

[54] GOLF PRACTICE AND AMUSEMENT APPARATUS

[76] Inventor: **Frederick L. Buenzle**, 735 Foresteria Dr., Apt. 1, Lake Park, Fla. 33403

[22] Filed: **Sept. 17, 1973**

[21] Appl. No.: **398,244**

[52] U.S. Cl. **273/176 F, 273/180, 273/178 B**

[51] Int. Cl. **A63b 69/36**

[58] Field of Search **273/176, 177, 178, 179, 273/195, 180**

[56] References Cited

UNITED STATES PATENTS

3,038,726	6/1962	Hesidence	273/176 F
3,342,494	9/1967	Talley	273/176 F
3,549,151	12/1970	Long	273/178 R

FOREIGN PATENTS OR APPLICATIONS

220,377	8/1924	Great Britain	273/178 R
---------	--------	---------------------	-----------

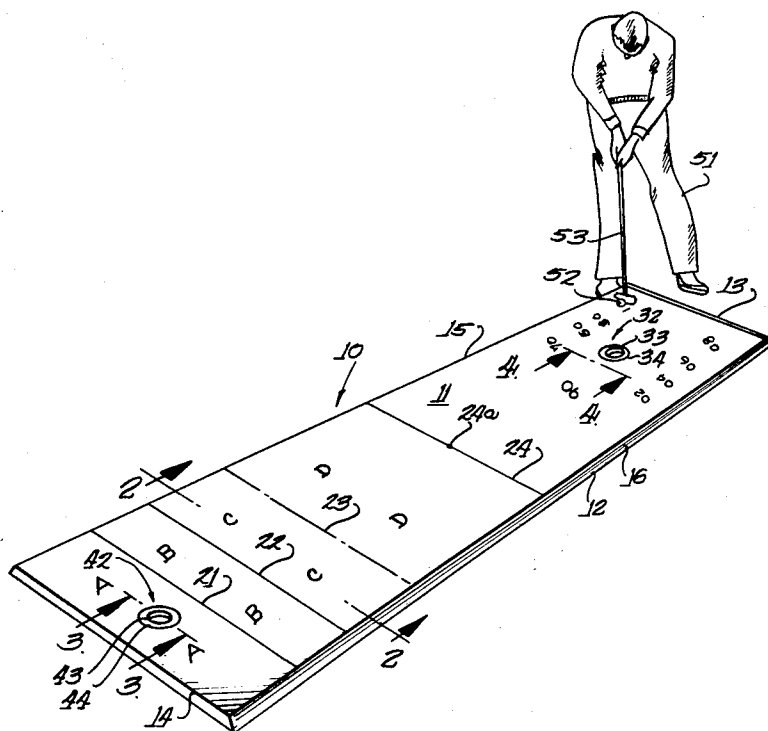
Primary Examiner—George J. Marlo

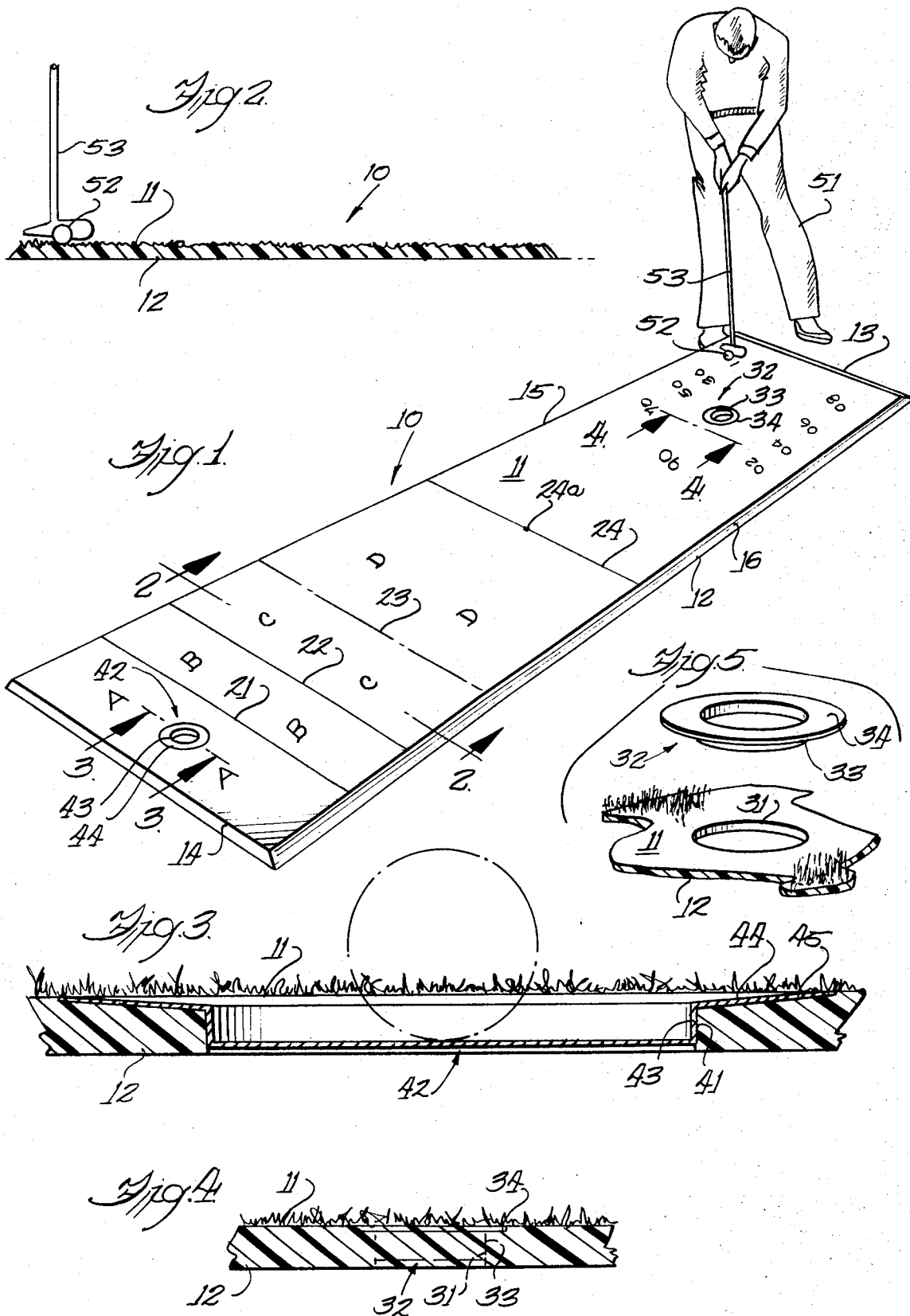
[57] ABSTRACT

A portable and compact golf practice and amusement

apparatus wherein the players use regular golf balls and conventional type putters in playing on an elongated playing mat of flexible resilient material having a putting surface with material characteristics simulating an actual putting green as to drag and resistance to the rolling of a golf ball thereacross, a first golf ball trapping cup having a relatively small diameter and a shallow depth relative to the diameter of a golf ball and located slightly inwardly from the back edge of the mat, a second golf ball trapping cup having a relatively larger diameter and again having a shallow depth and located in the front end portion of the mat spaced inwardly from the front edge a substantial distance, a plurality of spaced apart markers positioned about the front end portion of the mat providing golf ball tee-off positions to facilitate utilization of the apparatus with each marker being appropriately identified by a marking indicia defining a preferential sequence of use of each marker, and a plurality of sections marked off on the back end portion of the mat defining different regions thereon that are used to govern the placement of the golf ball after each consecutive putting stroke.

3 Claims, 4 Drawing Figures





GOLF PRACTICE AND AMUSEMENT APPARATUS

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

This invention relates generally to game apparatus and more particularly to a novel apparatus for utilization as a golf practice and amusement putting apparatus for use either for purpose of putting practice or for the playing of competitive games thereon.

