroll through the wilderness of the Keweenaw with the wildlife is an aspect that sets the Lodge golf course apart from other area golf courses. [read more about our Tempo Walks, here]



Caddytek Push/Pull Carts

Eight CaddyTek EZ-Fold Pushcarts were added to our rental selection this year. The pushcarts have a number of features which received numerous compliments throughout the season, such as: wide-base wheels that allow the cart to easily roll on

different surfaces. adjustable handles for multiple pushing positions, a lightweight and durability design, and foldability for efficient storage when not in use.

Callaway Club Rentals

This past summer, we also offered full sets of 2021 Callaway clubs for our club rental. The men's sets included, the Callaway Epic Speed Driver and 3-wood, Maverick irons (4-9) and wedges, and Odyssey White Hot OG #7 putters for both right- and left-handed sets. The women's sets included the Callaway Big Bertha REVA Driver and 5-wood, Maverick Max W Hybrids (4 & 5), Irons (6-9) and wedges, and Odyssey White Hot OG #5 putter, in both right-and left-handed models. The OAC staff was regularly hearing from golfers who rented the clubs how pleased they were with their performance and availability.



Golf Course Maintenance

Our golf course maintenance crew has done an exceptional job this season keeping the course in great shape. We strive to have the greens in excellent shape, good tee boxes, and finally decent fairways. We have received positive responses from players returning to play from previous year. Throughout the season, we have heard from players that the "course has never been this good in the past". Now that the season has come to a close, the grounds crew is preparing for the upcoming winter in order to prevent snow mold and other casualties that could possibly harm the course in the future.



Fling Golf

This season we continued to offer guests the opportunity to play FlingGolf – think golf, but using a Lacrosse stick to throw the ball instead of hitting it with a club. We had an array of FlingSticks available for rent at the OAC. Not only was FlingGolf fun and family friendly, it allowed for a unique alternative to golf, broadening our options to guests. We received regular, positive feedback from guests as well as staff on how much fun FlingGolf is at the Lodge.

Disc Golf

In addition to the improved shape of the golf course, our OAC and maintenance staff worked on improving the playability of the Disc Golf course on the opposite side of the property. In recent years, the disc course was rarely maintained on a regular basis, which led to an overgrowth of obstructive vegetation. This caused the course to not be as enjoyable to play. With the Disc Golf course better maintained, and providing Disc Golf rentals at the OAC, many of our lodging guests, as well as those who love to explore the area, have been able to enjoy the Disc Golf course multiple times.

Wildlife and Nature on the Golf Course

An aspect of the Keweenaw Mountain Lodge's golf course that is regularly commented on by guests is the likelihood of seeing wildlife on and around the course. Whether it be crows sounding a "wake-up alarm" around the cabins, painted lady butterflies feeding on nectar from the viburnum planted in front of the lodge, deer eating apples from the apple tree along the Hole 4 fairway, or the occasional black bear that strolls through our campus, one-on-one encounters with wildlife really emphasize for people the surrounding wilderness landscape and connect them

personally with our environment. These are just a couple of the many examples of wildlife encounters around and on the golf course this past season.

A pair of Sandhill Cranes nested on the course again this year. Their nest was not successful; however, they remained on the course throughout the season until they migrated south. They became very accustomed to the golfers and golf carts and provided some great opportunities for photos.

A pair of Merlins (a type of small falcon), nested in a pine tree between Holes 8 and 9 this season. They successfully fledged three young. A windstorm in early September forced them out of their nest because a large branch fell through it. Fortunately, the young were developed enough to fly and all survived.

As usual, there continues to be a healthy population of squirrels and chipmunks on the property. Near the end of the summer, an immature red-tailed hawk discovered this fact and took up temporary residence near the OAC. It was, on multiple occasions, seen gliding low among the trees, then snagging an unsuspecting chipmunk or squirrel for its meal.

We recognize the value of maintaining healthy ecosystems and getting the chance to encounter wildlife in such ways. To help protect our environment while preserving the natural heritage of the game of golf, the Keweenaw Mountain Lodge has joined the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf (ASCP-Golf). ASCP-Golf is an education and certification program developed by Audubon International to help enhance the valuable natural areas and wildlife habitats that golf courses provide, improve efficiency, and minimize potentially harmful impacts of golf course operations. The ASCP-Golf program takes stock of and then develops a plan for improvement around six key environmental

components: Environmental Planning, Wildlife and Habitat Management, Chemical Use Reduction and Safety, Water Conservation, Water Quality Management, and Outreach and Education.

While much of our effort to gain this certification will occur without much notice by guests. When you visit us over the next year there are some aspects you might see. For instance, we have already started an effort to convert some of the areas of rough to help local pollinators and aid in Monarch butterfly migration by planting native wildflowers and grasses. If you see work being done on the course and are not sure what it is, please ask. We are very excited to talk about the future of the ASCP-Golf at the Keweenaw Mountain Lodge.

Looking Forward: The 2022 Season

Looking forward to the next season, here are several items we will be focusing on in 2022:

- Continue to promote exercise / walking, by carrying one's bag, using a pull cart, or using a Tempo Walk
- Increase the awareness and activity of Speed golf on our golf course
- Evaluate, design, and implement a Foot Golf course
- Increase the awareness of the wildlife and nature associated with the golf course
- Moving through the process of becoming a certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Golf Course



