A golf club toy includes a golf club head having oversized dimensions to provide a planar contact surface for the continuous bouncing of a golf-sized ball off of the club head surface. Located opposite the striking surface of the club head is a back face that includes a concave pocket cavity that is large enough to hold at least one golf-sized ball. The golf club head also has a sole that is cylindrically convex located adjacent to the back face, a heel, a toe, and a hosel for attaching a shaft to the club head. The concave pocket and the oversized head allow a player to volley the ball, scoop the ball up or hit from a surface, and pass or catch the ball to/from another player.
GOLF CLUB TOY

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] 1. Field of Invention

[0002] This invention relates generally to a golf club toy, and more specifically to a golf club toy having a club head designed for bouncing a toy golf ball on a face of the golf club head, and/or for scooping and catching a toy golf ball in a cavity on a back face of the golf club head.

[0003] 2. Background

[0004] The sport of golf continues to increase in popularity due, in part, to the emergence of popular, young professional players. The increase in public exposure of the sport in the media has resulted in the increase of non-professional players, including children and adults. However, the game of golf requires a great deal of coordination and skill in order to successfully strike a small golf ball. This skill is achieved over years of practice and is not easily mastered by a child or an adult new to the game. Thus, a beginner player is likely to become frustrated trying to emulate his or her favorite golf player. In addition, golf clubs are expensive, and, therefore, a beginner player, or parent of a beginner child player, is not likely to invest in a set of real golf clubs until he or she is certain that the interest in the game is not merely a passing fancy.

[0005] Plastic golf club sets and toy golf accessories are popular for young children. These toy sets include pieces that resemble golf clubs, but which are sized for young children. The toy golf clubs are typically made of a combination of plastic parts and “soft parts”, such as foam, that provide a light-weight, and safe alternative to a club utilized by experienced players. The toy golf clubs provide children with the opportunity to develop their skills and to become familiar with the equipment of the game. However, adults typically do not wish to be “caught” using these miniaturized golf clubs constructed for children, and thus, must purchase a full-size “real” golf club for practice.

[0006] The use of golf club toys by children and full size golf clubs by adults is limiting in that these existing toy and real clubs do not facilitate the imitating of golf “tricks” or the playing of other skill-developing games. For example, professional golf players are able to bounce a golf ball off of the face of a golf club for an extended periods of time. Additionally, many experienced golf players can collect a golf ball that is on the ground by simply scooping the ball onto the face of a golf club, without touching the golf ball with their hands. Because of the small surface area on the club face of a toy or real club head, the loft, i.e., the angle, of the club face, and the ridges that typically are found on the club face, this skill is difficult to emulate by children and adults.

[0007] Another popular game played by adults and children is the sport of foot bag, e.g., Hacky Sack®. In this game, the players attempt to keep a soft, ball-shaped bag aloft utilizing their feet, only. The popularity of this game cannot be extended easily to skill development for golf since the typical golf club and/or a toy golf club is not designed for this purpose.

[0008] Therefore, a need exists for a golf club toy for both children and adults that provides opportunities for the development of golf skills and coordination, in general. Also, a need exists for a golf club toy that facilitates the bouncing, the scooping and the catching of golf-sized balls to allow users to create new skill-developing games and to imitate tricks performed by professionals.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0009] It is an object of the present invention to provide a golf club toy for both children and adults that may be used for preforming and practicing tricks that normally only highly coordinated golfers are able to perform and for developing skills and coordination for golf and other sports.

[0010] It is another object to provide a golf club toy having an enlarged club face for bouncing a golf ball off of the face.

[0011] It is a further object of the present invention to provide a toy that allows a user to scoop and catch a golf ball.

