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BAT AND TETHERED BALL COMBINATION

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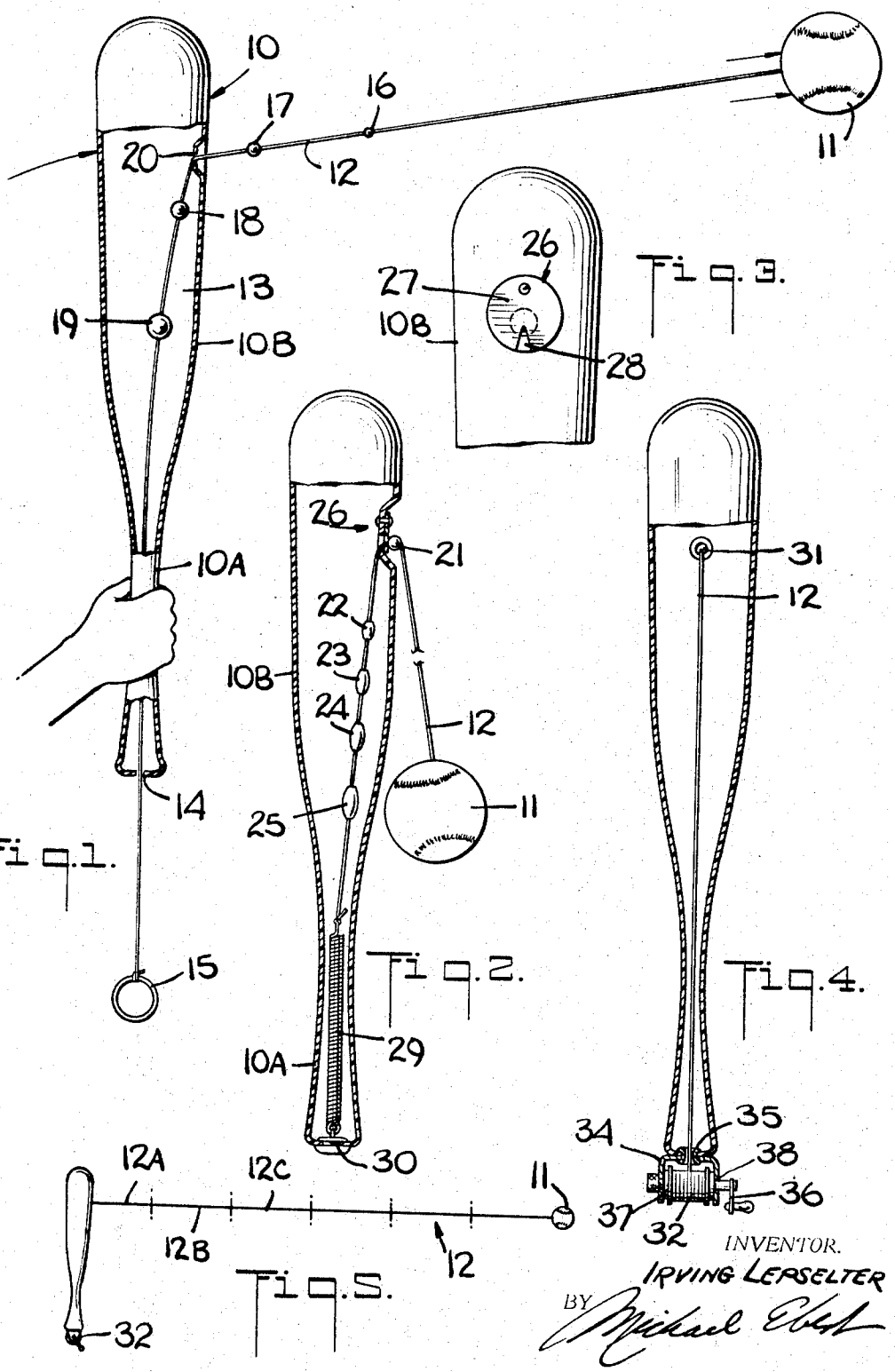


Fig. 1.

Fig. 2.

Fig. 3.

Fig. 4.

Fig. 5.

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BAT AND TETHERED BALL COMBINATION

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A hollow bat containing a cord extending out through an opening in the side of the bat. The cord has on its outer end a ball which can be struck by the bat. Means is provided to impede movement of the cord through the opening when the ball is struck. The cord contains indicia along its length to indicate the effectiveness of the hit.

This invention relates generally to a simulated baseball game, and in particular to a baseball bat and ball combination in which the ball is tethered to the bat by a line which is extensible to a degree determined by the effectiveness of the hit, and which includes indicia to score the hit.

