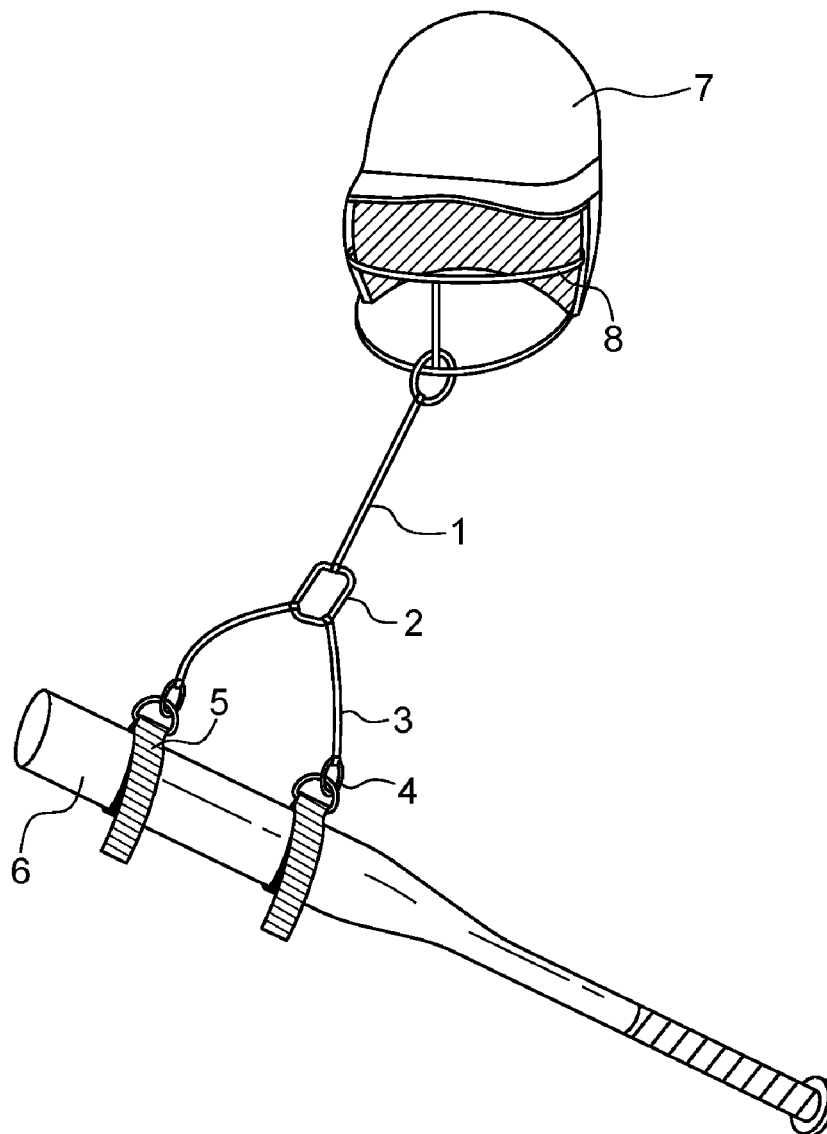




US 20170157483A1

(19) **United States**(12) **Patent Application Publication**
Wilber et al.(10) **Pub. No.: US 2017/0157483 A1**(43) **Pub. Date: Jun. 8, 2017**(54) **BUNT MASTER**(71) Applicants: **Thomas A. Wilber**, Maysville, GA
(US); **John T. Trimble**, Hoschton, GA
(US)(72) Inventors: **Thomas A. Wilber**, Maysville, GA
(US); **John T. Trimble**, Hoschton, GA
(US)(21) Appl. No.: **14/959,267**(22) Filed: **Dec. 4, 2015****Publication Classification**(51) **Int. Cl.**
A63B 69/00 (2006.01)(52) **U.S. Cl.**CPC .. **A63B 69/0002** (2013.01); **A63B 2069/0008**
(2013.01); **A63B 2102/182** (2015.10)(57) **ABSTRACT**

The present invention provides an apparatus and method for use in training the proper technique of bunting a ball in baseball or softball. The apparatus comprises a sleeve configured to wrap around the bat, an elastic cord such as, a bungee cord extended from the sleeve and a coupling mechanism to couple the other end of elastic cord to the helmet of the player. The apparatus allows the player to bunt a ball with proper bat angle and distance from the player's eyes to the contact point of the bunt. The stretch in the elastic cord would allow the player to feel the bat moving away from the proper distance or bat angle.