[0012] In an exemplary embodiment of the present invention, a golf club toy includes a club head attached to a club shaft, or handle. The golf club toy is manufactured from molded plastic. However, in other embodiments of the invention, other materials such as metal, fiberglass, foam plastics, etc., may be used alone or in combination for the club head and shaft. The club head of the exemplary embodiment includes a club face, a back face, and a sole. The club face, which is the surface of the golf club toy that is used for hitting or bouncing a golf-sized ball or other similar object, is smooth and flat, i.e., paddle-like, to facilitate the control of a ball as it is bounced on the club face surface. In addition, the club face is dimensioned larger than existing club faces of real and prior art toy golf clubs to provide additional surface area for continuously striking a ball. The club face is angled to slope towards the ground when the sole of the golf club toy is placed on the ground. The slope, also known as the loft of the club face, facilitates actions such as scooping the ball onto the face of the club. By angling the shaft, the club face may be brought parallel to the ground to provide a surface perpendicular to a continuous vertical bouncing of a ball.

[0013] The back face of the golf club toy bridges the club face and the sole. The back face of the golf club head contains a concave pocket cavity that can hold at least one golf-sized ball. The uniquely designed cavity the golf club head allows a ball to be scooped, caught, or transferred either to or from an object, or to or from another player. The cavity of the exemplary embodiment of the present invention also provides a space for storing at least one ball when the golf club toy is not in use.

[0014] The sole of the golf club head of the exemplary embodiment, which is the surface of the golf club toy that contacts the ground, may be defined by a heel and a toe located at opposite ends of the club head. A hosel on the club face, adjacent the heel of the golf club head, contains an axial channel for attachment of a shaft to the golf club head. The shaft of the exemplary embodiment is adjustable and/or may be sized to the player by, for example, removing a section of the shaft, or by telescoping the shaft to a preferred length.

[0015] The sole of the golf club head of the exemplary embodiment of the present invention is cylindrically convex in shape, but may be of many different shapes. The cylin-
A fin-type structure of the sole of the club head has several advantages including a savings in material cost, a reduction in weight of the golf club, and an aid in the manufacturing process. The fin design requires less material resulting in a reduction of material cost and weight. A lighter club head also allows a user to swing faster or with less effort because the golf club toy is easier to handle. This feature is particularly helpful for young children who may have difficulty lifting and manipulating a standard weight golf club. Another advantage of the fin-shaped sole is evident in the manufacturing process. For golf club heads molded from a plastic, or a similar material, the fins reduce the time required for mold cooling. In addition, because the material sets faster, the mold may be removed from the mold quicker to reduce the time for manufacturing of each golf club. In addition to the above advantages, the curvature of the sole surface also allows the club head to roll on a surface to facilitate in the scooping of a golf ball from that surface.

The golf club toy of the exemplary embodiment offers advantages for play not present in an standard golf club. Because of the uniquely designed club face and back face of the golf club toy, a broader range of games may be played with the present invention, and a user may practice tricks and games on the toy before attempting the same with a standard golf club. The back face of the club head which contains a pocket cavity, allows a golf ball or similar object to be scooped, caught or transferred either to or from another object, toy or player. The club face is dimensioned larger in size and smooth as compared to a standard club to allow a user to volley and bounce a golf ball continuously on the club face. In addition, the club face is designed to allow a ball to be hit off of the face or struck from off of the ground. Thus, the golf club toy may be utilized for skill and coordination development or simply for the user’s amusement. The golf club toy of the present invention is ideal for golf instruction for young children to introduce the children to the game and to provide them with a tool to develop coordination for the more serious aspects of the game.

A method of using the golf club toy of the exemplary embodiment is provided for individually volleying and catching of a ball. The method begins with the user collecting or scooping a golf ball into the pocket cavity of the golf club toy. The ball may be collected into the pocket cavity either by scooping the ball directly off of the ground or floor, by catching the ball from the air. The golf ball is then transferred from the pocket cavity of the toy onto the club face by tossing the ball in the air from the cavity. The player may bounce the ball continuously on the club face surface so that the ball remains airborne. The player may also alternate bouncing the ball off of the club face and catching the ball into the back face cavity.

