A water golf game comprising at least one floating portable green surrounded by at least one floating circle is disclosed. The floating green has a circle that sits on top of the green or is molded into the green. Both the floating circle and the circle on the green have lights so the game may be played at night.
BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of Invention

The present invention is related to golf. Specifically, the present invention is related to a water golf game, using a large golf green or multiple greens, floating or conventional golf balls or NITELITE® floating golf balls (BOO-ETM) and conventional clubs.

2. Background

Golf is one of the most popular games in the world. One reason for its popularity is that golf does not require high levels of skill to play the game. Persons of all ages can play golf simply by familiarizing themselves with the basic golf equipment. Additionally, since equipment may be rented, a first-time golfer can play a game of golf at minimal cost.

A disadvantage of golf is that the courses required to play a game of golf can be very expensive. To build a golf course, the cost can easily exceed several million dollars for an 18-hole golf course. Golf courses are also very expensive to maintain, requiring almost continuous mowing of the fairways and upkeep of the greens. Many resorts and hotels do not have the resources or the space to build and maintain an 18-hole golf course or even a 300-yard driving range. Therefore, these resorts and hotels cannot offer their visitors the opportunity to play a game of golf.

Despite the popularity of golf, there exists no portable and inexpensive golf course that may be arranged in limited amounts of space. A demand exists for a golf course that is inexpensive, portable, and can be placed in limited amount of space such as a pond or lake.

U.S. Pat. No. 6,004,219 describes a swimming pool version of a floating golf game, where a floating small (10-15 ft) green having a Velcro® loop-fabric surface is hit with floating golf balls coated with a Velcro® hook-fabric surface. The game requires the use of Velcro® fabrics to be functional. Golfers using this type of game generally develop bad stroke habits as the Velcro® fabrics tend to compensate for bad shots.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Now there is provided by the present invention a water golf game for playing a game of golf without the need to build an entire golf course on land.

It is a principal object of the present invention to provide a water golf game that comprises at least one large (e.g., at least about 100 ft², preferably at least about 200 ft², more preferably at least about 300 ft²) floating green that is surrounded by at least one floating target ring or “circle”. The target rings need not have the perfect shape of a mathematical circle, but each ring must surround the floating green and any inner rings completely, giving the golfers additional scoring targets should they miss the floating green. It is anticipated that movement of the rings due to water movement, wind movement, and the like will make changes in the shape of the target rings surrounding the floating green, so that golfers will have a variety of different targets each time they play. To prevent the target rings from floating away from the floating green, the rings may optionally be anchored to the northern, eastern, western, and southern sides of the floating green.

The use of a floating green allows for the golf course to be arranged in a body of water such as a pond, lake, river, or ocean. As described above, the use of one or more floating rings surrounding the green allows for scoring in the event the golf ball is not hit onto the floating green. The green also preferably comprises a circle sitting on top of the green for additional methods of scoring.

In a preferred embodiment, the circles comprise lights so that the game may be played at night. The players may use lighted floating golf balls to facilitate scoring of the game at night. The green also has a hole or cup in it allowing for a hole-in-one.

A second principal object of the water golf game comprises multiple floating greens and mobile floating platforms. The mobile floating platform may be a boat or boat or it may be a floating platform such as a dock. The use of mobile platforms adds increased variety to the water golf game since a player may hit a golf ball toward a floating green from different directions. “Floating tee boxes” allow golfers to hit from different distances to the greens without repositioning the floating greens. Other preferred aspects of the invention are disclosed below.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

These and other features and advantages of the present invention will become more apparent in view of the following detailed description in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, of which:

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a first embodiment of the water golf game of the present invention.

FIG. 2 is a perspective view of a second embodiment of the water golf game of the present invention.

FIG. 3 is a perspective view of a third embodiment of the water golf game of the present invention.

FIG. 4 is a perspective view of a fourth embodiment of the water golf game of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

The present invention will be further illustrated with reference to the following examples of a water golf game which aid in the understanding of the present invention, but which are not to be construed as limitations thereof.

