BALL GAME FENCE SYSTEM

Inventor: William C. Hoffman, JR.,
Lucedale, MS (US)

Correspondence Address:
Peter Loffler
P.O. Box 1001
Niceville, FL 32588-1001 (US)

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Abstract

A fence system for quickly establishing an outfield fence and possibly a back stop for a ball game uses a series of bases with a post receivable within each base. A section of tarp extends between adjacent posts such that clips are attached to each corner of the tarp and two clips at an end of the tarp are attached to a post. The clips are received within slots at the top and bottom of each post with the top capped to prevent clip discharge. Bulbous ends of the clip prevent lateral discharge of the clip from the slot. Alternately, a single section of tarp is removable attachable to each end post via cooperating hook and loop material with the tarp passing through slots on interior posts. An end brace may be used to stabilize end posts of the fence as well as to act as a visual aid for determining what constitutes a foul ball.
BALL GAME FENCE SYSTEM

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] 1. Field of the Invention

[0002] The present invention relates to a fence retaining system that is designed to quickly set up around a ball field, namely a wiffle ball play area.

[0003] 2. Background of the Prior Art

[0004] Baseball is the great American pastime. Millions of Americans, as well as others around the world, love the game in all its variations, both as a spectator sport and as a participant sport. What can be better than spending an afternoon at a ballpark eating hot dogs and popcorn and cheering for your favorite team? It’s a great way to spend a summer day.

[0005] Baseball also finds a large following as a participant sport wherein most adults and older kids play the actual game of baseball or its cousin softball. Home plate, three additional bases, and a home run fence in the outfield make for a great playing field wherein the players can have hours of enjoyment. Ball diamonds can be found in most communities throughout the country.

[0006] For younger kids, those just beginning to take up the sport, wiffle ball is the entry level game along with its close cousin T-ball. Young kids, who lack the strength and the refined motor skills for the more advanced baseball and softball games, find great enjoyment in hitting the hollow plastic ball of this great junior ball game. Due to the smaller size of the kids involved in wiffle ball, as well as the lightweight nature of the ball which cannot be hit or thrown as far as a baseball or softball, wiffle ball diamonds tend to be substantially smaller in overall dimensions relative to their baseball and softball diamond counterparts. And unlike their baseball and softball counterparts, very few dedicated wiffle ball diamonds exist. Accordingly, players must create makeshift diamonds that fit their specific dimensional requirements based on the age of the kids playing. While placement of home plate and the other three bases generally poses no problem, providing an outfield fence to delimit home runs can be challenging. Offentimes, players use makeshift markers for the outfield fence out of such items as broomsticks or whatever can be found near the playing field such as tree branches and pine cones. While this may prove satisfactory to many, other players, and their coaches in the case of organized games, want a more defined outfield fence. While a fence may be built to the desired dimensions, such may prove to be not very practical, especially in the case of an ad hoc game.

[0007] What is needed is a fencing system that can define an outfield fence for wiffle ball or T-ball such that the fence can be quickly assembled and disassembled so that it can be used in both organized settings as well as the just-conceived Saturday afternoon game down at the local park. Such a fencing system must be lightweight and portable so that it can be carried by the young players themselves if necessary, yet provide a good basis from which to judge what constitutes a home run. Such a fencing system should of relatively simple design and construction so that it is relatively inexpensive to manufacture so that it is readily affordable to a large segment of the wiffle ball playing community.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0008] The ball game fence system of the present invention addresses the aforementioned needs in the art by providing an outfield fencing system that is lightweight and portable so that it can be easily carried to the designated diamond for play and be quickly assembled for use. The ball game fence system provides an outfield fence of a desired height that allows for easy determination of what constitutes a home run for any ball that interacts with the device. The ball game fence system is of relatively simple design and construction so that it is relatively simple and straightforward to manufacture thereby making the present invention readily affordable to much of the ball playing community. The ball game fence system has the further benefit of allowing players (or umpires) to be able to determine what constitutes a foul ball with relative ease and can also be used as a back stop behind home plate.