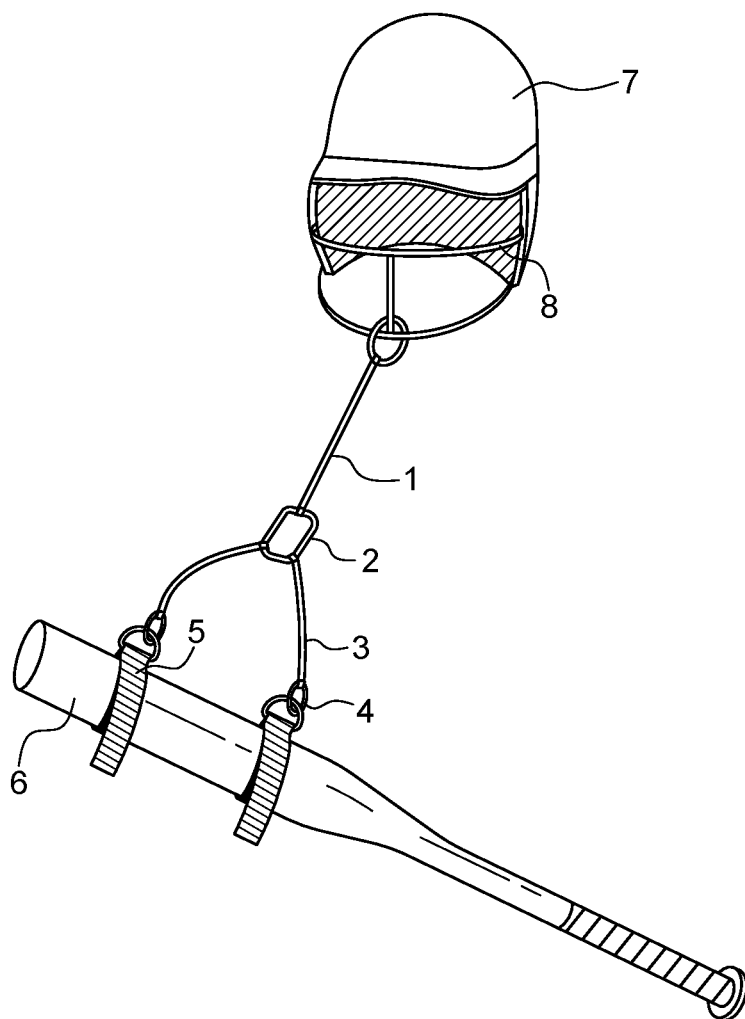


FIG. 1

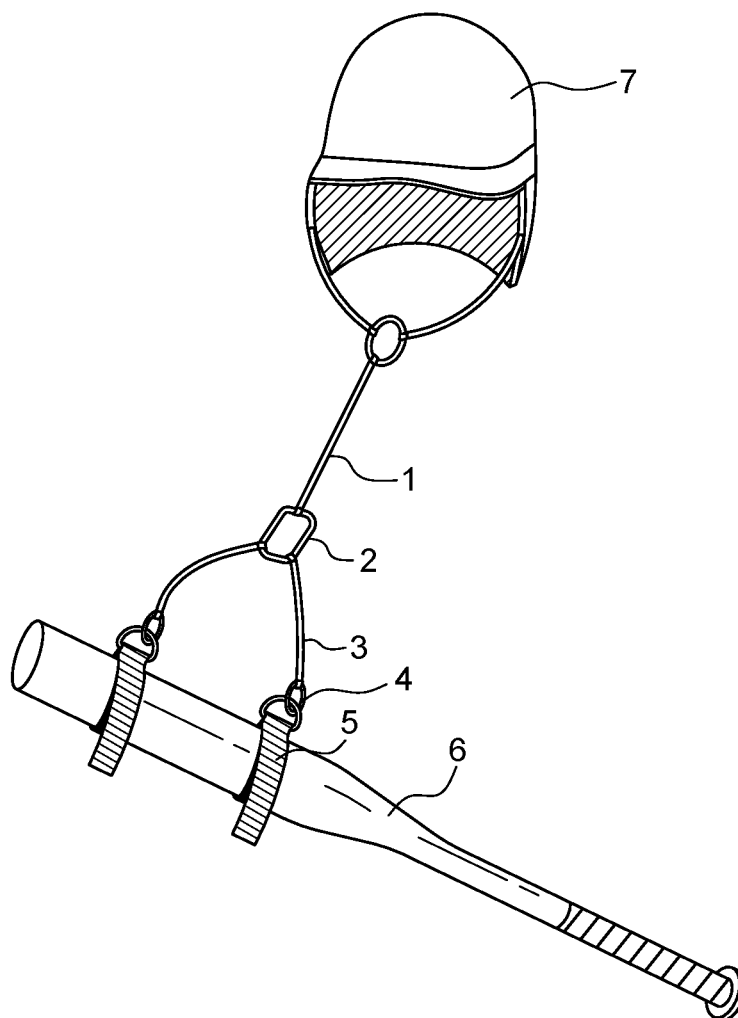


FIG. 2

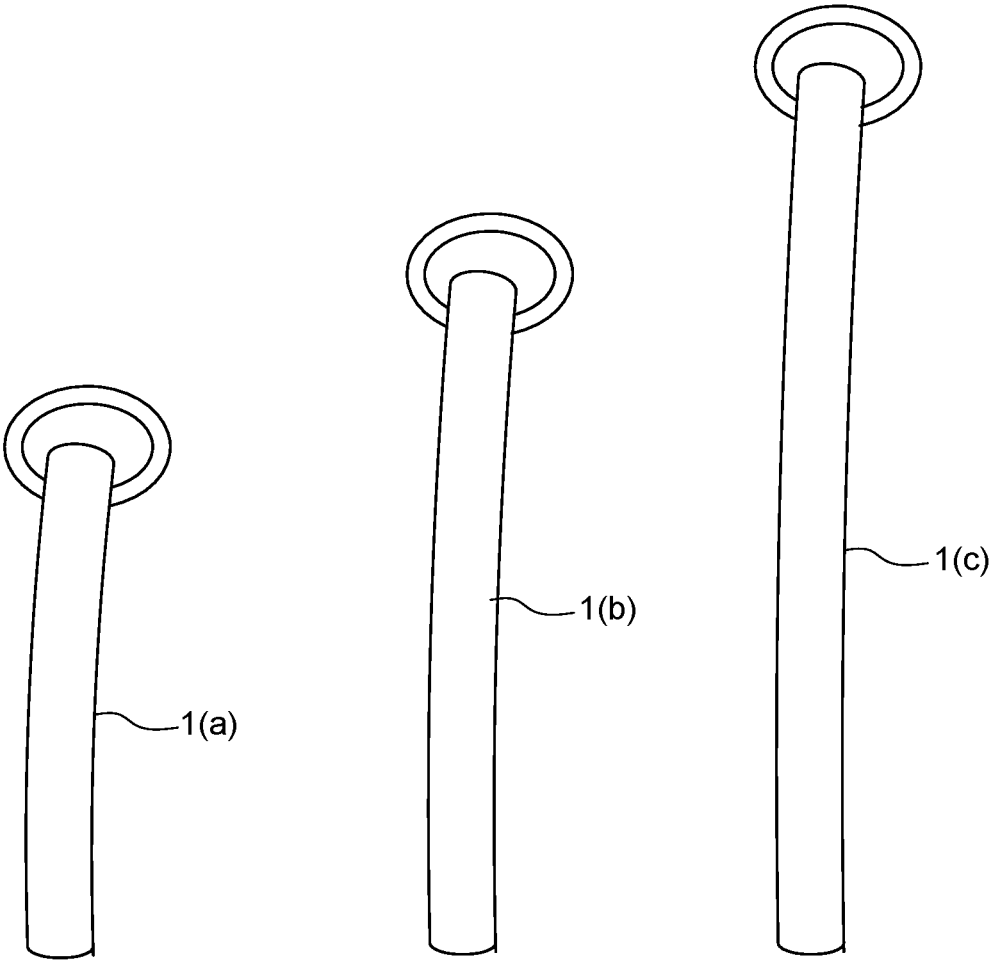


FIG. 3

BUNT MASTER**CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION**

[0001] Not Applicable

FEDERALLY SPONSORED RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

[0002] Not Applicable

MICROFICHE APPENDIX

[0003] Not Applicable

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0004] (1) Field of Invention

[0005] The present invention generally relates to a training apparatus and a method of training and in particular the invention relates to an apparatus and method for improving the batting skills.

[0006] (2) Background of Invention

[0007] In baseball/softball, teaching a proper technique to bunt a ball is often a difficult task particularly teaching the new players. The particular problem faced by players in bunting the ball is maintaining proper angle of bat while bunting the ball. The players generally learn a technique through hit and trail but it may often be a long process and the player may develop non-optimal habits. The trainers/coaches through their years of experience have learnt the proper techniques could help a new player to learn the proper technique in short span of time as well as the coach could keep a check on wrongs positioning or moves of the user. However, teaching the bunting technique