2. Description of the Prior Art

The popularity of golf is well known and, in this day and age of increasing recreational activity, is constantly growing in popularity with a well-known requirement of the game being the final putting stages once the player reaches the green. The necessity of improving a player's skill at putting is well evidenced by the fact that most golfers take every opportunity to increase their putting skills, this normally amounting to practice putting in the office or home on a carpet utilizing a drinking type glass, commercially available putting cup, or the like to receive the golf balls, therein.

While such practice putting does serve somewhat to increase the skill of the player, it is to be acknowledged that the carpet, floor surface, or the like does not provide the same drag and frictional resistance to the roll of the golf ball thereon as the player would encounter on an actual green, and further, such practice type putting becomes quite boring to the player as to not having any direct challenge to his or her putting skills, other than each time attempting to make a hole-in-one in the glass or putting cup.

Prior art devices have been developed with regard to automatic cup receiving and ball return devices, practice putters, safety golf balls, and the like but none provide a simple and easy to use apparatus readily stored by the player and adapted for quick use either at home or in the office, and either indoors or outdoors, as to providing a putting game having a truly characteristic playing surface for putting in addition to ball trapping cups and tee-off positions which provide a ready challenge to the skills of the player.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to an apparatus adapted for indoor and outdoor use by players of all ages and in any type of weather utilizing regular golf balls and conventional putters providing players both with a playing surface truly representative of that encountered on an actual green as well as a game to increase the fascination and usage by the player who enjoys the competitive nature of the game of golf while simultaneously increasing his or her putting abilities and related skills.

Further, the present invention provides an apparatus utilizing a golf mat which provides for putting practice and developing the skills necessary for directional flow and control of the golf ball while simultaneously providing the player with an enjoyable and stimulating competitive type of play.

It is a feature of the present invention to provide a game having a golf mat with characteristics simulating an actual putting green as to drag and resistance to the rolling of a golf ball thereacross and which is adapted for placement over any surface, either indoors or outdoors, for play thereon.

A further feature of the invention is to provide a competitive game to golf players for practicing their

putting skills while still being competitively challenged during the practice sessions whether practicing either alone or against other players.

Still a further feature of the invention is to provide a compact and readily portable game apparatus adapted for rolled storage and which may be readily unrolled for usage without having to restore the characteristics of the playing surface or doing any injury thereto.

Yet still a further feature of the invention provides a competitive game of putting skills utilizing a playing mat having a portion sectioned into different areas that are used to govern the placement of the golf ball after each consecutive stroke of the player along with having ball trapping and receiving cups therein of a shallow depth to permit a golf ball to run therethrough rather than be trapped therein if the putting is too hard for the distance to be traveled by the ball, thus increasing the difficulty of the game and requiring a higher level of skill on the part of the player.

The provision of a portable and compact golf practice and amusement apparatus, such as briefly outlined above, and possessing the stated advantages, constitutes the principle features of the present invention. The provision of a game which is simple in its construction and which therefor may be readily manufactured at a low cost and by simple manufacturing methods; one which is rugged and durable and has characteristics representing those encountered by the golfer on an actual green so as to be made guaranteeable by the manufacturer to please the vast number of golf players; one which is aesthetically pleasing and refined in appearance; one which may be manufactured and sold both with the golf balls and putters as a part thereof to comprise a complete game assembly, or which may be sold only as the playing surface with players utilizing their own regular golf balls and their own conventional putters for play or practice thereon; and one which, otherwise, is well adapted to perform the services required of it, are further desirable features which have been borne in mind in the production and development of the present invention.

Other features and advantages of this invention will be apparent during the course of the following description.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

In the accompanying drawings forming a part of this specification, and in which like reference characters are employed to designate like parts throughout the same:

FIG. 1 is a perspective view showing the golf mat spread out on any suitable support surface and showing an intended mode of utilization by the player;

FIG. 2 is an enlarged cross-sectional view of the playing mat taken along Line 2—2 of FIG. 1;

FIG. 3 is an enlarged fragmentary cross-sectional view taken along Line 3—3 of FIG. 1 illustrating the details of one of the cups having a golf ball trapped therein as shown in phantom configuration;

FIG. 4 is an enlarged fragmentary cross-sectional view taken along Line 4—4 of FIG. 1 illustrating another of the cups; and

