United States Patent

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[72] Inventor **Joseph A. Gentiluomo**
1456 Belmont Ave., Schenectady, N.Y. 12308

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[54] **PUTTING GREEN INCLUDING MEANS FOR SEQUENTIALLY RETURNING HOLED-OUT BALLS TO PERIPHERALLY SPACED BALL DISPENSERS**
6 Claims, 2 Drawing Figs.

[52] **U.S. Cl.** **273/176,** 273/201, 273/179
[51] **Int. Cl.** **A63b 67/02**
[50] **Field of Search** ..... 273/176 (all), 182, 87, 87.2, 87.4, 179 (A), 127, 195, 201; 194/Game Digest, (Inquired)

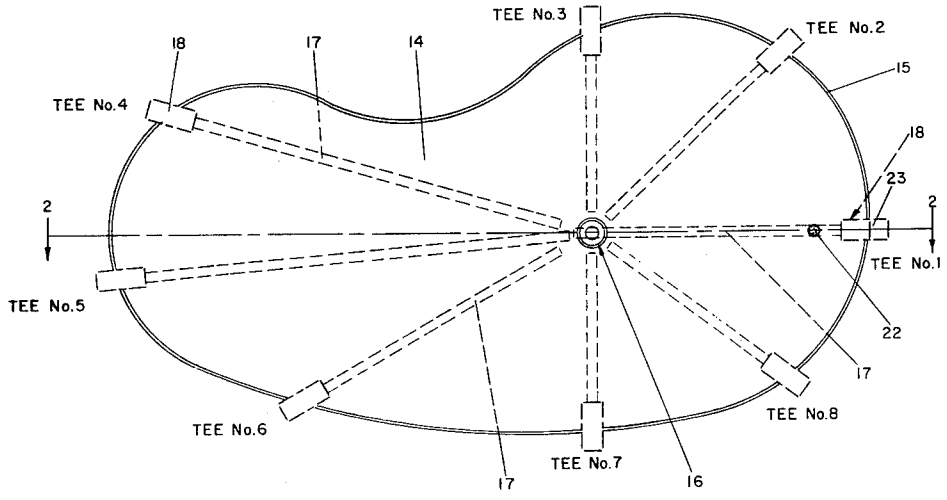
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Primary Examiner—George J. Marlo
Attorney—Joseph A. Gentiluomo

ABSTRACT: A continuous putting green surface having a cup, undulations, and surface texture similar to a golf course putting green, thereby, providing players with varied length putts in which the ball line-of-roll may envolve level, uphill, downhill, or sidehill travel or any combination thereof, either against, across, or with the grain of the putting surface or any grain combination thereof. Utilization of automatic ball-dispensing and ball return means eliminates player bending or stooping for balls both at the putting tees and at the cup. When the ball-dispensing means releases a ball upon the putting green, the ball return means is translated into ball-receiving position underneath the cup. A holed out ball will enter the ball return means and roll by gravity to the ball-dispensing means for subsequent reuse. This returned ball will initiate operation of a second ball-dispensing means to discharge a ball and cause the previously used ball return means to retract, and the ball return means associated with the second dispensing means to move into ball-receiving position underneath the cup. This sequence of operations will continue until balls are putted and holed out from the plurality of putting tee positions located on the putting green periphery.