[0009] The ball game fence system of the present invention is comprised of a first base that has a first pair of base slots. A first post has a first top with a pair of first top slots and a first bottom with a pair of first bottom slots. A second base has a second pair of base slots. A second post has a second top with a pair of second top slots and a second bottom with a pair of second bottom slots. A first generally rectangular tarp has four corners. A first clip is removably attached to a respective one of the corners of the first tarp, while a second clip is removably attached to another respective one of the corners of the first tarp, while a third clip is removably attached to yet another respective one of the corners of the first tarp, and while a fourth clip is removably attached to yet another respective one of the corners of the first tarp. The first clip is received within a respective one of the first top slots and the second clip is received within a respective one of the first bottom slots. The first post is received within the first base such that the second clip is also received within a respective one of the first base slots. The third clip is received within a respective one of the second top slots and the fourth clip is received within a respective one of the second bottom slots. The second post is received within the second base and the fourth clip is also received within a respective one the second base slots. Additionally, a third base has a third pair of base slots. A third post has a third top with a pair of third top slots and a third bottom with a pair of third bottom slots. A second generally rectangular tarp has four corners. A fifth clip is removably attached to a respective one of the corners of the second tarp, while a sixth clip is removably attached to another respective one of the corners of the second tarp, while a seventh clip is removably attached to yet another respective one of the corners of the second tarp. The fifth clip is received within another respective one of the second top slots and the sixth clip is received within another respective one of the second bottom slots and within a respective another of the second base slots. The seventh clip is received within a respective one of the third top slots and the eighth clip is received within a respective one of the third bottom slots. The third post receives within the second base and the eighth clip is also received within a respective one the third base slots. Each clip comprises a first arm that has a bulbous proximal end, a first distal end with a first extension, and a snap head. A second arm has a second bulbous proximal end, a second distal end with a second extension, and a snap opening. The first bulbous end is pivotally attached to the second bulbous such that the clip is capable of pivoting between an open position wherein the first extension and the second extension are spaced apart from one another and a closed position wherein the first extension and the second extension are in apposed position and the snap head is frictionally received within the snap.
opening such that the clip is attached to its respective corner of the tarp by placing the clip into the closed position and sandwiching the tarp between the apposed first extension and the second extension. The first base has a first hollow interior with a first fill spout leading thereto, the second base has a second hollow interior with a second fill spout leading thereto, and the third base has a third hollow interior with a third fill spout leading thereto. A fourth base has a standard extending upwardly therefrom with a cross brace extending from the standard. A collar is attached to the cross brace such that the collar is attached to the first top of the first post. A fourth post extends upwardly from the collar.

[0010] Alternately, the ball game fence system can comprise a first base and a first post that has a first section of hook and loop material thereon, the first post received within the first base. A second base is provided and a second post that has a second section of hook and loop material thereon is received within the second base; A tarp has a first end has a third section of hook thereon and loop material and a second end with a fourth section of hook and loop material thereon such that the first end of the tarp is attached to the first post by cooperatively mating the first section of hook and loop material with the third section of hook and loop material and the second end of the tarp is attached to the second base by cooperatively mating the second section of hook and loop material with the fourth section of hook and loop material. A third base is provided as is a third post that has a pair of slots. The third post is received within the third base wherein the tarp passes through the pair of slots. Similarly, the first base has a first hollow interior with a first fill spout leading thereto, the second base has a second hollow interior with a second fill spout leading thereto, and the third base has a third hollow interior with a third fill spout leading thereto. A fourth base has a standard extending upwardly therefrom with a cross brace extending from the standard. A collar is attached to the cross brace such that the collar is attached to the first top of the first post. A fourth post extends upwardly from the collar.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0011] FIG. 1 is a perspective view of the ball game fence system of the present invention.
[0012] FIG. 2 is a perspective view of a tarp clip used with the ball game fence system in a closed position.
[0013] FIG. 3 is a perspective view of a tarp clip used with the ball game fence system in an open position.
[0014] FIG. 4 is an exploded view of the tarp clip used with the ball game fence system.
[0015] FIG. 5 is an elevation view of a section of fence of the ball game fence system.
[0016] FIG. 6 is an exploded perspective view of the base and post used with the ball game fence system with tarp clips installed.
[0017] FIG. 7 is a perspective view of an alternate embodiment of the ball game fence system of the present invention.
[0018] FIG. 8 is an elevation view of a section of fence of the alternate embodiment of the ball game fence system.
[0019] FIG. 9 is a perspective view of the base and post used with the alternate embodiment of the ball game fence system.
[0020] FIG. 10 is an exploded perspective view of the base and post of FIG. 9.