The golf club toy of the exemplary embodiment may also be utilized by more than one player in a volley-type of a game. The ball is scooped up and then volleyed onto a player’s club faced. The ball is tossed to another player for volleying and/or for passing. The object of the game is to catching and volleying a ball between players and to keep the ball airborne for as long as possible. By practicing the methods of the present invention, players can compete against one another or can play by themselves to develop tricks and games and to improve their coordination and skills. Individual or group playing or practicing aids in the development of a user’s balance, hand and eye coordination, and concentration skills.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The present invention will be better understood from the following detailed description of an exemplary embodiment of the invention, in conjunction with the accompanying drawings in which like reference numerals refer to like parts and in which:

FIG. 1 is a view of the back face of the golf club head;
FIG. 2 is a bottom view of the sole of the golf club head;
FIG. 3 is an end view taken from the left-hand side of FIG. 1;
FIG. 4 is an end view taken from the right-hand side of FIG. 1;
FIG. 5 is a top view of the face of the golf club head;
FIG. 6 is a rear view thereof;
FIG. 7 is a sectional view taken on line 7-7 of FIG. 1;
FIG. 8 is a view of the back face of an alternative club head without the fin structure; and
FIG. 9 is a bottom plan view of the configuration of FIG. 8.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIGS. 1 to 7 illustrate various views of a preferred embodiment of the golf club toy of the present invention. The golf club toy includes a shaft 12 (shown in broken lines) attachable to a golf club head 10 at a hole 22. The golf club head 10 has a club face 20 for contacting or striking a ball (not shown). The club face 20, or contact or striking surface, is a generally planar as shown in FIG. 5. The club face 20 of the preferred embodiment has a greater surface area than a standard golf club face to provide a user with a larger area in which to contact a ball. The expanded club face 20 provides a paddle-like target for a player to volley and/or bounce a ball continuously on the club face 20. Referring to FIG. 4, the club face 20 is angled 0 with respect to the shaft 12 to form a loft when the sole 8 of the club head 10 is placed on a ground surface 4. In the preferred embodiment, the angle 0 is 60 degrees, but may be manufactured to have a loft of any desired angle 0. In an alternate embodiment, the hosel 22 or the shaft 12 includes a hinging point which allows the loft of the club face 20 to be adjusted to any desired angle 0. The sole 8 of the club head 10 of the preferred embodiment is cylindrically convex to allow a user to roll the golf club head 10 in order to scoop golf balls up from the ground surface 4. However, in other configurations of the present
invention, the club head 10 may have a triangular configuration such that the sole 8 lies flat on the ground surface 4.

[0031] Continuing with FIG. 1, the golf club head 10 has a back face 26 that is located adjacent the striking face 20. The back face 26 is defined by a pocket cavity 14 that is deep enough to hold at least one golf-sized ball. Referring also to FIG. 2, the cavity 14 of the preferred embodiment is rounded inside of the club head 10, but may be shaped in other configurations. For example, the cavity 14 of an alternate embodiment follows the contours of the outside profile of the club head 10. Continuing, the sole 8 of the golf club head 10 includes a heel 16, a toe 18, and a hosel 22. The heel 16 and toe 18 are located on opposite ends of the golf club head 10, and the hosel 22 is located at the heel 16 of the club head 10. The hosel 22 includes an axial channel that allows the shaft 12 to be positioned securely inside the hosel 22 for attachment to the golf club head 10.

[0032] The cylindrically convex shape of the sole 8 of the preferred embodiment includes fins 30 that are spaced apart along the sole 8 of the club head 10. A fin configuration has the advantage of requiring less material to form the golf club head 10. The use of fins 30 also results in a lighter golf club toy that is easier to control. In addition, the manufacturing process time is reduced for golf club heads made of plastics since the golf club head 10 sets quicker in the mold injection process. And as shown in FIG. 7, the depth of a fin 30 provides greater surface area for the quick cooling of the plastic used to manufacture the golf club head 10.

[0033] FIGS. 3 and 4 illustrate side views of the pocket cavity 14 of the club head 10. The opening of the cavity 14 is wide enough to accept a golf-sized ball. Thus, a player may utilize the cavity, not only for storing a number of balls, but also for catching a ball into the cavity 14, and for tossing the ball from the cavity 14 to the club face 20 or to another player. The cavity 14 may also be used to scoop a ball from a ground surface 4.