Referring to FIG. 1, there is shown a first embodiment of a water golf game of the present invention. The water golf game comprises a floating portable green 1. The green may be constructed from aluminum, fiberglass, plastic or wood. The green comprises an inner structure that has flotation devices to keep the green from sinking. The floating portable green 1 comprises a cup 5 and a flag pin 10 inserted into the cup 5. Located on the floating green is a first circle 20. Surrounding the green and floating in the water is located a second circle 25. More circles may be added as desired.

Preferably, the circles are visible during daylight, due to their size, color, or the like. Advantageously, the circles may be illuminated with strings of lights, such as rope lights, powered by solar energy cells, powered by both
12-volt and/or 24-volt batteries or powered by 120-volt current delivered by extension cords running through protective plastic tubing. More preferably, low power lights, such as low power LEDs, are used to light the circles and the golf green. Most preferably, these low power lights are solar powered, such as the lights described in United States Pat. Nos. 6,027,225 and 6,013,985, the entire disclosures of which are hereby incorporated by reference.

[0021] The flag pin 10 of the floating green 1 may also be illuminated with lights for ease of night play. In a preferred embodiment, the flag pin 10 comprises a clear fiberglass cylindrical rod that projects upward from the surface of the green and may be illuminated using a light source in the cup. In this preferred embodiment, light diffuses from the cup upward throughout the length of the flag pin thus providing easy viewing of the flag pin at night.

[0022] Referring to FIG. 1, the floating green 1 is preferably covered with a material such as AstroTurf® or another artificial grass surface. Alternatively or additionally, a sound producing substance (or sound “generator”) may be included on, in or under the surface of the green e.g., for generating sound effects. The metallic sound producing substance may be any substance capable of producing a sound comparable to a golf ball striking a metal object. If desired, actual grass may be used, including conventional putting green grass varieties.

[0023] As illustrated, the first circle 20 sits atop the material covering the floating green and surrounds the periphery of the green. The second circle 25 surrounds the entire green and floats in the water. Additional circles (not shown) would be similarly situated, either on the green (smaller targets) or in the water, either closer than that illustrated or farther away from the floating greens, depending upon the degree of difficulty to be provided to the players. These circles preferably comprise different colored lights that are used to differentiate each circle. The circles are preferably made of polyethylene tubing or similar plastic into which lights, such as rope lights, are inserted to illuminate the circles. The combination of the lights and the tubing provide a greater degree of illumination than if the lights were used by themselves. Increased illumination of the circles is caused by light diffusion from the lights through the plastic tubing and also because of accentuated reflection off the water. The lights are optionally supported by floation devices.

[0024] The circles are used to visualize the floating green at night and to provide a method of scoring for the water golf game. Each circle is valued at a different score. For example, if scoring of the game follows the scoring rules of a traditional golf game, then a person hitting a golf ball within the first circle 20, which sits atop the green and is closest to the cup 5, receives a lower score. A person hitting a golf ball into the second circle 25, which surrounds but is not on the floating green, receives a higher score. A person hitting a golf ball into the cup would receive the lowest score. Therefore, the person with the lowest score wins. The game might also be scored using a scoring method where the golf ball that is hit in the cup or within the first circle 20, which is closer to the cup 5, receives a higher score. A person hitting a golf ball into the second circle 25 would receive a lower score. In this latter scoring method, the person with the highest score would win.

[0025] Underlying the surface material of the floating green in some preferred embodiments is a shock-absorbent material. This shock-absorbent material may be any material capable of softening the impact of golf balls when the golf balls strike the green. This material acts to enable the golf balls to “bite” and hold onto the surface of the green. Preferably this shock-absorbing material is made from a material that absorbs the energy of a falling golf ball. Suitable materials include foam and/or sponge materials; particularly those that either repel water or absorb water. The water repellent materials are preferable in some case, and materials that absorb water would be preferable in other cases. One skilled in the art would recognize that the recited shock-absorbent materials can be replaced with a bladder filled with air, sand, water, bee-bees, or other material capable of absorbing the incident momentum of a golf ball. The bladder would serve the same function as the shock-absorbent material, which is softening, the impact of the incident golf ball.