requires a closer supervision by the trainer wherein the player must keep on repeating the technique as told by the trainer including the movement and positioning of body in order that the muscles develop memory of the technique and the player could unconsciously repeat the technique. This often requires long time and also the right coaching may not be available to the trainee. Moreover, it may not be possible for a trainer to give sufficient amount of time to teach and monitor each trainee. To overcome such a problem, various type of training aids are developed which helps a player to learn the proper technique and avoid non-optimal habits. Using a training aid may save the time of trainers and could also allow a player to learn the proper technique themselves. For example, a prior art disclosing such training aid includes:

[0008] U.S. Pat. No. 8,512,171 entitled "Batter training apparatus and method" issued to "David Minotti" which teaches an apparatus and method to train baseball and softball batters to effectively swing the bat with a proper rotation of a player's hips and proper follow through of a player's wrist, arm and shoulder. Training apparatus includes a belt worn over the hips that has a cable extending behind and between the hips. A tether connects the belt to a support post, preventing forward motion of the batter's body, but allowing and conditioning the hips to rotate. The support post sits at the rear of a platform that is about the size of a batter's box. An elastic cord connected to a forward arm and attached to the front of the platform, pulls a batter's wrists, arms and shoulders forward during proper follow through, conditioning the batter to swing the bat efficiently.

[0009] U.S. Pat. No. 6,988,966 entitled "Method for controlling a batter's foot" issued to "Guzman Daniel P" which teaches a batting technique teaching device for teaching a baseball batter proper foot movement. The apparatus comprises a fixable panel and the rear foot of a batter is positioned beneath the panel such that lifting of the rear foot from the ground surface is restricted when the batter swings at a pitch.

[0010] U.S. Pat. No. 7,811,185 entitled "Method for training and improvement of batting skill" issued to "Launch Pad 39A, Llc" which teaches a method of training in swinging and hitting a baseball or softball in which a mechanical training aid is provided and attached to a batter's trailing back forearm and trailing back calf with a stretchable band attached between the back forearm and back calf. The band is stretched as a batter swings with proper extension and rotation of his body. The stretched band may further cause a visual, audible, or tactilely perceived indicator to the batter or observer that a batter has properly extended during a swing.

