**SHAG 'N BAG**

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**ABSTRACT**

A multifunctional sporting apparatus designed for golf practice and play featuring a novel integration of golf ball retrieval and transportation technology with a golf club and accouterment portage device. A chamber capable of internally accepting, storing, and releasing a plurality of golf balls configured with a means of detachably securing a plurality of golf clubs and accoutrements. Its compact nature enables a golfing athlete to practice and play the game of golf in a more efficient and convenient manner.
Fig. 3
SHAG 'N BAG

FIELD OF THE PRESENT DISCLOSURE

[0001] This disclosure relates generally to sporting equipment, and more particularly to sporting equipment designed to assist an athlete practice and play the game of golf in a more efficient and portable manner.

BACKGROUND OF THE RELATED ART

[0002] The game of golf is often referred to as one of the most difficult games to master. This is largely due to the fact that it requires near perfect coordination of a person’s entire body to repeatedly swing a golf club with the desired tempo, precision, and accuracy. Golfers improve such coordination largely through muscle memory developed by hitting hundreds or even thousands of golf balls. This practice creates the need to transport and retrieve large quantities of golf balls. There are several solutions to this need in the prior art, each with varying limitations and disadvantages.

[0003] One common solution to this need is the driving range. At a driving range a golfer may purchase the use of a plurality of golf balls for a small fee, typically dispensed in a bucket or similar portable device. The golfer may then practice his or her golf swing in a designated area, striking each golf ball until the plurality of golf balls is exhausted. The retrieval of the plurality of golf balls is conducted by the driving range as a service included in the fee. While this solution serves a portion of golfers well, it has several disadvantages. Most obviously, it can be expensive because, as previously stated, an avid golfer may hit hundreds or even thousands of golf balls to hone and perfect his or her golfing skills. Driving ranges can also be crowded, often provide inferior quality golf balls, offer artificial or compromised ground conditions, and/or lack the obstacles and challenging terrain a golfer must navigate on the golf course. These disadvantages reduce both the quality of practice and desirability of the driving range as a practice solution.

[0004] Golfers wishing to traverse these disadvantages commonly provide their own plurality of golf balls and find less structured locations to practice such as an open field or a golf course on a closed or slow day. This approach typically reduces the expense of practice and can be more convenient, allowing the golfer to practice in any accommodating location. It may also be more effective because the golfer is free to practice on terrain that offers the ground conditions or unique challenging features on which the golfer wishes improve his or her golfing skill. However, this method of practice leaves the issue of transporting and retrieving the required plurality of golf balls to the golfer. A large number of devices have been developed to assist with this task, each with varying advantages and disadvantages.

[0005] The most rudimentary solution involves the use of a container of suitable size, such as a bucket or small gym bag, and requires the golfer to manually retrieve the golf balls after each practice session. However, as any golfer who has utilized this method can attest, the energy and strain associated with repeatedly bending down to collect a plurality of golf balls can quickly become prohibitively great. Devices such as those disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 5,466,027 and U.S. Pat. No. 5,060,906 address this issue by providing the golfer a means to reach and collect each golf ball without bending over. While each device accomplishes the task in a different manner, they all similarly eliminate the necessity of bending over during the retrieval process thereby making the process more convenient.

[0006] A major disadvantage associated with the above mentioned devices is capacity. Each device similarly stores the retrieved golf balls in a linear manner inside the tubular structure and therefore can only hold a relatively small number of golf balls. A golfer who prefers to practice with more than a few dozen golf balls must empty the device into a larger container after collection thereby necessitating an additional storage and portage device. This inconvenience is addressed by devices such as U.S. Pat. No. 5,476,297 and U.S. Pat. No. 6,572,167. These devices, generally referred to as shag-bags, comprise, inter alia, a tube portion capable of accepting the golf balls, attached to a bag portion configured to increase the golf ball holding capacity. Shag-bag devices both successfully reduce the effort associated with retrieving a plurality of golf balls without the capacity issues of the previous devices, however, disadvantages are associated with these devices as well, such as convenience and portability.

