A driving mat used for practicing golf shots made of flexible material formed in tapering thickness so that it is substantially thicker at the front end than at the rear end, with the thick end being transversely relieved along the underside to define a cantilevered lip which overhangs, and is spaced above, the supporting surface. A tee may be inserted into the mat near the edge of the cantilevered lip for supporting a golf ball. When a golf club swung at the ball is swung too low, the lip, in the face of the impact, is free to yield by deflecting downwardly toward the supporting surface thereby to minimize damage to the mat and the club and discomfort to the player.

2 Claims, 4 Drawing Figures
DRIVING MAT FOR PRACTICING GOLF SHOTS

In the past it has been conventional in driving ranges to employ solidly mounted mats of tough relatively non-yielding material to resist the wear and tear which occurs when a club is swung too low. With the mat required to absorb the full impact, damage is unavoidable and cumulative. Moreover, a shock is transmitted up the shaft of the club, stinging the hands of the player.

It is therefore an object of the invention to provide a golf driving mat which is of simple and economical construction, which has a useful life longer than mats of more expensive construction, which insures the club against damage, and which protects the hands of the player against the stinging or numbing sensation which occurs when the club head is swung so low as to strike the mat.

It is a more specific object of the present invention to provide a driving mat which protects itself by harmlessly deflecting in the face of a blow from a club and which, therefore, may be made of cheaper and less durable material than conventional mats while still having a long useful life.

It is a related object of the invention to provide a driving mat of the above type, which may, in addition to "tee" shots, be used for practice driving of a ball at ground level to simulate a fairway shot. To this end the lip portion of the mat, in addition to being of cantilevered construction, is preferably surfaced with artificial textured turf made of flexible plastic, which, in addition to its non-rolling characteristic, provides a tough covering for the body which may then, for example, be made of relatively fragile sponge rubber.

Other objects and advantages of the invention will become apparent upon reading the attached detailed description and upon reference to the drawings in which:

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a driving mat constructed in accordance with the invention;

FIG. 2 shows a side elevation of the mat of FIG. 1 positioned on a supporting surface;

FIG. 3 is a fragment showing a teed ball; and,

FIG. 4 is a fragment showing use with an unteed ball.

While the invention has been described in connection with a preferred embodiment, it will be understood that it is not intended to be limited to the embodiment shown but it is intended, on the contrary, to cover the various alternative and equivalent constructions included within the spirit and scope of the appended claims.

Turning now to the drawings there is shown in FIGS. 1 and 2 a driving platform 10 in the form of a mat and constructed in accordance with the present invention. In the preferred embodiment the mat is of rectangular shape having a rear edge 11, a front edge 12 and lateral edges 13, 14. The mat rests on a flat supporting surface 15 and may be wholly or partly recessed in such supporting surface without departing from the invention.

It is one of the features of construction that the body 16 of the mat is of tapering thickness having a thickness \( t_b \), which may be on the order of an inch or less at the rear end and with the thickness flaring, particularly in the region 17, toward the front end of the mat to a thickness \( t_f \) which is substantially greater and which may, for example, be on the order of twice as great. The thickened front edge portion of the mat is transversely hollowed out to form a transversely extending relief 20 which defines a horizontally extending cantilevered lip 21 which projects a distance of several inches and which overhangs, and is substantially uniformly spaced above, the supporting surface. As a further feature of the invention, in combination with the above, the body 16 is formed of rubber-like material to insure a high degree of flexibility in the region of the lip.

It is a still further feature of the invention, in its preferred form, to cover the top surface of the mat body with a layer 30 of artificial turf which is bonded to the body and which serves to protect the body against scuffing by the impact of a club head and which serves, in addition, to provide a deeply textured surface for direct, non-rolling support of a ball without interposition of a supporting tee. The artificial turf is made of flexible and durable plastic having a thin flexible fabric-like base 31 and integral upwardly extending and randomly bent blades or fibers 32 which form a deeply textured cushion. The artificial turf is commercially available on a worldwide basis under the trademark ASTROTURF manufactured by Monsanto Corporation, 800 North Lindbergh Boulevard, St. Louis, Ill., 63166. The deeply textured surface of the ASTROTURF material, and the fact that the base 31 thereof is foraminous, facilitates use of the usual pointed tee shown at 33 in FIG. 3, holding ball 34.