FIG. 5 is a fragmentary perspective view detailing one of the cups and the opening in the mat associated therewith for receiving the cup therein.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Referring now to the drawings, reference numeral 10 generally designates an elongated golf mat having an upper surface 11 and a lower surface 12. The preferred embodiment provides that mat 10 is preferably of artificial turf measuring between 2½ feet to 3 feet wide by 12 feet long and being of a thickness ranging between ¼ inch to 1 inch, with the upper surface 11 defining the putting surface and having characteristics simulating an actual putting green as to drag and frictional resistance to the rolling of a golf ball thereacross so that a player may practice putting thereon under conditions as would be encountered on an actual green so that appropriate skills may be developed as to the directional flow and control of the golf ball. The mat is provided with a front edge, and transversely spaced longitudinally extending sides 15 and 16 respectively interconnecting the front and back edges 13 and 14.

The front end portion of the upper surface 11 of the mat 10 is provided with a total of nine markings, such as circles or the like, representing tee-off positions for the player to place the golf ball thereon, the markings being consecutively numbered as positions 1 through 9 and disposed at preselected positions on the mat for use by the player in pursuing a system of golf practice of a competitive nature which will be further described in later paragraphs. The preferred disposition of the markings 1-9, and which for further reference will be identified as such by the numerals 1-9, has positions 1, 3, 5 and 7 longitudinally aligned and spaced between 4 and 5 inches from side 15 of the mat, with position 1 being spaced inwardly from the front edge 13 a distance of about 6 inches, position 3 spaced from position 1 by about 6 inches, position 5 spaced from position 3 by about 6 inches, and position 7 spaced from position 5 by about 6 inches. Similarly, positions 2, 4, 6, and 8 are spaced inwardly a distance of from 4 to 5 inches from side 16 of the mat and are longitudinally aligned with position 8 being spaced inwardly from front edge 13 a distance of about 6 inches, position 6 being spaced from position 8 by a distance of about 6 inches, position 4 being spaced from position 6 by a distance of about 6 inches, and position 2 being spaced from position 4 by a distance of about 6 inches. Position 9 is spaced inwardly from front edge 13 a distance of about 36 inches and is centered on the mat 10.

To assist in the play of the competitive game on the mat and to prevent any player from trying to shortcut the game and thus undermine the main objective of increasing a player's putting skills, the back end portion of the upper surface 11 is divided into four regional sections identified by marking indicia A, B, C and D by lines 21, 22, 23, and 24 extending transversely between the sides 15 and 16 generally parallel to the back edge 14 and longitudinally spaced apart to define the areas of section A-D respectively. Each of sections A-D extend the full width of the mat 10 with the preferred embodiment having a spacing of about 12 inches between back edge 14 and line 21, a spacing of about 9 inches between lines 21 and 22, a spacing of about 12 inches between lines 22 and 23, and a spacing of from about 38 to about 40 inches between lines 23 and 24.

The front end portion of the mat is provided with an opening 31 extending therethrough and which is adapted to receive therein a golf ball trapping and re-

ceiving cup 32 having a closed bottom with a cylindrical body portion 33 of a diameter to be snugly received in opening 31 and with a flange portion 34 extending thereabout in an outwardly extending direction so that upon insertion of cup 32 into opening 31 the flange 34 will fit substantially planar with upper surface 11 with the cup bottom surface not projecting out of the opening 31 so as to permit the entry of a properly aimed golf ball putted along the upper surface 11 thereinto without affecting the course of travel of the ball. Further, flange 34 supports cup 32 in the proper disposition in opening 31. A further opening 41 is provided in the back end portion of the mat 10 in section A and is adapted to receive therein a cup 42 having a closed bottom end with a cylindrical body portion 43 and a flange portion 44 extending outwardly from the top edge portion of the body portion, the body portion adapted to be snugly received in the opening 41 with the flange being substantially coplanar with surface 11 for supporting the cup 42 in the opening with the cup bottom end not projecting out of the opening. As seen in FIG. 3, the flange 44 may be of a slightly tapered configuration with the supporting surfaces 45 of the mat 10 being complementary tapered such that a golf ball which is propelled too hard during putting by a player will have a tendency to roll completely through the cup 42 rather than being trapped and retained therein thereby increasing the level of skill required on the part of the player in putting the ball into the cup.