[0007] When practicing or playing the game of golf, a typical athlete must also transport a plurality of clubs, usually carried in a golf bag. Carrying a shag-bag type device as well as golf bag may prove cumbersome, requiring both hands or a shoulder strap over both shoulders. In some situations such a cumbersome load may be unacceptable or impossible. Alternatively, if the golfer chooses to practice without a golf bag and carries only a shag-bag style device and a solitary or small number of golf clubs by hand, the golfer is similarly encumbered and faces the additional disadvantage of a reduced variety of practice options. The present disclosure provides a solution to this quandary and distinguishes over the related art providing heretofore unknown advantages as described in the following summary.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0008] The present disclosure describes an improved sporting apparatus designed to perform both as a golf bag and as a practice ball retrieval and storage aid. The sporting apparatus features a novel integration of golf ball retrieval and transportation technology with a golf club and accoutrement portage device. Its versatility and compact nature effectively performs multiple functions that the golfing athlete desires during golf practice and play.

[0009] An exemplary embodiment comprises a means of securing a plurality of golf clubs to the external surface of an elongated chamber capable of internally accepting, storing, and releasing a plurality of golf balls. The chamber is configured with an ingress aperture located on its posterior end, sized appropriately for the passage of a golf ball thereby enabling a golfer to capture and collect a golf ball situated on the ground by merely setting the sporting apparatus down properly aligned with the desired golf ball. As the captured golf ball is forced through the ingress aperture it enters the chamber where it is stored and transported until it is released for further practice or play.

[0010] The presently disclosed sporting apparatus may be further configured with a shoulder strap for convenience during transportation and retractable legs, allowing for upright stability so that the golfing athlete may gain access to the plurality of golf clubs with ease during a practice or play session. These features are commonly associated with golf bags but when incorporated with a dual purpose device, capable of collecting, storing, and transporting a plurality of
golf balls and a plurality of golf clubs and accoutrements, it provides an athlete with a golf practice and play solution that is substantially more convenient than carrying multiple specialized devices as taught in the prior art.

[0011] The convenience provided by the presently disclosed apparatus is a significant advantage for reasons beyond simply ease and enjoyment of use. Among these reasons is the ability to socially interact. Golf, during both practice and play, is a highly social game. Individuals often play and practice golf as a common activity used to gain a greater familiarity with each other for both personal and business reasons. The use of a convenient multipurpose device such as the presently disclosed sporting apparatus leaves an individual greater freedom to participate in social pleasures such as shaking hands, gesturing, or marking a score card, which may allow an individual to make a more beneficial social impression.

[0012] The appearance of the presently disclosed sporting apparatus may present additional advantages in relation to golf course decorum. During normal golf course play, there typically exists an expectation that a golfer will play the course at a particular pace so that golfers who follow are not unreasonably delayed. Playing multiple balls or practicing for an extended length of time at a particular site on a golf course is usually disruptive to the expected rate of play and is therefore discouraged by other golfers, and may be prohibited by course officials. For this reason, it may be unacceptable decorum for a golfer to carry a shag-bag or other device clearly configured for golf practice, rather than play, on the golf course. However, as avid golfers are aware, there are times when golf course practice is acceptable, either because there are very few golfers on the course due to weather, or the time of day, or perhaps because all or part of the course is closed for maintenance or repair. The disclosed sporting apparatus has a similar appearance to, and can function as, golf play gear. This appearance and dual multifunctional nature allows a golfing athlete to take advantage of golf course practice opportunities without suffering the potential negative response ordinarily acquainted with carrying practice equipment on the course by fellow golfers and course officials.

[0013] The presently disclosed apparatus shares some basic similarities with a variety of devices that are known in the art; however, no existing device yields the synergistic advantages and benefits in construction and use that give rise to the objectives described below.

[0014] A primary objective inherent in the above-described apparatus is to provide advantages not taught by the prior art.

[0015] Another objective is to assist an athlete playing and practicing the game of golf in a more efficient and portable manner.

[0016] A further objective is to provide a singular apparatus that is capable of easily collecting, storing, and transporting a plurality of golf balls with a plurality of golf clubs and assorted accoutrements.

[0017] A still further objective is to provide a single portable apparatus that is capable of easily collecting, storing, and transporting a plurality of golf balls with a plurality of golf clubs and accoutrements without excessive encumbrance.

[0018] A yet still further objective is to provide an apparatus capable of assisting a golfer practice and play the game of golf that is acceptable to the norms of golf course decorum.