[0021] Similar reference numerals refer to similar parts throughout the several views of the drawings.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

[0022] Referring now to the drawings, it is seen that the ball game fence system of the present invention, generally denoted by reference numeral 10, is comprised of a series of post systems 12. Each post system 12 has a base 14 with a generally flat bottom 16 for resting on the ground G surface and has a hollow interior which is accessible via a fill spout 18 that has a removable cap 20 attached thereto, the hollow interior being filled with an appropriate material, such as water or sand, in order to give the base 14 ballast. A receiver 22 extends upwardly from the base 14. A pair of base slots 24 is disposed within the receiver 22 which slots 24 extend downwardly into the base 14. The base slots 24 may be 180 degree opposed for one another as illustrated, however, the base slots 24 may be angularly offset from the 180 degree opposition. A post 26 has a top 28 and a bottom 30 with a pair of top slots 32 extending from the top 28 toward the bottom 30, and a pair of bottom slots 34 extending from the bottom 30 toward the top 28. The bottom slots 34 are angularly offset from one another (180 degree opposition in the illustrations) in the same fashion as the angular offset of the base slots 24 of the base 14 into which the particular post 26 is to be received.

[0023] The base 14 and the post 26 may each be made from an appropriate sturdy and lightweight material such as a hard plastic (PVC, etc.), or possibly aluminum.

[0024] A clip 36 has a first arm 38 with a first bulbus proximal end 40 having one or more openings 42 thereon and a first distal end 44 that has an extension 46. One or more snap heads 48 are located along the length of the first arm 38. The clip 36 also has a second arm 50 with a second bulbus proximal end 52 also having one or more openings 54 thereon and a first distal end 56 that has a downward extension 58 to correspond to the extension 46 of the first arm 38. One or more corresponding snap openings 60 are located along the length of the second arm 50. The first arm 38 and the second arm 50 are pivotally attached to one another by aligning the corresponding openings 42 and 54 of each arm 38 and 50, respectively, and passing an appropriate pin 62 through the aligned openings 42 and 54. The clip 36 is positionable between an open position, illustrated in FIG. 3 wherein the distal ends 44 and 56 of the two arms 38 and 50, respectively, are separated from one another, and a closed position, illustrated in FIG. 2, wherein the two distal ends 44 and 56 are brought together. In the closed position, each of the snap heads 48 on the first arm 38 is received within a corresponding snap opening 60 on the second arm 50 and frictionally held therein in order to maintain the clip 36 in this closed position. The clip 36 is opened by pulling on the two distal ends 44 and 56 so as to overcome the frictional engagement of the snap heads 48 within the snap openings 60.

[0025] The clip 36 may be made from a lightweight and sturdy material such as a hard plastic or a metal.

[0026] A generally flat tarp 64 is generally rectangular in shape and has a pair of opposing ends 66 and a pair of opposing sides 68. The tarp 64 may be made from an appropriate lightweight and flexible material such as a soft plastic such as Vinyl or Visqueen.

[0027] In order to use the ball game fence system 10 of the present invention, each base 14 is filled with an appropriate fill material as desired with the cap 20 placed upon fill spout
so that the fill material does not spill out if the base 14 is knocked over. A length of tarp 64 is retrieved and clips 36 are attached at each corner of the tarp 64 by opening each clip 36 and placing the first arm 38 on one side of the tarp 64 and the second arm 50 on the other side of the tarp 64 and closing the clip 36 so that the tarp 64 is sandwiched and held between the extension 46 of the first arm 38 and the extension 58 of the second arm 50. The snap heads 48 are received within their respective snap openings 60. Each tarp 64 has four clips 36 attached thereto, one at each corner of the tarp 64, with the corresponding downward extensions 46 and 58 of each clip at a given end 66 of the tarp facing the corresponding extensions 46 and 58 of the clip 36 on the opposing side 68 of the tarp 64 at this end 66. For each end 66 of the tarp 64, one of the clips 36 is received within one of the top slots 32 of a post 26 and the clip 36 on the opposing side 68 of the tarp 64 received within the bottom slot 34 of this post 26. The tarp 64 is dimensioned so as to be taut when the two clips 36 are so received within the slots 32 and 34 of the post 26. During tarp 64 attachment, if the tarp 64 is sufficiently resilient, the tarp 64 is stretched after one of the clips 36 is received within its respective slot 32 or 34 in order to give the outstanding clip 36 sufficient clearance over the entire end 28 or 30 of the post 26. If the tarp 64 is not sufficiently resilient, then one of the clips 36 (or both for that matter) can be attached to the tarp 64 after that clip 36 is received within its respective slot 32 or 34. The bushing ends 40 and 52 of the clip 36, which are wider than the widths of the slots 32 and 34, prevent the clip 36 from being laterally pulled out of its respective slots 32 or 34. The other end 66 of the tarp 64 is attached to another post system 12 in similar fashion. For each post system 12 that serves as an interior post, another tarp 64 is attached to the opposing slots 32 and 34 on the post 26 in similar fashion. For post systems 12 that act as end posts, only the slots 32 and 34 of one side of the post 26 are utilized to receive a tarp 64. As each post 26 receives its either one tarp 64 (end post) or two tarp 64 (interior post), a cap 70 is placed onto the top 28 of the post 26 in order to prevent the clip 36 or clips 36 from being discharged from their respective top slots 32 and 26 is received within the receiver 22 of the base 14. Each clip 36 is also received within one of the slots 24 on the base 14. The receipt of a clip 36 within one of the slots 24 of the base 14 helps prevent the post 26 from rotating within the receiver 22. Once all of the tarp 64 are connected to the device 10 so as to form a contiguous fence, the overall ball game fence system 10 is spread out to form the outfield fence for the designated ball diamond D.