Baseball is the national game of the United States, and is growing in popularity abroad. The game makes use of a bat and a ball, the ball being thrown by a pitcher toward the batter, who seeks to hit the ball with such force as to drive it as far as possible into a field having a diamond with corner bases. The effectiveness of a hit depends not only on the force with which the ball is hit, but also on the disposition of the bat relative to the ball impinging thereon. Thus a glancing blow, however powerful, is not as effective as one in which the bat is centered on the ball.

Baseball is an outdoor game requiring a sizeable field. While it is not feasible to play baseball within the home, this obvious fact does not appear to deter some children, for children enjoy swinging a bat, and the interdiction of parents is not always obeyed. However, should the child succeed in hitting a ball thrown toward him, his pleasure may be somewhat dampened by the damage to the household wreaked by the ball.

Accordingly, it is an object of the invention to provide a simulated baseball game in which the ball is tethered to the bat, the ball when struck being displaced from the bat by a restricted distance which depends on the effectiveness of the hit. Thus it becomes possible safely to play with a bat and ball within a confined area, and to enjoy the experience of swinging a bat and striking a ball without causing damage.

More specifically, it is an object of the invention to provide a bat and ball combination of the above type wherein the line which tethers the ball to the bat is extensible to a degree determined by the effectiveness of the hit, the line including indicia to score the hit.

A significant feature of the invention resides in the fact that the line is retractable into the body of the bat, and that after the ball is hit and the line played out, the line may be quickly retrieved to place the combination in readiness for the next play.

For a better understanding of the invention, as well as other objects and further features thereof, reference is made to the following detailed description to be read in conjunction with the accompanying drawing, wherein:

FIG. 1 is a bat and ball combination in accordance with one embodiment of the invention, the bat being shown in side view partially in section to reveal how the tethering line is retractable therein;

FIG. 2 is another embodiment of the invention, showing another means for retracting the line, the bat being shown in side view, partially in section;

FIG. 3 is a front view of the bat illustrated in FIG. 2, showing the uni-directional line valve;

FIG. 4 is still another embodiment of the invention, the line being wound about a reel; and

FIG. 5 illustrates schematically the manner in which the line shown in FIG. 4 acts to score a hit.

Referring now to FIG. 1, the bat and tethered ball combination according to the invention is constituted by a hollow bat **10**, a ball **11**, and a tethering line **12**. Bat **10** has the shape of a conventional baseball bat, although it may be scaled down for the use of a child, and it includes a handle portion **10A** to be grasped by the player, and a bottle-shaped body portion **10B** providing the striking surface. In practice, bat **10** may be blow-molded of a suitable heavy-duty plastic material, the interior chamber being designated by numeral **13**.

Ball **11** is preferably made of rubber, but it is styled to resemble a standard hard baseball. The front end of the line **12** is anchored in the ball, the line passing through a diaphragm valve **20** mounted on a face opening in the body portion **10B** of the bat. The line then extends through chamber **13**, the other end of the line going through an opening **14** in the heel of the bat and terminating in a ring **15**. The line is preferably of filamentary nylon or other strong and durable non-elastic line material.

A series of beads **16**, **17**, **18** and **19** is secured to line **12** at spaced positions therealong, the beads being of progressively larger size. Diaphragm valve **20** is bi-directional and is cross-slotted to form flexible lips which close on line **12**. When the line is drawn in one direction by ring **15**, or is pulled in the other direction by the flight of ball **11**, the lips are forced apart to permit passage of the beads on the line.

Initially, all of the beads are retracted within the bat chamber, the exposed line length being sufficient to permit a player to throw ball **11** into the air and to strike the ball with the bat. Depending on the accuracy and force of the blow, the beads will then be snapped out of the valve and the line played out to a degree which reflects the effectiveness of the hit.

If the ball is entirely missed, a "strike" is called, but if the ball is struck with a glancing blow or with only slight force, none of the beads will be forced out, and an "out" is called. Should the force be such as to pull out bead **16**, this is scored as a single, and if bead **17** is also ejected, this is a double. The ejection of bead **18** scores a triple, and that of bead **19**, which is the largest bead, scores a home run. It will be appreciated that since the beads are of a graduated size, it becomes increasingly difficult to force the beads through the diaphragm and to extend the line. The limit of line displacement is reached when the ring **15** engages the heel of the bat, but even when the line is fully played out, the ball is still safely tethered to the bat.