The cups 32 and 42 may be manufactured in any suitably satisfactory color and of any suitable material, such as metal, plastic, rubber and the like being of a thickness suitable for the intended purpose. The preferred embodiment provides that cup 42 be of a smaller diameter than cup 32 in order to increase the difficulty in obtaining a hole-in-one when a player initially tees off from one of positions 1-9, with the preferred inner diameter of cup 42 being about 3½ inches and with the preferred inner diameter of cup 32 being about 4¼ inches. Further, in accord with the preferred embodiment, to increase the level of skill required in putting the ball into the cup 42 without going off of the mat 10, the cup 42 is preferably located in the range of about 1 inch to about 12 inches inwardly from back edge 14 and approximately centered on the mat. Further, the preferred embodiment is that cup 32 is located in the front end portion of the mat spaced in the range of from one foot to about two feet inwardly from the front edge 13 and approximately centered on the mat.

While the invention provides a mat suitable for practice putting in any manner desired by the golfer over the length and width of the mat, it is more expressly adapted for competitive putting practice to maintain the interest and fascination of the player who may play either individually or in competition with other players, with the mat adapted for unrolling over any surface, either indoors or outdoors, so that play may take place at any convenient location regardless of the weather.

The preferred embodiment of the game provides that preferably not more than four players will take consecutive turns, and as there are a total of 9 tee-off positions it is envisioned that the par for the game would be 27 so that a preferred name of the game is "Challenger 27." Thus the game represents a short 9 hole regulation golf course designed to challenge a player of all ages, with it being possible for players to allow other players

handicaps and the like just as normally done during regular golf play.

In play of the game, cup 42 is designated as a hole-in-one cup which is only utilized during a player's initial tee-off from any of the positions 1-9. Should the player not make a hole-in-one on such initial putting, then cup 42 is not utilized again during the consecutive putting of the player who must then play in accord with the rules as will be described hereafter which will eventually result in the player having to putt out in cup 32.

The sections identified by indicia A, B, C and D are specifically designed and are of a specific size range to control the rewards and penalties a player receives depending upon which section the ball stops in after tee-ing-off from the tee-off position.

In play, each player rotates in turn but plays each hole to completion from each tee-off position before the next player begins his turn. Only after all players have completed a hole from, for example, tee-off position 1, which represents hole one for purposes of play, will the player who wins the hole then lead off from tee-off position 2 in the next round of play. This round-robin type procedure is followed until all 9 holes are complete with the lowest score determining the winner of the game.

As seen in FIG. 1, player 51 places the golf ball 52 on tee-off position 1 and then strikes the same with putting club 53 in the conventional manner in an attempt to propel the ball down the mat 10 and into the cup 42. In any event, the ball must always pass the line 24 to count, and if line 24 is not reached, then the player must replace the ball on the same tee-off position and, without penalty, again hit the ball. If, after any tee-off, the hole-in-one cup 42 is missed and the ball rolls off either side 15 or 16 of mat 10, then a one stroke penalty is placed against the player and the ball is placed anywhere in section A for the player to return putting the ball into cup 32. However, if the hole-in-one cup 42 is missed during any tee-off and the ball runs off the back edge 14 of the mat, then there is no penalty placed against the player and again the player may place the ball anywhere in section A for return putting into cup 32. In either event, the player then putts from section A toward cup 32 and continues his turn until successfully putting the ball into cup 32. Should the ball roll off the sides or front edge of the mat while return putting the ball from section A toward cup 32, then a further one stroke penalty is assigned to the player who then replaces the ball on the mat at a designated spot 24a on line 24 and continues to putt until sinking the ball in cup 32.