The post systems 12 that are located at the ends of the overall fence may have an end support 72 attached thereto. The end support 72 has a base 74 (which may be hollow and have a fill spout (not illustrated)) and a standard 76 extending upwardly therefrom. A cross brace 78 extends diagonally from the top of the standard 76 and has collar 80 on the end thereof. The collar is placed atop the top 28 of the post 26 at the end of the fence in place of the cap 70. A post 82, which may have a cap 84 thereon, extends upwardly from the collar 80. The end support 72 not only helps brace the post systems 12 that form the end of the fence, but, by virtue of the post 82, act as a visual aid for determining if a hit ball B is a foul ball or not.

The end support 72 may be made from the same materials that are used to make the base 14 and post system 12.
extends diagonally from the top of the standard 176 and has collar 180 on the end thereof. The collar 180 is placed atop the top 128 of the post 126 at the end of the fence in place of the cap 170. A post 182, which may have a cap 184 thereon, extends upwardly from the collar 180. The end support 172 not only helps brace the post systems 112 that form the end of the fence, but, by virtue of the post 182, act as a visual aid for determining if a hit ball B is a foul ball or not.

If desired, only a two post system 112 configuration can be utilized, without the need for end supports 172 which two post system 112 can be positioned behind home plate H in order to act as a back stop.

Once the game is complete, the ball game fence system 110 is disassembled by detaching each end 166 of the tarp 164 from its respective post 126 and pulling the tarp 164 out of each post 126. The tarp 164 may be rolled or folded as desired. The cap 170 may but need not be removed from each post 126 and each post 126 is removed from its base 114. The post 182 of the end support 172 is removed from its collar 180 and the collar 180 is detached from the end post 126 to which it is attached. Each base 114 is drained of its fill material. Each component is stowed as desired.

While the invention has been particularly shown and described with reference to embodiments thereof, it will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that various changes in form and detail may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.

I claim:

1. A fence system comprising:
a first base having a first receiver and a first pair of base slots;
a first post having a first top with a pair of first top slots and a first bottom with a pair of first bottom slots;
a second base having a second receiver and a second pair of base slots;
a second post having a second top with a pair of second top slots and a second bottom with a pair of second bottom slots;
a first generally rectangular tarp having four corners;
a first clip removably attached to a respective one of the corners of the first tarp;
a second clip removably attached to another respective one of the corners of the first tarp;
a third clip removably attached to yet another respective one of the corners of the first tarp;
a fourth clip removably attached to yet another respective one of the corners of the first tarp; and
wherein, the first clip is received within a respective one of the first top slots and the second clip is received within a respective one of the first bottom slots and the first post is received within the first receiver such that the second clip is received within a respective one of the first base slots and wherein the third clip is received within a respective one of the second top slots and the fourth clip is received within a respective one of the second bottom slots and the second post is received within the second receiver and the fourth clip is received within a respective one of the second base slots.