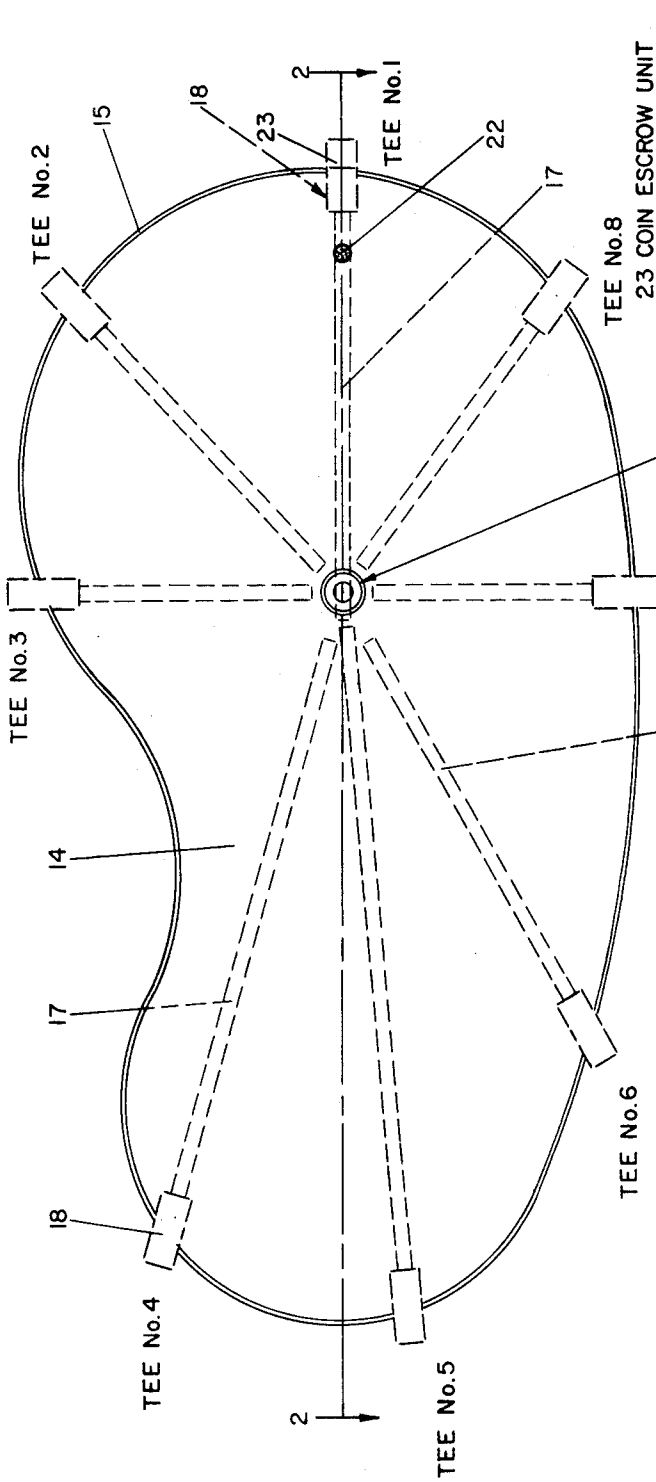


FIG. 1

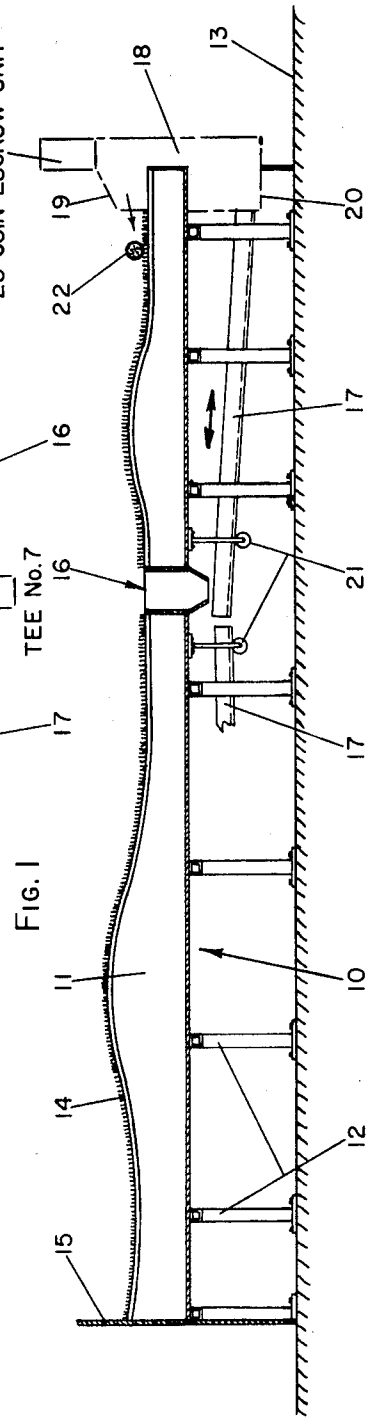


FIG. 2

INVENTOR.
JOSEPH A. GENTILUOMO
BY Joseph A. Gentiluomo

PUTTING GREEN INCLUDING MEANS FOR SEQUENTIALLY RETURNING HOLED-OUT BALLS TO PERIPHERALLY SPACED BALL DISPENSERS

This application is a continuation of U.S. Pat. application No. 550,664, filed May 17, 1966.

Due to the unavailability of year-round use of good putting facilities, which more closely simulate actual regulation grass putting greens, the golfer has been forced to revert to presently available inadequate putting devices and facilities or go into an approximate six month physical hibernation each year.

Therefore, it is the aim of this invention to provide golfers with a putting green which will aid in developing golfer putting touch or feel of the greens. The putting green will feature undulations and grasslike surface texture. This will give golfers the opportunity to develop their powers of observation by actually lining up putts to take into consideration the contour of the green, the grain of the artificial grasslike putting surface and the force with which to strike the ball.

Accordingly, other objects of my invention are as follows:

To provide a putting green for year-round use.

To provide a putting green having the appearance, feel and roll of natural bent grass greens.

To provide a putting green with undulations similar to a regulation golf course grass putting green.

To provide a putting green which will present the golfer with level, uphill, downhill and sidehill putts.

To provide a putting green which eliminates golfer bending or stooping for golf balls both at the putting tees and at the cup.

To provide a putting green which can be utilized on a competitive game basis by furnishing score cards for golfers to record their scores based on the number of putts required to hole out.