[0026] Additionally, a plurality of pressure sensors may underlie the green for verifying that the ball strikes the green. The pressure sensors may be any sensor capable of registering a golf ball impact, but are preferably sensors such as those produced by Interlink Electronics, Camarillo, Calif., and Tekscan, Inc., Boston, Mass., and those described in United States Pat. Nos. 5,771,492 and 6,148,280, the entire disclosures of which are hereby incorporated by reference. When a golf ball strikes the green, the pressure sensors may register the impact and subsequently cause the lights of the green to illuminate. Alternatively, the pressure sensor may register the golf ball impact and subsequently cause the lights of the green to blink on and off when a ball strikes the green.

[0027] The cup 5 may optionally contain a motor. The motor acts to spin the flag pin 10 when a golf ball is hit into the cup 5. Other methods may be used to indicate that the golf ball has been hit into the cup 5. For example, the lights on the flag pin 10 may blink on and off rapidly when a golf ball is hit into the cup. Alternatively, when the ball is hit into the cup an alarm, siren, or buzzer may sound, fireworks may go off, or the green may start flashing different colors.

[0028] The green may be pitched at an angle to increase visibility of the green at a distance. The pitching of the green provides for location of the green a farther distance from the shore. Golfer will thus have the opportunity to use a variety of clubs in connection with this game, depending upon the distance from the tee box to the green, and the skill level of the golfer.

[0029] To play the game, the floating portable green 1 is drifted into a pond, lake, river, or ocean. A weight or anchor may be attached to the floating portable green 1 to prevent the green from floating too far away from the game players. Each game player then attempts to hit a golf ball onto the floating portable green 1. The player strikes a golf ball and receives a score depending on the area of the green where the golf ball lands. Various scoring methodologies have been discussed hereinabove. Preferably the players use golf balls that contain illuminating devices such as light sticks or glow sticks. The use of lighted golf balls allow the players to play at night and allows for easy scoring of the game at night. The players may be located on the shore of the lake or ocean, or they may be located on a ship or floating platform for
increased difficulty. Regular floating golf balls may be used during the day or in highly lit areas at night.

[0030] One skilled in the art would recognize that a plurality of floating greens may be used in the game and the number of greens is limited only by the available space in the body of water. Additionally, a plurality of floating circles might surround the greens. The addition of greens and floating circles provide more ways to arrange the course. Several of these embodiments are discussed below.

[0031] Referring to FIG. 2, there is shown a second embodiment of a water golf game of the present invention. This second embodiment comprises all of the elements listed hereinabove for the first embodiment. The second embodiment comprises a third circle 35 which surrounds the second circle 25. The third circle 35 may be added for additional scoring opportunities for the players.

[0032] Referring to FIG. 3, there is shown a third embodiment of a water golf game of the present invention. This third embodiment comprises all of the elements listed hereinabove for the first embodiment. The third embodiment comprises an additional second floating portable green 50. Surrounding the second floating portable green 50 and the first portable green 1 is a large circle 55. In this embodiment, a player increases the probability that their ball will land on the green since two greens are placed close together.

[0033] Referring to FIG. 4, there is shown a fourth embodiment of a water golf game of the present invention. This fourth embodiment comprises all of the elements listed hereinabove for the third embodiment. The fourth embodiment also comprises additional circles 60 and 65 that surround each floating portable green 50. Surrounding both floating greens is a large circle 70. This embodiment provides for increased scoring opportunities.

[0034] Many different golf games can be played with more than one floating green having multiple circles that surround the greens. For example, each golfer may hit a specified number of golf balls to each floating green. The best shot on each green may then be recorded. Golfers can use the scoring methodologies discussed hereinabove or may play closest to the flag pin contests. Other possible scoring methodologies and games are possible. For example, golfers may play a “30-minute shootout” where a foursome has 30 minutes to hit as many balls as possible onto the green and/or inside the various circles. “Regular golf” may also be played. Each player in a foursome hits one or more balls to each green (hit to holes 1 to 18 or hitting holes 1 to 9 twice). The “best ball,” the ball closest to the cup, hit by each player is recorded in the total score. The total score is added at the end of the round to determine the winner of the round.

[0035] Advantages of this invention include assembly of a portable golf course without the need to purchase real estate. Because each green is portable, a different golf course may be presented to the golfers on a daily basis. Each green may be moved further from or closer to the shore to provide a different golf course. Likewise, the number and placement of the scoring circles may be varied on any given day, either manually (by the operators of the game) or by action of wind and/or water movement, changing the shape and spacing of the floating circles.