[0019] Other features and advantages of the present invention will become apparent from the following more detailed description, taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, which illustrate, by way of example, the principles of the presently described apparatus and method of its use.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWING(S)

[0020] The accompanying drawings illustrate various exemplary implementations and are part of the specification. The illustrated implementations are proffered for purposes of example not for purposes of limitation. Illustrated elements will be designated by numbers. Once designated, an element will be identified by the identical number throughout. Illustrated in the accompanying drawing(s) is at least one of the best mode embodiments of the present disclosure. In such drawing(s):

[0021] FIG. 1 is a perspective view of an exemplary embodiment of the presently disclosed apparatus shown in an upright position with legs extended;

[0022] FIG. 2 is a perspective view of an exemplary embodiment of the presently disclosed apparatus shown being used to collect a plurality of golf balls;

[0023] FIG. 3 is a cut away view of an exemplary embodiment of the ingress aperture;

[0024] FIG. 4 is a perspective view of the exemplary embodiment of the presently disclosed apparatus shown releasing a plurality of golf balls through the egress aperture.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE EXEMPLARY EMBODIMENT

[0025] The above described drawing figures illustrate an exemplary embodiment of the sporting apparatus and its method of use in at least one of its preferred, best mode embodiments, which is further defined in detail in the following description. Those having ordinary skill in the art may be able to make alterations and modifications to what is described herein without departing from the spirit and scope of the disclosure. Therefore, it must be understood that what is illustrated is set forth only for the purposes of example and that it should not be taken as a limitation to the scope of the present apparatus and method of use.

[0026] Described now in detail is an improved sporting apparatus designed to assist an athlete practice and play the game of golf in a more efficient and portable manner. FIG. 1 is a perspective view of an exemplary embodiment of the presently disclosed apparatus 100. This figure depicts an elongated, cylindrical chamber 110, designed to internally accommodate a plurality of golf balls, with an egress aperture 120 and ingress aperture 130 located on the anterior and posterior ends of the chamber 110, respectively.

[0027] The egress aperture 120 may be sized appropriately to conveniently allow for the release of the plurality of golf balls from within the chamber 110. The egress aperture 120 may also be covered or closed when release is not desired. In one embodiment, the egress aperture 120 is covered or closed by a threaded lid 140 capable of engaging the complementary threads of the egress aperture’s 120 inner circumference. The threaded lid 140 may also feature a handle 150 providing an ergonomic gripping point for both assisting in manipulation of the lid 140 for the purpose of engagement and disengagement...
ment, as well as for lifting or transporting the presently disclosed sporting apparatus 100 in its entirety when the lid 140 is engaged.

[0028] The ingress aperture 130, located on the posterior end of the chamber 110, may be nominally larger than a standard sized golf ball and configured to accept a golf ball into the chamber 110. The ingress aperture 130 may be designed to restrict golf ball passage in a unidirectional manner thereby preventing a golf ball from exiting the chamber 110 once it has entered.

[0029] The sporting apparatus 100 further features a means of detachably fastening a plurality of golf clubs thereby providing the golfer a single apparatus to hold and dispense the equipment necessary to both practice and play the game of golf. In the exemplary embodiment shown in FIG. 1, a plurality of paired clips 160 and cups 170 are mounted to and radially spaced along the external surface of the chamber 110. Each clip 160 detachably fastens a golf club’s shaft while the corresponding cup 170 secures the gripping end of the golf club and supports its weight when the sporting apparatus 100 is oriented in an upright position. There are a variety of methods to accomplish this end. So long as the method is robust and allows for convenient detachment when desired, it is acceptable.

[0030] In another embodiment, the chamber 110 may be removable integrated to a chassis that is capable of supporting a plurality of golf clubs. The chassis may appear and function substantially similar to a standard lightweight golf bag with the additional feature that may accept and support a chamber 110 as an insertable unit. In this embodiment the chamber 110 insert unit is similarly designed to internally accommodate a plurality of golf balls, with an egress aperture 120 and ingress aperture 130.

[0031] The exemplary embodiment shown in FIG. 1 further illustrates the addition of retractable legs 180 to provide support for the apparatus in an upright orientation and a shoulder strap 190 to increase portability.

[0032] FIG. 2 illustrates an exemplary embodiment of the presently disclosed apparatus 100 being used to collect a plurality of golf balls situated on the ground. With the lid 140 fastened, the lid’s handle 150 provides an ergonomic gripping point to hold and orient the apparatus 100. As previously described, to capture and collect a golf ball, an individual must merely align the apparatus 100 above the desire ball and lower the apparatus, forcing the golf ball in the ingress aperture 130. Use of the sporting apparatus 100 does not require bending or reaching and therefore eliminates the stress and strain associated with manually picking up a plurality of golf balls.