If during a tee-off the hole-in-one cup 42 is missed but the ball does not roll off the mat but rather stops in section A, then the player is rewarded by being able to move the ball from section A into section C and return putts from there into cup 32. If the ball stops in section B after any tee-off, then the player will return putt towards cup 32 from exactly where the ball stopped in section B. Should the ball stop in section C after any tee-off, the player must then move the ball to section A and then proceed to return putt to cup 32. If the ball stops in section D, the player then again must move the ball to section A and return putt toward cup 32, but now the player is penalized one stroke for not having initially propelled the ball beyond section D on the mat 10, thus discouraging a player from attempting to play a short distance type of putting game.

It is thus seen that by providing sections A-D, along with the placement of cups 42 and 32, that a player is competitively challenged by the game while simultaneously developing and improving upon putting skills necessary for accurate putting control of the ball.

As before stated, the present apparatus shown and described herein lends itself to use in many and varied ways for practicing putting and the like, with the preferred embodiment enabling the golfer to both practice and develop putting skills while being competitively challenged by the nature of the game as well as being able to practice putting skills in competition with others in a fascinating and interesting manner well adapted to the social aspects normally associated with the game of golf.

It is to be understood that the form of this invention herewith shown and described is to be taken as a preferred example of the same, and that this arrangement is not to be limited to the exact arrangement of parts shown in the accompanying drawings or described in this specification as various changes in the detail of construction as to shape, size, and arrangement of parts may be resorted to without departing from the spirit of the invention, the scope of the novel concepts thereof, or the scope of the sub-joined claims.

Having thus described the invention what is claimed is:

1. A portable and compact golf practice and amusement apparatus wherein the players use regular golf balls and conventional type golf putters, comprising:

an elongated playing mat of flexible resilient material having an upper surface defining a putting surface having characteristics simulating an actual putting green as to drag and resistance to the rolling of a golf ball thereacross, and a bottom surface adapted to be laid atop a floor, carpet, lawn and the like, the mat having a front edge, a back edge parallel to and longitudinally spaced from the front edge, and a pair of transversely spaced apart longitudinally extending side edges interconnecting the opposite ends of the front and back edges respectively;

a first opening located in the back end portion of the mat, centrally thereof, and extending completely therethrough, the opening spaced a slight distance inwardly from the back edge of the mat;

a second opening located in the front end portion of the mat, centrally thereof, extending completely therethrough, and spaced inwardly from the front edge of the mat;

a first golf ball trapping and receiving cup adapted to fit into and be retained in the first opening, the first cup having cylindrical vertically extending side walls of a length less than the thickness of the mat and terminating in a closed bottom end and an open top end, the exterior diameter of the side walls being less than the diameter of the first opening such that the cup may be axially inserted therinto, and an annular ring like flange extending completely about the cup side wall top edges and projecting outwardly therefrom to support the cup in the first opening with the flange portion and cup opening lying substantially in the plane of the upper mat surface to permit the entry of a properly aimed golf ball which is properly putted along the upper surface therinto without affecting the course of travel of the golf ball into the cup;

a second golf ball trapping and receiving cup adapted to fit into and be retained by the second opening, the second cup having vertically extending cylindrical side walls terminating in an open topped end and a closed bottom end, the side walls extending for a length less than the thickness of the mat, the exterior diameter of the side walls being less than the diameter of the second opening such that the cup may be axially inserted into the second opening, and an annular ring like flange member extending completely about and connected to the top edge of the side walls and projecting outwardly therefrom to support the second cup in its respective second opening with the flange member and cup opening lying substantially in the plane of the upper mat surface to permit the entry of a properly aimed golf ball which is properly putted along the upper surface thereof without affecting the course of travel of the golf ball into the cup;

the first cup being of a smaller inner diameter than the inner diameter of the second cup with the first cup being located nearer the back edge of the mat than the second cup is to the front edge of the mat in order to increase the difficulty in putting a golf ball into the first cup without the golf ball going off of the mat and the player being penalized accordingly;

the depth of both the first cup and the second cup being shallow relative to the diameter of a conventional golf ball to permit a putted golf ball to run through the cup rather than be trapped therein should the golf ball be putted too hard by the player for the distance to the cup;

a first plurality of longitudinally spaced apart first shot tee-off position markers disposed intermediate the second opening and one side edge of the mat and extending in longitudinal alignment from a position nearest the mat front edge to a position on the opposite side of the second opening;

