

Obama called Golfer in Chief after playing 100th Round

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President Obama rolled out of his Kenwood, Chicago home Sunday morning and headed to out to play his 100th round of golf since becoming president.

Obama played at the Beverly Country Club with two old pals, Eric Whitaker and Marty Nesbitt, as well as regular golf companion Marvin Nicholson, the White House trip director.

Obama has already played golf eight times this year. He actually is a little off his normal pace – perhaps campaigning is intruding on golf. The president golfed 28 times in 2009, 30 times in 2010, and an incredible 34 times in 2011.

Obama's golfing takes about five hours, including the motorcades back and forth from the fairways. If one thinks of this as taking up much of the day – include getting ready to go and cooling off afterward – its fair to say that Obama has spent more than three months of his presidency golfing.

While golf is played by millions of Americans and extends its reach well into the middle class, it is also perceived as a game of the idle rich and is generally unavailable to the poor, putting Obama's frequent outings at odds with his image as a man of "hope" for the dispossessed.

The White House carefully downplays Obama's golfing, rarely talking about it and releasing few pictures of the president swinging away. A search of the White House uploads on the Flickr photo-sharing website finds only a handful of shots of the president playing golf, compared to nearly two dozen of him playing basketball, which he spends far less time at.

Many argue that golf provides a badly needed source of relaxation for Obama, a refuge and a respite from extraordinary demands of the presidency. And most or all of Obama's golf days have been on weekends or during scheduled vacations.

But others say the president could find another way to relax, and that golfing sends the wrong message to the poor and to the troops during a time of economic struggle and war.

George W. Bush gave up golfing in 2003, explaining his rationale five years later in an interview with POLITICO, saying it was wrong to play during wartime:

- I don't want some mom whose son may have recently died to see the commander in chief playing golf. I feel I owe it to the families to be in solidarity as best as I can with them. And I think playing golf during a war just sends the wrong signal.

Obama clearly disagrees and has been unperturbed by criticism of his golf, maintaining a steady pace even during an election year.