

Soil Conservation District aids golf club

When White Birches GC needed technical help in building a pond and drainage ditch, Hancock SCD supplied it.

Five years ago the White Birches Golf Club in Ellsworth, Maine, was no more than a dream—a dream of Mrs. John Raymond, whose husband was considering the purchase of 58 high rolling acres, land which looked clear across to Cadillac Mountain on Mount Desert Island in one direction, and Schoodic Mountain in the other.

Within a year, under the direction and ownership of John and Georgia Raymond, White Birches, a small public course in the executive-size bracket, had brought the great game of golf within the means of the townspeople and had become an added recreation attraction to the many summer vacationers in the area.

Now owned by PGA professional Gene McNabb in partnership with John Raymond, greens and fairways have been improved each year under the able direction of superintendent "Bud" Staples.

Without a doubt the most spectacular improvement was brought about in the summer of 1965 when Green No. 3 was moved and partly surrounded by a picturesque pond. Mr. Raymond, treasurer of the Hancock County Soil & Water Conservation District made up of over 100 local cooperators, knew of the technical advice available to the cooperators of the District, and knew, too, that the laying out of farm ponds is a specialty of Richard Duncan, work unit conservationist for the Soil Conservation Service assisting the local Soil & Water Conservation District.

With Mr. Duncan's supervision, the pond was laid out, and in spite of a period of prolonged drought in the

northeast, has held water at the prescribed level. The pond is used for irrigation and fish and is of aesthetic value as well.

In addition to the pond which was called for in the conservation plan developed by White Birches and the Soil & Water Conservation District, a waterway was called for to control runoff. Previously, water flooded adjacent fairways to Green No. 3 and did not allow early playing. The new waterway was designed to prevent this flooding and pass the water safely around the new green.

In this connection and to the amazement of many players who "sidewalk superintended" every move, the ditch was installed. Most ditches of this type usually are installed with a grader or bulldozer and then new turf is established. However, the turf in this area was in excellent shape and it seemed a waste to ruin it and establish new.

Something different had to be done. What about saving the present turf? It was decided to try it, so a turf cutter was used and the turf was rolled up like so many rolls of stair carpet, 180 yards of soil removed, and the rolls of turf replaced.

More ditching will be done when the budget permits—and even this one would have been impossible to accomplish without the help of the Soil Conservation office and its trained technicians.

As a result of this improvement, White Birches Golf Course is playable earlier in the spring, which is important in a part of the country where winters are so long. •