a second plurality of longitudinally spaced apart first shot tee-off position markers disposed intermediate the second opening and the second side edge of the mat, the markers disposed in longitudinal alignment and extending from a position nearest the mat front edge to a position on the opposite side of the second opening;

the second plurality of first shot tee-off position markers each being transversely aligned with an associated one of the first plurality of spaced apart first shot tee-off position markers;

a further first shot tee-off position marker disposed centrally of the mat upper surface intermediate the first and second plurality of position markers and spaced slightly rearwardly of the second opening;

each of said first shot tee-off position markers simulating various tees of a real golf course;

each of said first shot tee-off position markers being appropriately identified by numerical marking indicia defining a predetermined numerical sequence of use of a player of each marker;

a plurality of transversely extending longitudinally spaced apart lines formed integrally on the upper mat surface dividing the complete back end portion of the mat into four adjacent regional sections each being disposed at a successively longer distance from the second opening; and

marking indicia associated with each of the regional sections and formed integral with the upper mat surface to identify each regional section to permit a player to position a golf ball on a selected first shot tee-off position marker and proceed to putt on the mat in a competitive or practice manner utilizing the first and second cup and the marking lines and regional sections to simulate play of the game of golf.

2. A golf practice and amusement apparatus as set forth in claim 1 further characterized by the peripheral edges about both the first opening and the second opening in the mat having sloped inward and downward extending portions starting at the upper mat surface a distance from the associated opening and tapering downwardly to the opening at a position below the upper mat surface; and the flange member projecting outwardly from the top edge of the side walls of the first cup and the second cup each respectively tapering in an upward and outward direction away from the side walls at an angle complementary to the sloped portions surrounding the first and second openings in the mat such that the cups are supported by their respective flange members in their respective openings in a manner substantially co-planar with the upper surface of the mat.

3. A golf practice and amusement apparatus as set forth in claim 2 wherein:

the mat has a length at least four times greater than its width, is of a uniform thickness throughout its length, and is manufactured of flexible and resilient material so that it may be rolled up and stored when not in use and readily unrolled for utilization with the upper surface retaining the desired material characteristics thereof;

the first opening is located in the range of from about 1 inch to about 12 inches from the back edge of the mat;

the first cup has an inner diameter of about 3 and $\frac{1}{2}$ inches;

the second opening is located in the range of from about one foot to about two feet from the front edge of the mat and is longitudinally aligned with the first opening;

the second cup has an inner diameter of about 4 and $\frac{1}{4}$ inches;

the first plurality of first shot tee-off position markers are four in number and are set apart from each other by the marking indicia identifying the markers in consecutive order starting from the front edge by the numerals 1, 3, 5 and 7 which are in increasing numerical order from the front edge of the mat with marker 1 being a distance of about 6 inches inwardly from the front edge of the mat and with each of the remaining markers being spaced an equal distance of about 6 inches apart from each other;

the second plurality of first shot tee-off position markers being four in number and being identified by the numerals 8, 6, 4 and 2 in decreasing numerical order from the front edge of the mat with marker 8 being spaced about 6 inches inwardly from the front edge and with the remaining markers being spaced about 6 inches apart from each other starting from marker 8;

the further first shot tee-off position marker being longitudinally aligned with the first and second

openings and identified by marking indicia 9 and being spaced about three feet from the front edge of the mat and centered on the mat;
position marker 8 being in transverse alignment with position marker 1, position marker 6 being in transverse alignment with position marker 3, position marker 4 being in transverse alignment with position marker 5, and position marker 2 being in transverse alignment with position marker 7;
the marking lines dividing the back end portion of the mat into four adjacent regional sections, each of the sections identified by marking indicia A, B, C

and D, with section A being the furthest from the second opening, section B being the next furthest, section C being the next furthest, and section D being the next furthest and closest section to the second opening, section D extending a longitudinal distance at least three times greater than the length of section C which, in turn, is equal in length to section A which, in turn, is at least 1-½ times greater than the length of section B, the sections A - D extending completely from the back edge of the mat to the center of the mat.

* * * * *

15

20

25

30

35

40

45

50

55

60

65