[0011] U.S. Pat. No. 5,114,142 entitled "Training device for baseball hitters" issued to "Gillespie Gordon A" which teaches a training device for baseball hitters using a bat comprising, in combination, (a firm) an inelastic belt for encircling the chest of a hitter, a second (firm) inelastic belt for encircling the upper portion of the lead arm of the hitter, and means for firmly securing said chest and arm belts together in direct contact with each other to thereby bind the hitter's upper lead arm and elbow tightly to his side while leaving his forearm generally free for movement throughout an entire swing of the bat.

[0012] U.S. Pat. No. 6,984,184 entitled "Baseball batting swing training apparatus and method of using same" issued to "Gray Jonathan D" which teaches an apparatus for building muscle memory to develop a more rapid baseball swing and avoid casting of the hands and bat during the swing. Such apparatus includes a first attachment member connectable to an upper arm and a second attachment member connectable to an opposing forearm interposed by an elongated tether to be aligned along a forearm upon initially entering into a hitter's stance.

[0013] The training aids generally comprise a restraining mechanism which helps the user to repeat the proper technique and avoid any non-optimal habit. The prior art provides different types of training aids to improve batting skills, however, to best of our knowledge, no prior art teaches a training aid to improve bunting of the ball in baseball and softball. Thus, a need is appreciated for a training aid which assists a player to learn proper technique of bunting the baseball.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0014] The present invention, therefore, has as its principal object to provide training apparatus and method to improve bunting skills in baseball and softball.

[0015] Another object of present invention is that the apparatus could be used by a new player to learn bunting the ball.

[0016] Still, another object of present invention is that the apparatus helps to avoid non-optimal habits in bunting the ball.

[0017] An additional object of present invention is that the apparatus could be used by a player to learn proper technique of bunting a ball themselves.

[0018] A further object of present invention is that the apparatus and the method is safe to use.

[0019] A still further object of present invention is that the apparatus could be used by young as well as adults.

[0020] Yet another object of present invention is that the apparatus is economic to manufacture.

[0021] Certain embodiments of present invention provide an apparatus and method for use in training the proper technique of bunting a ball in baseball and softball. The apparatus comprises a sleeve configured to wrap around the bat, an elastic cord such as, a bungee cord extended from the sleeve and a coupling mechanism to couple the other end of elastic cord to the sleeve.

[0022] In a preferred embodiment, the device allows a user to bunt a ball with proper bat angle and distance from the player's eyes to the contact point of the bunt. If the player extends their arms or reaches for a pitched ball, the player will feel the bat move away from the proper distance or bat angle.

[0023] In addition to the various objects and advantages of the present invention described with some degree of specificity above it should be obvious that additional objects and advantages of the present invention will become more readily apparent to those persons who are skilled in the relevant art from the following more detailed description of the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0024] To further clarify various aspects of some example embodiments of the present invention, a more particular description of the invention will be rendered by reference to specific embodiments thereof which are illustrated in the appended drawing. It is appreciated that the drawing depicts only illustrated embodiments of the invention and are therefore not to be considered limiting of its scope. The invention will be described and explained with additional specificity and detail through the use of the accompanying drawing in which:

[0025] FIG. 1 shows perspective view of training apparatus having a helmet with face mask.

[0026] FIG. 2 shows perspective view of training apparatus having a helmet without face mask.

[0027] FIG. 3 shows the various sizes of an elastic cord.

DETAIL DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0028] The present invention provides an apparatus and method to train a player a proper technique of bunting in baseball and softball.

[0029] Before explaining at least one embodiment of the invention in detail, it is to be understood that the invention is not limited in its application to the details of construction and the arrangements of the components set forth in the following description. The invention is capable of other embodiments and of being practiced and carried out in various ways. Also it is to be understood that the phraseology and terminology employed herein are for the purpose of description and should not be regarded as limiting.

[0030] As used in this specification and the appended claims, the singular forms "a", "an", and "the" include plural referents unless the content clearly dictates otherwise.