Accordingly, the present mat is ideal for two types of driving practice. Where a ball is held in upraised position by a tee, the condition of "teeing off" is exactly simulated. Where, on the other hand, the ball is supported directly upon the fibers of the artificial turf as in FIG. 4, spaced above the body of the mat and without interposition of any tee, the condition of a fairway shot is created, a type of shot which is usually not permitted in driving ranges where more conventional mats are used.

In either event, the present mat is uniquely adapted to counteracting the effects of a swing which is too low. Where the player misjudges, striking below the ball and into the mat, the cantilevered lip portion 21 simply deflects harmlessly downward into the position shown dotted at 21a (FIG. 2). This downward yielding movement not only protects the body 16 of the mat against a destructive blow, but the covering of artificial turf which is intimately secured to the lip retrofits with the lip so as to avoid destructive impact enabling the turf to survive numerous misdirected blows. It will be seen, therefore, that the flexible body 16 and artificial turf 30 cooperate to protect one another, the former by its yielding movement and the latter by its protection of the body against scuffing by the club head. As a result of the protection provided by the artificial turf the body may be made of a material which is not only flexible but which is substantially less durable than the dense materials conventionally used for driving mats. Indeed, the body may be expensively molded of foam rubber while still achieving a long useful life.

However the invention is not limited thereto and, if desired, the main advantages of the invention may be secured by using the body 16 alone without the durable textured covering. In such event it will be desirable to mold the body of good quality, highly flexible solid rubber or rubber-like material. The term "rubber-like" is meant to include any substance, for example, synthetic rubber, having the resilient, flexible characteristics normally associated with natural rubber. When the turf
covering is omitted, a permanently upstanding tee or supporting cup may be provided on the lip 21. The "thiness" of the lip is preferably such as to provide a high degree of flexibility, yet short of that which would result in "droop".

In addition to the self-protection which the present mat structure affords, it is one of the primary features of the invention that a hazard associated with conventional driving mats is completely avoided, that is, the shock which is transmitted to the hands of the player resulting from impact when the ball is struck too low. All golfers have experienced the unpleasant numbing and stinging sensation which accompanies a solid, misdirected impact. The present mat construction, by deflection of the supporting lip, permits the club to "follow through" even where impact takes place at a level substantially below the ball, so that any sudden deceleration is avoided. This not only protects the hands of the player but protects the club itself against damage.

While it is one of the features of the present mat that a conventional tee may be used for exactly simulating conditions on the course, it will be understood that the lip 21 of the mat may, if desired, be fitted with a conventional "permanent" type of tee in the form of a short upstanding tubular member of rubber or the like.

I claim as my invention:

1. A driving platform for practicing golf shots in the form of a mat having a body of flexible rubber-like material intended for resting on a flat supporting surface, the body being of smoothly tapering configuration having limited thickness at the rear end and substantially greater thickness at the front end, the front of the mat having a transversely extending relief on the underside to define a cantilevered lip several inches in extent which overhangs and is substantially uniformly spaced above the supporting surface, the top surface of the lip having means thereon for non-rolling support of a golf ball in striking position, the cantilevered lip being sufficiently thin so that when a golf club swung at the ball is swung too low, the lip, in the face of the impact, is free to yield by deflecting harmlessly downward toward the supporting surface thereby to minimize damage to the mat from the club head and to preclude any stinging or numbing sensation in the hands of the player.

2. The combination as claimed in claim 1 in which the body of rubber-like material is covered with artificial bladed turf formed of tough, flexible plastic bonded to the body to provide a durable surface layer which flexes with the body for protection against impact and to provide a deeply textured surface for direct non-rolling support of the ball in a position raised above the body permitting striking of the ball without use of a driving tee thereby more nearly to simulate driving conditions on the open fairway.

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