To provide either an automatic coin-operated or nonautomatic putting green.

To provide a putting green which can be marketed as a prefabricated unit.

These objects and other objects of this invention should be discerned and appreciated from the description and claims taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings in which:

FIG. 1 shows a schematic plan view of the putting green.

FIG. 2 shows an elevational section view taken on line 2–2 of FIG. 1.

In explaining the invention in detail, it can be discerned that this invention is capable of many embodiments of which the preferred is herein described and illustrated in the accompanying drawing.

This invention comprises a base means **10** fabricated from a material such as honeycomb structure **11** and supported by suitable conventionally available means such as structural framing **12** at a set height with respect to the ground surface **13**. Fixedly mounted on top of said honeycomb structure **11** is putting green surface material **14** such as artificial grass having the texture of natural bent grass. Said honeycomb structure **11** is fabricated to contain surface undulations and a peripheral outline to resemble regulation golf course putting greens.

Vertically and fixedly mounted along the periphery of the putting green is the ball-confining means **15** such as a plastic retaining wall. Said ball-confining means **15** is of such height as to prevent any ball, inadvertently hit toward it, from leaving the confinements of the putting green thus acting as an effective backstop. Also, fixedly mounted with respect to the honeycomb structure **11** is cup **16**. Said cup **16** is mounted vertically and constructed to allow balls to enter and drop completely through and onto the ball return means **17** which are reciprocably mounted underneath the honeycomb structure **11**.