2. The fence system as in claim 1 wherein each clip comprises:
a first arm having a first bulbous proximal end, a first distal end with a first extension, and a snap head; and
a second arm having a second bulbous proximal end, a second distal end with a second extension, and a snap opening, the first bulbous end pivotally attached to the second bulbous such that the clip is capable of pivoting between an open position wherein the first extension and the second extension are spaced apart from one another and a closed position wherein the first extension and the second extension are in apposed position and the snap head is frictionally received within the snap opening such that the clip is attached to its respective corner of the tarp by placing the clip into the closed position and sandwiching the tarp between the apposed first extension and the second extension.

3. The fence system as in claim 1 wherein the first base has a first hollow interior with a first fill spout leading thereto, and the second base has a second hollow interior with a second fill spout leading thereto.

4. The fence system as in claim 1 further comprising:
a third base having a standard extending upwardly therefrom;
a cross brace extending from the standard;
a collar attached to the cross brace such that the collar is attached to the top of the first post; and
a third post extending upwardly from the collar.

5. The fence system as in claim 1 further comprising:
a third base having a third receiver and a third pair of base slots;
a third post having a third top with a pair of third top slots and a third bottom with a pair of third bottom slots;
a second generally rectangular tarp having four corners;
a fifth clip removably attached to a respective one of the corners of the second tarp;
a sixth clip removably attached to another respective one of the corners of the second tarp;
a seventh clip removably attached to yet another respective one of the corners of the second tarp;
a eighth clip removably attached to yet another respective one of the corners of the second tarp; and
wherein, the fifth clip is received within another respective one of the second top slots and the sixth clip is received within another respective one of the second bottom slots and within a respective another of the second base slots and wherein the seventh clip is received within a respective one of the third top slots and the eighth clip is received within a respective one of the third bottom slots and the third post is received within the third receiver and the eighth clip is received within a respective one the third base slots.

6. The fence system as in claim 5 wherein each clip comprises:
a first arm having a first bulbous proximal end, a first distal end with a first extension, and a snap head; and
a second arm having a second bulbous proximal end, a second distal end with a second extension, and a snap opening, the first bulbous end pivotally attached with the second bulbous such that the clip is capable of pivoting between an open position wherein the first extension and the second extension are spaced apart from one another and a closed position wherein the first extension and the second extension are in apposed position and the snap head is frictionally received within the snap opening such that the clip is attached to its respective corner of
the tarp by placing the clip into the closed position and sandwiching the tarp between the apposed first extension and the second extension.

7. The fence system as in claim 5 wherein the first base has a first hollow interior with a first fill spout leading thereto, the second base has a second hollow interior with a second fill spout leading thereto, and the third base has a third hollow interior with a third fill spout leading thereto.

8. The fence system as in claim 5 further comprising:
   a fourth base having a standard extending upwardly therefrom;
   a cross brace extending from the standard;
   a collar attached to the cross brace such that the collar is attached to the first top of the first post; and
   a fourth post extending upwardly from the collar.

9. A fence system comprising:
   a first base having a first receiver;
   a first post having a first section of hook and loop material, the first post received within the first receiver;
   a second base having a second receiver;
   a second post having a second section of hook and loop material, the second post received within the second receiver;
   a tarp having a first end with a third section of hook and loop material and a second end having a fourth section of hook and loop material such that the first end of the tarp is attached to the first post by cooperatively mating the first section of hook and loop material with the third section of hook and loop material and the second end of the tarp is attached to the second base by cooperatively mating the second section of hook and loop material with the fourth section of hook and loop material.

10. The fence system as in claim 9 wherein the first base has a first hollow interior with a first fill spout leading thereto, and the second base has a second hollow interior with a second fill spout leading thereto.

11. The fence system as in claim 9 further comprising:
   a third base having a standard extending upwardly therefrom;
   a cross brace extending from the standard;
   a collar attached to the cross brace such that the collar is attached to the first top of the first post; and
   a third post extending upwardly from the collar.

12. The fence system as in claim 9 further comprising:
   a third base having a third receiver;
   a third post having a pair of slots, the third post received within the third receiver such that the tarp passes through the pair of slots.

13. The fence system as in claim 12 wherein the first base has a first hollow interior with a first fill spout leading thereto, the second base has a second hollow interior with a second fill spout leading thereto, and the third base has a third hollow interior with a third fill spout leading thereto.

14. The fence system as in claim 12 further comprising:
   a fourth base having a standard extending upwardly therefrom;
   a cross brace extending from the standard;
   a collar attached to the cross brace such that the collar is attached to the first top of the first post; and
   a fourth post extending upwardly from the collar.