United States Patent [19]

Harrington

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[54] **BATTING TEE**

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[52] **U.S. Cl.** ..... **273/26 E**, 273/95 A

[51] **Int. Cl.** **A63b 69/40**

[58] **Field of Search** .. 273/26 A, 26 R, 26 E, 200 R, 273/207, 212, 95 A, 202

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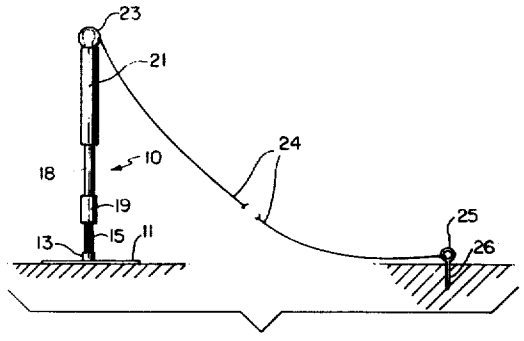
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[57] **ABSTRACT**

A baseball support tee comprising a base having a vertical upright extending therefrom, the vertical upright including an elongated cylindrical spring having one end attached to the base and a first sleeve slidably attached to its upper end. The first sleeve also has one end of a rigid post attached axially thereto. The other end of the rigid post is provided with a second cylindrical sleeve, the second sleeve being vertically adjustable on the rigid post, and being capable of supporting a ball when the ball support tee is in a vertical position. The function of the spring is to restore the tee to a vertical position if accidently knocked over while a ball is being hit therefrom. A tethered ball is also provided with the ball support tee, the tether having one of its ends connected to the ball and its other end being connected to an anchor member which is remote from the ball support tee.