[0031] Unless otherwise defined, all terms (including technical and scientific terms) used herein have the same meaning as commonly understood by one having ordinary skill in

the art to which this invention belongs. It will be further understood that terms, such as those defined in commonly used dictionaries, should be interpreted as having a meaning that is consistent with their meaning in the context of the relevant art and the present disclosure and will not be interpreted in an idealized or overly formal sense unless expressly so defined herein.

[0032] It is further noted that, unless indicated otherwise, all functions described herein can be performed in either hardware or software, or some combination thereof. In a preferred embodiment, however, the functions are performed by a processor such as a computer or an electronic data processor in accordance with code such as computer program code, software, and/or integrated circuits that are coded to perform such functions, unless indicated otherwise.

[0033] Referring to the drawings, specifically to FIG. 1 of the drawings thereof is shown, a restraining training aid used to train the players a proper bunting technique in baseball or softball. The apparatus includes an elastic cord 1 which may be similar to a bungee cord. At the one end of the elastic cord 1 is a metallic clip 2 to connect the elastic cord 1 to a pair of sleeves 3 configured to position the apparatus around a baseball bat 6, a locking mechanism 4 which may be similar to a carabiner, to couple the sleeves 6 to a fastening mechanism 5 like a Velcro strap configured to wrap around a baseball bat 7. Further at the other end of the elastic cord 1 is coupling mechanism to connect the elastic cord 1 to a protective face mask 8 of a protective headgear 7 like a helmet.

[0034] Referring to the drawings, specifically to FIG. 2 of the drawings thereof is shown an embodiment of the invention. Herein is shown a restraining training aid used to train the players. The training aid is formed of a protective headgear 7 like a helmet, an elastic cord 1 which may be similar to a bungee cord attached to the protective headgear 7 at one end, and at the other end of the elastic cord 1 is a metallic clip 2 to connect the elastic cord 1 to a pair of sleeves 3 configured to position the apparatus around a baseball bat 6, a locking mechanism 4 which may be similar to a carabiner, to couple the sleeves 6 to a fastening mechanism 5 like a Velcro strap configured to wrap around a baseball bat 7.

[0035] Referring to the drawings, specifically to FIG. 3 of the drawings thereof is shown, the length of elastic cord 1 in the apparatus. The length of elastic cord 1 depends upon the body size and age of the player. The elastic cord 1 may be customized according to an individual trainee or preferably the elastic cord 1 could be provided in three different sizes i.e. small elastic cord 1(a), medium elastic cord 1(b) and large elastic cord 1(c). The small size elastic cord 1(a) could be 12 in. in length; the medium size elastic cord 1(b) could be 15 in. in length and the large size elastic cord 1(c) could be 18 in. in length.

[0036] According to an embodiment of the invention, the elastic cord 1 at one end could be connected to a sleeve 3 which is configured to wrap around the baseball bat 6. The sleeve 3 could be flexible cylindrical or substantially cylindrical hollow body that could be slipped into the baseball bat 6 and secured to the bat 6 using restraining straps. The straps could be separate from the sleeve 3 which is wrapped around the sleeve 3 and tightly fastened to secure the sleeve 3 around the baseball bat 6. Also, the strap 5 could be fixed to the outer surface of the sleeve 3 which could be wrapped around the sleeve 3 and secured. The straps could be

fastened using hook and loop mechanism, such as using Velcro strips. Despite the use of sleeves 3, the wraps could also be used which could be simple wrapped around the bat 6 and secured using hook and loop fasteners such as Velcro. [0037] Further, the elastic cord 1 is removably coupled to the face mask 8 of helmet 7 or the elastic cord 1 could also be coupled to the helmet 7 using two points of attachment. The elastic cord 1 is coupled to left and right sides of the helmet 7 where the face mask 8 attaches to the helmet 7 body. The elastic cord 1 is secured to the helmet 7 body through snaps or other fastener.