[0034] FIGS. 8 and 9 illustrate an alternate golf club head 40 of the present invention. The golf club head 40 includes a club face 52, a back face 54 that contains a pocket cavity 48, a heel 44, a toe 46, and a hosel 42. As shown in FIG. 9, the sole 8 of the alternate embodiment is a cylindrically convex, continuous surface that does not include fins. A person skilled in the art will recognize that the golf club head of the alternate embodiment 40 may be configured in a number of shapes. In addition, any suitable light weight material such as plastic or fiberglass, or combinations thereof, may be used to form the golf club head 10, 40 and shaft 12 of any of the embodiments. For example, the golf club toy of an embodiment may include a foam-like contact pad (not shown) attached to the club face 52 for blunting the impact of a ball, and for providing more control in launching or catching a ball.

[0035] Although an exemplary embodiment of the invention has been described above by way of example only, it will be understood by those skilled in the field that modifications may be made to the disclosed embodiment without departing from the scope of the invention, which is defined by the appended claims.

I claim:
1. A golf club toy comprising:
a club shaft having a grip end and a lower end; and
a golf club head affixed to the lower end of the club shaft, the golf club head comprising:
a club face having a generally planar surface, the club face enlarged to provide an expanded surface for contacting at least one ball;
a back face adjacent the club face, the back face having a pocket cavity for at least one of catching, storing or scooping up the at least one ball;
a sole adjacent the back face and club face, the sole having a heel at a first end of the golf club head and a toe at a second end of the club head.
2. The golf club toy of claim 1, wherein the club head further comprises a hosel located at the heel for connecting the club shaft to the golf club head.
3. The golf club toy of claim 1, wherein the sole is cylindrically convex.
4. The golf club toy of claim 1, wherein the club face is angled to form a loft.
5. The golf club toy of claim 4, wherein the loft is 60 degrees.
6. The golf club toy of claim 1, wherein the sole comprises fins.
7. The golf club toy of claim 6, wherein the fins are spaced equally along a length of the sole.
8. The golf club toy of claim 1, wherein the sole is comprised of a continuous surface.
9. The golf club toy of claim 1, wherein the club head is formed of molded plastic.
10. The golf club toy of claim 2, wherein the hosel has an axial channel for that allows the shaft to be secured therein.
11. The golf club toy of claim 1, wherein the club shaft is adjustable.
12. The golf club toy of claim 1, wherein the club face further comprises a pad.
13. A method of using a golf club toy having a shaft and a club head comprising the steps of:
   providing the golf club head having an enlarged club face for scooping and contacting a golf-sized ball, the golf club head having a cavity in a back face for scooping and accepting the golf-sized ball;
   scooping the golf-sized ball from a surface utilizing one of the club face and the cavity;
   tossing the golf-sized ball in a desired direction utilizing a a shaft to project the golf-sized ball in the desired direction; and
   performing one of catching the golf-sized ball in the cavity and bouncing the golf-sized ball off of the club face.
14. The method as in claim 8, further comprising the step of:
   transferring the golf-sized ball from one of the cavity and the club face to a second golf club toy.
15. A club for performing tricks with a ball comprising:
a club shaft having a grip end and a lower end; and
a club head affixed to the lower end of the club shaft, the
class head comprising:
a club face having a generally planar surface at an angle
with respect to the club shaft, the club face enlarged
to provide an expanded-surface for contacting the
ball;
a back face adjacent the club face, the back face having
a pocket cavity for at least one of catching, storing or
scooping up the the ball;
a sole adjacent the back face and club face, the sole
having a heel at a first end of the golf club head and
a toe at a second end of the club head, the sole
comprising a plurality of fins equally spaced along a
length of the sole.

16. The club of claim 15, wherein the angle of the club
face is 60 degrees.
17. The club of claim 15, wherein the angle of the club
face is adjustable.
18. The club of claim 15, wherein the shaft is adjustable.