1 Claim, 3 Drawing Figures



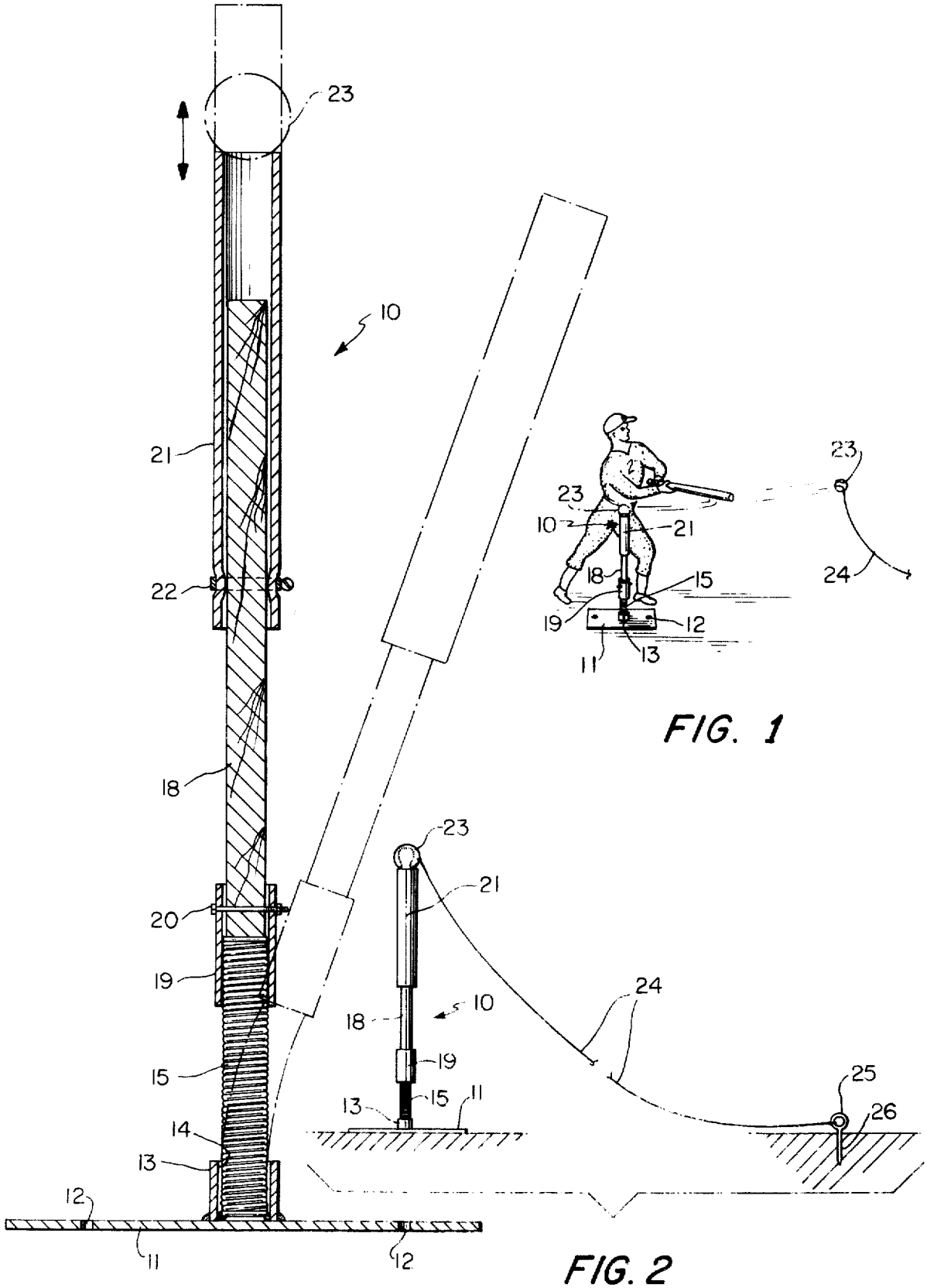


FIG. 1

FIG. 2

FIG. 3

BATTING TEE

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

This invention relates generally to sporting equipment and relates particularly to apparatus utilized for instruction purposes as well as being utilized as equipment by which a game can be played.

2. Description of the Prior Art

Heretofore many efforts have been made to provide a practice batting tee on which a ball could be supported in a position to be struck by a bat and many of these prior art devices have included telescoping posts upon which a ball could be mounted and such posts included resilient portions which could be struck accidentally by the bat without causing damage to the bat or to the post. In some of these structures the ball has been provided with a tether to limit the distance which the ball travels and in other structures the ball has been mounted on a post in a manner to permit free flight of the ball when struck. Some examples of prior art structures are the patents to Delia et al U.S. Pat. No. 2,862,712, Patterson U.S. Pat. No. 2,884,250, Lande U.S. Pat. No. 3,139,282 and Dix U.S. Pat. No. 3,183,000.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is a batting tee for supporting a ball in a position to be struck by a bat or the like and such tee includes a base member having an upright post thereon. The post includes a relatively rigid portion adjustably connected to a telescopically mounted resilient sleeve the upper end of which is adapted to support the ball. The resilient sleeve prevents damage to the bat or to the post if the post should be accidentally struck by the bat. In the event that the post is struck by the bat, it is desirably that the post be displaced without offering substantial resistance and to return to its initial position automatically. This is done by connecting the lower end of the post to the base member by a relatively stiff resilient member which is strong enough to support the post in a substantially vertical position but which will flex in any direction when a lateral force is applied and which will return to its vertical position automatically when the lateral force is relieved.

In one embodiment the ball is provided with a tether which is anchored in a position remote from the post so that the true flight of the ball can be observed but which limits the distance the ball can travel so that the ball is easily retrievable.

It is an object of the invention to provide a batting tee having a base and an upright post connected together by a relatively stiff resilient member which permits the post to bend relative to the base when the post is struck but returns to its vertical position.

Another of the invention is to provide a batting tee for a ball connected to one end of a tether and the opposite end of such tether being anchored in a position remote from the tee.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

FIG. 1 is a perspective illustrating one application of the batting tee.

FIG. 2 is a side elevation thereof.

FIG. 3 is an enlarged vertical section.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

With continued reference to the drawing, a batting tee **10** is provided having a relatively large flat base member **11** adapted to rest on the ground. The base member **11** can be of any desired configuration including circular, square, rectangular, or may have a polygonal configuration representative of a conventional home plate normally associated with the game of baseball. Also the base member **11** can be made of any desired material such as a plate of wood, metal or thermoplastic material. Preferably the base member **11** is provided with one or more openings **12** extending therethrough in a vertical direction for receiving large nails, spikes, or other fasteners for mounting the base member **11** in fixed position on the ground. It is contemplated that a semipermanent installation could be provided having a substructure (not shown) embedded in the ground and having upwardly extending studs which are received within the openings **12** and to which the base member is secured by nuts or the like.

An upwardly extending socket **13** is provided generally centrally of the upper surface of the base member **11** and such socket can be integrally cast with the base member or can be attached thereto in any desired manner, as by welding, adhesives, threads, or fasteners such as screws or the like. The socket **13** is generally cylindrical and includes a hollow core **14** in which one end of a relatively stiff coil spring or other resilient member **15** is fixed in a conventional manner such as welding, anchoring pin, or the like. As illustrated, the end of the resilient member **15** is received within the core **14** of the socket, however, it is contemplated that the socket **13** could be replaced by a stub post extending upwardly from the base member **11** and adapted to be received within and connected to the lower end of the resilient member **15.**

The upper end of the resilient member **15** is adapted to yieldably support a shaft or post **18** in an upright position. In order to do this, the lower end of the post is received within a sleeve **19** and is connected to one end thereof in any desired manner as by a bolt and nut, rivet, lock pin, or the like **20.** The sleeve **19** is hollow and the lower portion thereof is adapted to receive the upper end of the resilient member **15** in a manner such that the sleeve can be removed from the resilient member so that the post **18** can be disassembled from the base member **11.** As illustrated, the resilient member **15** frictionally engages the inner surface of the sleeve **19,** however, the resilient member could be removably connected to the sleeve by a pin or the like (not shown).