Peripherally and fixedly mounted at predetermined positions with respect to base means **10** are a plurality of conventional ball-dispensing means **18** illustrated by broken lines in

both FIGS. **1** and **2**. Said ball dispensing means **18** is constructed to include outlet portion **19** located over putting green surface **14** and inlet portion **20** located underneath the honeycomb structure **11**. At the inlet portion **20**, the termination of the ball return means **17** is reciprocably and slidably mounted with respect to said inlet portion **20** and activated through a suitable means toward and away from cup **16** by the drive means associated with said ball-dispensing means **18**. Therefore, when the said ball-dispensing means **18** releases ball **22** from outlet portion **19**, ball return means **17** will be automatically moved away from inlet portion **20**. Conversely, when a holed out ball is returned to the ball-dispensing means, a signal is initiated to cause the ball return means **17** to be automatically drawn toward inlet portion **20**. Inlets of the plurality of said return means **17** commence at proximity of cup **16**, branch radially outward, and mount slidable within conventional guide means **21** which in turn are fixedly mounted to the underside of base means **10** as shown in FIG. **2**. Each ball return means **17** extends along the underside of base means **10** and are downwardly inclined toward inlet portion **20** of said ball-dispensing means **18**.

In order to utilize the invention as an automatic coin-operated putting green the golfer must first place the proper fee into a commercial type coin escrow unit **23** associated with the machine. The coin escrow unit **23** will in turn initiate the automatic machine cycle. In doing so the first of a plurality of automatic ball-dispensing means **18** will release a ball upon the green at putting tee No. 1 through outlet portion **19**. Also, the ball return means **17** will be actuated and moved until the inlet of said return means is underneath the cup **16** and in position to accept the golf ball designated as **22**. The golfer will then putt the golf ball toward the cup **16** until the ball is holed out. The ball in passing through the cup rolls by gravity toward the opening of inlet portion **20** via the return means **17** and settles within the ball retention portion of the ball dispensing means **18** for future use. Thus, the ball **22**, in returning to the dispensing means, will initiate an electrical signal to start operation of the dispensing means **18** associated with putting tee No. 2. When this occurs the ball return means **17** of putting tee No. 1 will retract by moving away from underneath cup **16** and in turn the ball return means **17** associated with putting tee No. 2 will move in underneath the said cup. Now, the ball within the dispensing means of putting tee No. 2 will be conveyed up through it and discharged from outlet portion **19** onto the putting green. Again the golfer will putt the ball until he or she holes out and upon doing so the ball will trigger operation of the next putting tee. This sequence of operations will continue until a ball has been putted and holed out from the plurality of putting tee positions located on the putting green periphery. Upon holing out the ball putted from the last tee position, the plurality of ball return and ball-dispensing means of cited putting green will automatically become deactivated at the completion of the vend. Putting green play can now be restored only after another vend is initiated by the placement of the proper fee into the machine's coin escrow unit **23** located at tee No. 1.

Having thusly described my invention, I claim:

1. A golf putting green apparatus comprising in combination, a putting surface, a base means for supporting said putting surface, a cup assembly positioned within said putting green, a plurality of ball-dispensing means peripherally spaced from each other, and a plurality of ball return means each disposed intermediate said cup assembly and a functionally associated ball-dispensing means, said cup assembly and each ball return means interact sequentially to return holed-out balls to each of its said functionally associated ball-dispensing means.

2. The invention as defined in claim 1, wherein said putting surface is further characterized as having undulations for providing players with putts in which the ball line-of-roll may involve level, uphill, downhill, or sidehill travel or any combination thereof.

3. The invention as defined in claim 1, wherein said putting surface is further characterized as having a grained texture for providing players with putts in which the ball line-of-roll may involve putts traveling either against the grain, across the grain, with the grain, or any combination thereof.

4. The invention as defined in claim 3, wherein said putting surface is further characterized as having undulations for providing players with putts in which the ball line-of-roll may involve level, uphill, downhill, or sidehill travel or any combination thereof.

5. The invention as defined in claim 4, further characterized by a ball-confining means defining the green boundary.

6. The invention as defined in claim 5, further characterized by a monetary acceptor unit for placing the said apparatus in condition for operation upon receipt of money equivalent to the vend price preset therein.