In the embodiment shown in FIG. 2, the line **12** having beads **21**, **22**, **23**, **24** and **25** of graduated size secured thereto at spaced positions, passes through a unidirectional valve **26** which includes a hinged flap **27** having a V-notch **28** therein, the flap being only movable in one way. One end of the line is secured to the ball **11**, as in the first embodiment, whereas the other end of the line within chamber **13** is connected to the upper end of a helical compression spring **29** which extends longitudinally within the handle portion **10A** of the bat. The lower end of the spring is attached by an anchor member **30** or grommet to the heel of the bat.

In play, when the ball is hit and the line played out, spring **29** expands and tension is imposed on the line. The scoring beads **21** to **25** are snapped out of the valve, but the uni-directional hinged flap **27** prevents the scoring beads from reentering the bat despite the spring tension.

When, however, the hinged flap is manually lifted, the scoring beads are admitted into the bat by the action of the spring, and the player may again try to hit the ball.

In the embodiment shown in FIGS. 4 and 5, the line 12 is without beads and passes out of the bat interior through a grommeted hole 31 in the face of the bat. The other end of the line is wound about the spool 32 of a reel, the integral axles of which are rotatably supported on the arms of a yoke 34. The yoke is attached to the heel of the bat by a rivet 35 having an aperture therein through which the line passes. The spool is turned by a handle 36, and is subjected to friction by washers 37 and 38 interposed between the arms of the yoke and the end plates of the spool. The degree of friction is adjustable by means of a knob 39 threadably received on one of the spool axles.

When the ball is hit, line 12 is played out through hole 31, the line unwinding from the reel. By adjusting the frictional force imposed on the spool, the extent to which the line is played out may be correlated to scoring requirements. Scoring is effected, as shown in FIG. 5, by coloring line 12 so that the line is effectively divided into sections of different color, whereby, say, a green section 12A represents a home run, a blue section 12B, a triple, a yellow section 12C, a double, and so on. After the ball is hit and scored, the line is retrieved in readiness for the next at bat.

In practice, the game may be played by two or more children representing opposing teams, and the ball may, by proper adjustment of the line control means, be struck with the greatest strength of which the player is capable without having the ball displaced from the bat more than a safe distance.

While there have been shown and described preferred embodiments of bat and tethered ball combination in accordance with the invention, it will be appreciated that many changes and modifications may be made therein without, however, departing from the essential spirit of the invention as defined in the annexed claims.

What I claim is:

1. A baseball bat and ball game comprising:
(a) a hollow bat member having an interior chamber, said bat having a hole in the face thereof,
(b) a line within the chamber, the front end passing out of the bat through said hole,
(c) a helical spring longitudinally disposed within said chamber, one end of the spring being secured to the heel of the bat, the other end to the rear end of the line,
(d) a series of beads secured to said line at spaced positions therealong,
(e) a uni-directional valve covering said face hole and adapted to permit said beads to exit therethrough, and
(f) a ball secured to the front end of the line.

2. A game as set forth in claim 1, wherein said beads are of a graduated size to provide scoring indicia.

3. A ball and bat game comprising:
(a) a hollow bat having an interior chamber and a face opening,
(b) a ball,
(c) a line secured at one end to the ball, said line passing into said chamber through said opening,
(d) means to retract said line into said chamber after said ball has been hit by the bat and the line played out,
(e) means to impede the movement of said line so that its exit from the chamber is correlated to the effectiveness of the hit, and
(f) indicia means on said line to score said hit.

4. A baseball bat and ball game comprising:
(a) a hollow bat member having an interior chamber, said bat having an opening in the face thereof and an opening in the heel thereof,
(b) a line within said chamber, the front end passing out of the bat through said face opening and the rear end passing out through said heel opening,
(c) a ball secured to the front end of the line,
(d) a ring secured to the rear end of the line to draw the line in a direction opposed to the pull exerted by the ball when struck by the bat,
(e) beads secured to said line at spaced positions to provide scoring incida, and
(f) a bi-directional valve covering said face opening through which said beads may pass when sufficient pull is exerted on said line.

5. A game as set forth in claim 4, wherein said beads are of graduated size.

6. A baseball bat and ball game comprising:
(a) a hollow bat having an interior chamber, said bat having a hole in the face and a hole in the heel thereof,
(b) a reel secured to the heel of the bat,
(c) a line wound about said reel and passing into the interior chamber of the bat through the heel hole and passing out of the chamber through the face hole,
(d) a ball secured to the end of the line, and
(e) an adjustable friction means included in said reel to impede the unwinding of said reel when said ball is struck by the bat.

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