[0036] The use of floating golf balls is preferred, as it simplifies retrieval of the balls by the operator of the game.

To facilitate ball retrieval, a boat with a net or a telescopic net (i.e., a hand-held fishing net) may be used to retrieve the balls. However, should conventional golf balls be used, they may be retrieved by conventional methods (e.g., a diver) and reused.

[0037] Although the invention has been shown and described with respect to exemplary embodiments thereof, various other changes, additions and omissions in the form and detail thereof may be made therein without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.

What is claimed is:

1. A water golf game comprising:
   a floating green and a floating circle surrounding the floating green.

2. The water golf game of claim 1, wherein:
   the floating green comprises a top surface and a bottom surface,
   the top surface is covered by a material,
   the bottom surface sits in contact with a body of water or sits on land.

3. The water golf game of claim 2, wherein the floating green comprises a cup for receiving a golf ball, a flag pin inserted in the cup, a circle sitting on top of the green, and optionally a plurality of pressure sensors underlying the material.

4. The water golf game of claim 3, wherein the material comprises artificial grass or a metallic sound producing substance.

5. The water golf game of claim 3, wherein the flag pin spins when the golf ball is hit into the cup, an alarm or siren sounds when the golf ball is hit into the cup, a buzzer sounds when the golf ball is hit into the cup, fireworks go off when the golf ball is hit into the cup, or the lights on the green flash different colors when the golf ball is hit into the cup.

6. The water golf game of claim 3, wherein the circle on top of the green and the floating circle surrounding the floating green each comprise lights.

7. The water golf game of claim 3, wherein the golf ball is lighted using a glow stick, light stick, or other illuminating device that is chemiluminescent, fluorescent, or phosphorescent.

8. A water golf game comprising:
   a plurality of floating greens and a plurality of floating circles surrounding the plurality of floating greens.

9. The water golf game of claim 8, wherein:
   the plurality of floating greens each comprise a top surface and a bottom surface,
   the top surface is covered by a material,
   the bottom surface sits in contact with a body of water or sits on land.

10. The water golf game of claim 9, wherein:
    the floating greens each comprise a cup for receiving a golf ball, a flag pin inserted in the cup, a circle sitting on top of the green, and optionally a plurality of pressure sensors underlying the material.

11. The water golf game of claim 10, wherein the material comprises artificial grass or a metallic sound producing material.
12. The water golf game of claim 10, wherein the circle on top of each green and the plurality of floating circles surrounding each green each comprise lights.

13. The water golf game of claim 10, wherein the flag pin spins when the golf ball is hit into the cup, an alarm or siren sounds when the golf ball is hit into the cup, a buzzer sounds when the golf ball is hit into the cup, fireworks go off when the golf ball is hit into the cup, or the lights on the green flash different colors when the golf ball is hit into the cup.

14. The water golf game of claim 10, wherein the golf ball is lighted using a glow stick, light stick, or other illuminating device that is chemiluminescent, fluorescent, or phosphorescent.

15. A method of playing a water golf game comprising:

providing at least one floating portable green surrounded by at least one floating circle,

drifting at least one floating green surrounded by at least one floating circle into a body of water, the floating circle is anchored to the floating green,

hitting a golf ball towards the drifting green,

recording a score.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein:

the floating green comprises a cup for receiving the golf ball, a flag pin inserted in the cup, and a circle sitting on top of the floating green or molded into the floating green, the circle on top of the green and the floating circles each comprise lights.

17. The method of claim 16, wherein the golf ball is lighted using a glow stick, light stick or other illuminating device that is chemiluminescent, fluorescent, or phosphorescent.

18. The method of claim 16, wherein the flag pin spins when the golf ball is hit into the cup, an alarm or siren sounds when the golf ball is hit into the cup, a buzzer sounds when the golf ball is hit into the cup, fireworks go off when the golf ball is hit into the cup, or the lights on the green flash different colors when the golf ball is hit into the cup.

19. The method of claim 16, wherein the flag pin comprises lights and the lights blink on and off when the golf ball is hit into the cup.

20. The method of claim 16, wherein the golf ball is hit from a shore of a body of water or from a floating platform in a body of water.

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