The post **18** is constructed of any desired material such as wood, metal, thermoplastic material or the like and normally is round in cross-section and can be of any desired length, a length of 15 to 20 inches having been found satisfactory. The upper end of the post **18** is telescopically received within the lower end of a flexible resilient tubular sleeve **21** and such sleeve is adjustably mounted on the post in any desired manner, as by a hose clamp **22.** The upper free end of the sleeve **21** is adapted to support a ball **23.**

With particular reference to FIGS. **1** and **2,** when the batting tee **10** is being used as an instructional device to teach a youngster the correct manner to swing a bat or to offer suggestions as to how to overcome faults in

the batting swing, it is desirable to provide a ball which can be struck in a conventional manner without the necessity of fielders for returning the ball. In order to do this, one end of a tether or cord **24** is secured to the ball **23** in any desired manner, as by drilling a hole through the ball and passing the end of the tether through such hole after which the end of the tether is knotted to prevent withdrawal.

The opposite end of the tether **24** is secured in spaced relationship to the base member **11** to limit the distance which the ball can travel and to make the ball easily retrievable. The opposite end of the tether **24** is tied or otherwise connected to a ring **25** mounted on the upper end of a stake **26** the lower end of which is driven into the ground. The tether **24** is of any desired length (a length of 20 feet having been found to be satisfactory) and is constructed of any desired material which resists breaking such as nylon or the like. The stake **26** is driven into the ground at a desired distance and direction from the base member **11** and preferably at a distance which provides some slack in the tether so that the true flight path of the ball can be observed.

In the operation of the device, when the batting tee is being used as an instructional apparatus, the base member **11** is placed on or secured to the ground or a substructure after which the sleeve **19** of the post **18** is placed on the upper end of the resilient member **15** so that the post is in a substantially upright position. Thereafter the sleeve **21** is adjusted relative to the upper end of the post to compensate for the size of the batter as well as to locate the ball at a particular elevation of the strike zone. The ball **23** is then placed on and supported by the upper end of the sleeve **21** after which the stake **26** is driven into the ground in spaced relationship to the base in the direction of flight of the ball. When the batter swings the bat and makes contact with the ball, the initial flight path of the ball can be observed and it can readily be determined whether the ball would have been a pop fly, fly ball, line drive, or a ground ball. Also the direction of flight of the ball can be determined before the tether becomes taut and stops the ball. If the batter undercuts the ball so that the bat strikes the sleeve **21**, the resilient member **15** permits the post to move to an angle other than substantially vertical, as illustrated in phantom lines in FIG. **3**, without causing damage to either the tee or the bat and thereafter the resilient member **15** returns the post **18** and the sleeve **21** to a substantially vertical position.

When the batting tee is being used as an instrument for a game, or if the distance a ball travels is important to the instruction of the batter, a conventional baseball, soft ball or the like is placed on the upper end of the sleeve **21** and one or more fielders are located in a position remote from the batter. In this situation the ball is in free flight when struck by the bat and is retrieved by the fielders and returned to the batter. This not only affords practice to the batter but also gives the fielders practice in catching the ball.

Although the batting tee has been illustrated and described for use with a baseball, it is contemplated that the tee could be used with any member which is struck in flight by an implement wielded by a person. As an example, a tennis player could practice forehand and backhand shots by placing a tennis ball on the sleeve **21.** Even though the tennis racquet will normally engage the sleeve **21** and the upper post **18,** substantially no damage will be done to the racquet or the tee.

I claim:

1. The combination of a batting tee and a ball means in which the tee supports a ball in a position to be struck by a bat, said batting tee comprising a base member adapted to be placed on the ground, an elongated relatively stiff coil spring connected at one end to said base member and extending upwardly therefrom along a generally vertical axis, a first sleeve having a first portion engaging the other end of said spring and being disengageable therefrom, a rigid post attached to another portion of said first sleeve and normally being located along a vertical axis, an elongated flexible resilient second sleeve telescopically receiving the upper end of said post, clamp means for connecting said second sleeve to said post in fixed adjusted position, said ball means comprising a ball adapted to be placed on the upper end of the second sleeve, a stake having an elongated shank adapted to be driven into the ground in spaced relationship with the base member of said tee, the upper end of said stake being disposed above the ground, a tether having one end attached to said ball and the other end attached to the upper end of said stake, whereby said coil spring normally maintains said post and said sleeves in an upright ball supporting position along a generally vertical axis but bends in an arcuate path when the resilient sleeve is struck by a bat and thereafter automatically returns the post and sleeve to an upright position and the tether limits the distance the ball travels when struck while permitting the direction of travel to be observed.

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