[0033] Once inside the ingress aperture 130 a series of upward facing flexible teeth 200 fabricated from a flexible material, illustrated in FIG. 3, create constructive interference, thereby discouraging the golf ball from downward travel. After the golf ball is forced through the ingress aperture 130, it enters the internal cavity of the chamber 110, where it is stored and transported until the egress aperture 120 is opened allowing for release.

[0034] FIG. 4 illustrates an exemplary embodiment releasing a plurality of golf balls from the chamber 110 through the egress aperture 120. The egress aperture 120 is opened by rotating the lid 140 until it disengages from the complementary threads of the inner circumference of the egress aperture. The illustrated embodiment also features a handle 210 located toward the posterior end of the chamber 110. An athlete may lift up on the handle 210 to create a gradient in the chamber 110 to facilitate expedient release of the golf balls. Once the golf balls are released, the apparatus 100 may be returned to its upright position, illustrated in FIG. 1, and the athlete may remove a golf club and begin to practice or play the game of golf.

[0035] The enablements described in detail above are considered novel over the prior art of record and are considered critical to the operation of at least one aspect of the apparatus and its method of use, and to the achievement of the above described objectives. The words used in this specification to describe the instant embodiments are to be understood not only in the sense of their commonly defined meanings, but to include by special definition in this specification: structure, material, or acts beyond the scope of the commonly defined meanings. Thus, if an element can be understood in the context of this specification as including more than one meaning, then its use must be understood as being generic to all possible meanings supported by the specification and by the word(s) describing the element.

[0036] The definitions of the words or drawing elements described herein are meant to include not only the combination of elements which are literally set forth, but all equivalent structures, materials or acts for performing substantially the same function in substantially the same way to obtain substantially the same result. In this sense it is therefore contemplated that an equivalent substitution of two or more elements may be made for any one of the elements described and its various embodiments or that a single element may be substituted for two or more elements in a claim.

[0037] Changes from the claimed subject matter as viewed by a person with ordinary skill in the art, now known or later devised, are expressly contemplated as being equivalents within the scope intended and its various embodiments. Therefore, substitutions, now or later known to one with ordinary skill in the art, are defined to be within the scope of the defined elements. This disclosure is thus meant to be understood to include what is specifically illustrated and described above, what is conceptually equivalent, what can be obviously substituted, and also what incorporates the essential ideas.

[0038] The scope of this description is to be interpreted only in conjunction with the appended claims and it is made clear, here, that each named inventor believes that the claimed subject matter is what is intended to be patented.

What is claimed is:

1. An apparatus for assisting an athlete practice and play the game of golf, the apparatus comprising:
   a chamber capable of accepting and caching a plurality of golf balls; and
   a means of removably attaching a plurality of golf clubs to the external surface of said chamber.

2. An apparatus as in claim 1, further comprising an ingress aperture located on the posterior end of said chamber through which a golf ball may enter said chamber.

3. An apparatus as in claim 2, wherein said ingress aperture is coupled with a means of restricting passage of a golf ball unidirectionally.

4. An apparatus as in claim 3, wherein said apparatus further comprises an egress aperture configured for the convenient release of a plurality of golf balls from said chamber.
5. A apparatus as in claim 4, wherein said apparatus further comprises:
   a plurality of retractable legs affixed to said chamber capable of supporting said apparatus in an upright orientation; and
   a strap affixed to said chamber at each extremity configured for shoulder mounted portage.
6. An apparatus for assisting an athlete practice and play the game of golf, the apparatus comprising:
   a chassis;
   a chamber capable of accepting and caching a plurality of golf balls, configured to removably interface with and derive support from said chassis; and
   a means of supporting a plurality of golf clubs by said chassis.
7. An apparatus as in claim 5, further comprising an ingress aperture located on the posterior end of said chamber through which a golf ball may enter said chamber.
8. An apparatus as in claim 6, wherein said ingress aperture is coupled with a means of restricting passage of a golf ball unidirectionally.
9. An apparatus as in claim 7, wherein said apparatus further comprises an egress aperture configured for the convenient release of a plurality of golf balls from said chamber.
10. A apparatus as in claim 8, wherein said apparatus further comprises:
    a plurality of retractable legs affixed to said chassis capable of supporting said apparatus in an upright orientation; and
    a strap affixed to said chassis configured at each extremity configured for shoulder mounted portage.
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