[0038] In one embodiment, the apparatus includes a strap 5 which could be wrapped around the baseball bat 6 and secured using a hook and loop fastener. The strap 5 is coupled to a carabiner through a hook. The apparatus further includes a bungee cord having hooks on both the ends and one of the hooks is coupled to the strap 5 hook which is also used to couple the carabiner. The bungee cord could then loop through the face mask 8 and the other end of the bungee cord could be hooked to the carabiner.

[0039] Moreover, the two sleeves 3 are closely spaced on the bat 6 and the two sleeves 3 are connected through an elastic cord. An elongated elastic cord 1 having one of the end coupled to one of the two sleeves 3 and the other end coupled to the other sleeve 3 forming a loop. The elastic cord 1 loop could be then coupled to the helmet 7 through a strap 5 or an elastic cord. The elastic cord 1 loop is attached to another strap 5 or elastic cord 1 which couples to the helmet 7. The loop is interrupted near the middle of the elastic cord 1 to divide the elastic cord 1 in two unequal portions. The shorter portion lies toward the holding area of the bat 6 and such as a triangulation of elastic cord 1 provides more control over the bat 6 while bunting having two control points.

[0040] According to the invention with the use of the apparatus there would not be any need to be able to promote the proper bat angle when bunting a softball or baseball and the apparatus allows the players to see and feel the proper way to bunt the ball. The device allows the player to bunt a pitched ball with the proper bat angle and the distance from the player's eyes to the contact point of the bunt. If the player extends their arms or reaches for a pitched ball, the device will allow players to develop the skills necessary to execute proper and successful bunt.

[0041] It is to be understood that the apparatus encompasses a variety of alternatives. For example the apparatus could be adapted for genders i.e. boys and girls and also the apparatus could be used by both young's and adults. Moreover the apparatus could be used by novice players to learn bunting technique and also could be used by professional players to improve their bunting technique. The apparatus could further include safety features such as a safety break which separates the bat from the headgear in case the player accidentally extend the bat far away from the helmet.

[0042] Those skilled in the art should appreciate that they can readily use the disclosed conception and specific embodiment as a basis for designing or modifying other

structures for carrying out the same purposes of the present invention and that such other structures do not depart from the spirit and scope of the invention in its broadest form.

1. A training apparatus for use in training a bunting technique to a player in baseball or softball, wherein said training apparatus comprises:

- a. a sleeve configured to position around a baseball bat; and
- b. an elastic cord having a proximal end and a distal end, the proximal end of said elastic cord coupled to the sleeve, said distal end of the elastic cord is coupled to a protective headgear worn by the player.

2. The training apparatus of claim 1, wherein said elastic cord is a bungee cord.

3. The training apparatus of claim 1, wherein said protective headgear is a helmet.

4. The training apparatus of claim 1, wherein said protective headgear is a helmet with a facemask.

5. The training apparatus of claim 1, wherein said headgear is a helmet with facemask and the elastic cord is coupled to the facemask of the helmet.

6. The training apparatus of claim 1, wherein said headgear is a helmet and the elastic cord is coupled to the body of the helmet.

7. A training apparatus for use in training a bunting technique to a player in baseball or softball, wherein said training apparatus comprises:

- a. a pair of sleeves positioned around the baseball bat and the two sleeves are closely spaced apart;
- b. an elongated elastic cord coupling the two sleeves to form a loop, said loop is interrupted with a fastener near the middle of the loop to divide the loop in two unequal portions, the shorter portion faces the holding area of the bat, the fastener is coupled to a strap which connects the elastic cord to a protective gear adapted to be worn by the player.

8. The training apparatus of claim 7, wherein said elastic cord is a bungee cord.

9. The training apparatus of claim 7, wherein said protective headgear is a helmet.

10. The training apparatus of claim 7, wherein said protective headgear is a helmet with a facemask.

11. The training apparatus of claim 7, wherein said headgear is a helmet with facemask and the elastic cord is coupled to the facemask of the helmet.

12. The training apparatus of claim 7, wherein said headgear is a helmet and the elastic cord is coupled to the body of the helmet.

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