Dec. 12, 1967 R. M. BLANCHARD 3,357,705

GOLF PRACTICE PROJECTILE

Filed Nov. 2, 1964

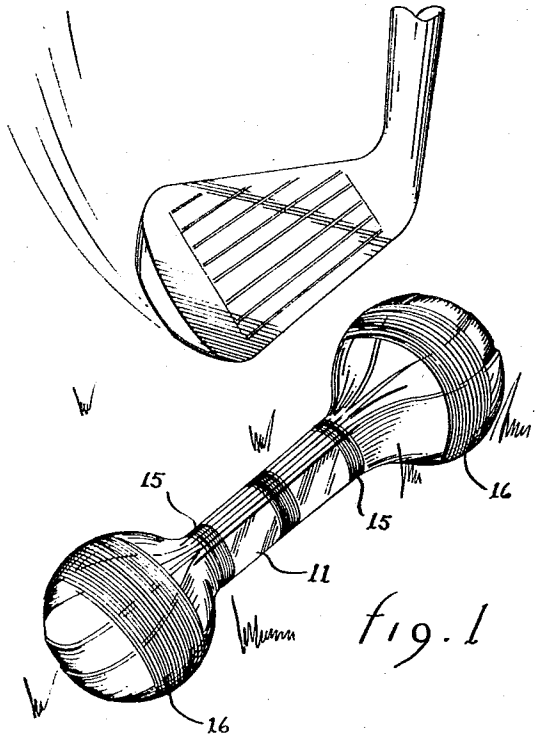


Fig. 1

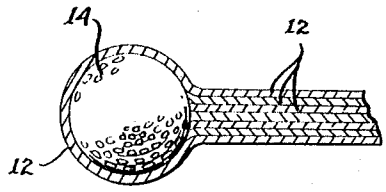


Fig. 3

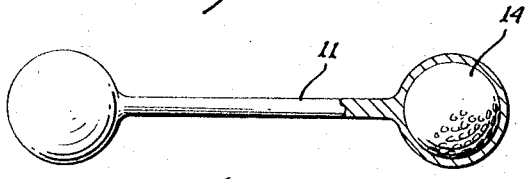


Fig. 4

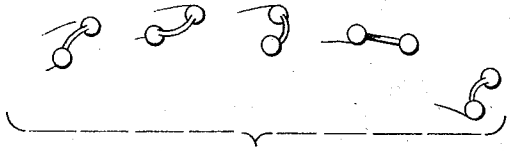


Fig. 5

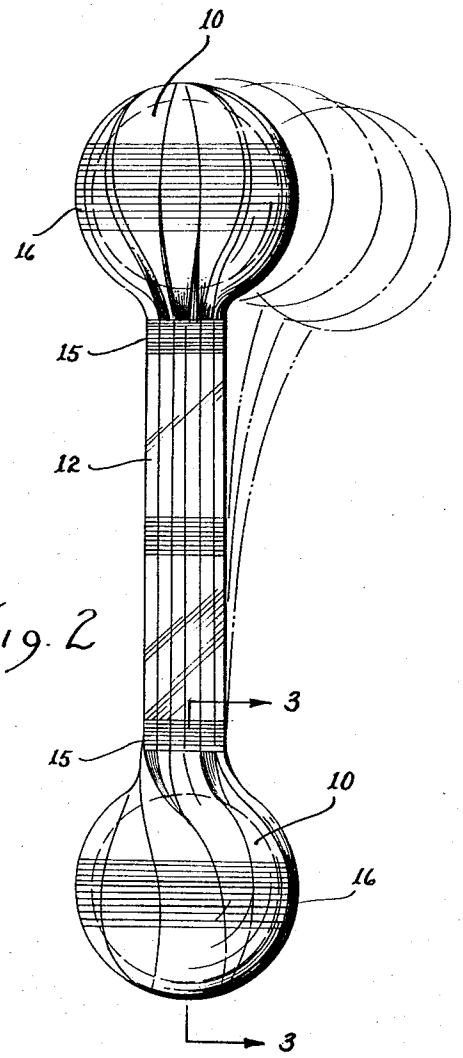


Fig. 2

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United States Patent Office 3,357,705 Patented Dec. 12, 1967

3,357,705

GOLF PRACTICE PROJECTILE

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Filed Nov. 2, 1964, Ser. No. 408,027
1 Claim. (Cl. 273—199)

My invention relates to an article useful for golf practice and more particularly to an article which may be employed where only limited space is available.

Many golfers desire to practice and thereby improve their abilities at the game of golf. Many of these golfers wish to practice when they have neither the time nor the inclination to travel to the various types of practice courses. A golf ball, if struck in the correct manner, will usually travel a sufficient distance to become a safety hazard. Consequently, it would be advantageous if these golfers could practice at home in their own back yard or in other convenient locations. Previous practice golf balls and the like were generally of a light weight construction and did not feel like a golf ball when struck, insufficient energy being absorbed by the ball. Remaining energy was then usually absorbed by the golfer's arms.

Accordingly, it is an object of my invention to provide a golf practice device at which the golfer may take a full swing, but which, when struck, will travel a limited distance.

Another object of my invention is to provide a practice device which has the feel of a golf ball when struck.

Other objects and advantages of my invention will become apparent in the course of the following specification and claim when taken in light of the accompanying drawings in which:

FIG. 1 is a isometric view of my golf practice device substantially as it would appear in use;

FIG. 2 is a plan view illustrating the action of my golf practice device immediately after impact of a golf club with one end thereof;

FIG. 3 is a fragmentary plan view, partially in section, taken along 3—3 of FIG. 2 illustrating in detail the construction of one embodiment of my golf practice device;

FIG. 4 is a plan view, partially in section, illustrating another embodiment of my invention; and

FIG. 5 is a series of schematic representations illustrating the gyrations of my device in flight.

In general, my golf practice device comprises a pair of spheres **10** held in dumbbell-like spaced relationship by a flexible, normally straight member **11** having a maximum cross sectional dimension less than the diameter of said spheres.

The flexible member may be of any suitable flexible material such as, for example, rubber, plastic, spring wire, or the like which, while flexible, does not stretch appreciably in use and has the property of readily returning to its original substantially straight configuration when in a relaxed state. Length of the flexible member is not critical, but ordinarily is from about 5 to about 12 inches and preferably is from about 7 to about 10 inches.

Spheres **10** used in the present invention are usually from about 1½ to about 1¾ inches in diameter and preferably approximate the dimensions of an ordinary golf ball. The spheres may be of any resilient material such as, for example, hard rubber, hard plastic, or the like or combinations thereof. Preferably, spheres employed in accordance with the present invention are golf balls of the type ordinarily used in play.

In one of the embodiments illustrated (FIGS. 1–3), a plurality of rubber bands **12** is employed to make up the flexible member **11** and golf balls **14** are employed as spheres **10**. The rubber bands **12** are assembled about the golf balls **14** in such a manner as to substantially enclose and contain said golf balls and to maintain them in a spaced dumbbell-like relationship. If desired, the golf balls may be coated with an adhesive-type material prior to assembly. Assembly is usually further secured by binding the article with a fibrous material **15**.

Suitable fibrous materials are natural or synthetic threads or filaments. Usually, fibers **15** are secured in position by means of an adhesive such as glue, resin, liquid rubber or the like. Adhesive may be applied to the fiber either before or after the binding step. Preferably, fibers **15** are treated with adhesive prior to binding and the binding operation is accomplished with the adhesive is a substantially unset or uncured condition. If desired, additional adhesive may be applied to the fibers after binding.

In another embodiment (FIG. 4), golf balls **14** are joined by a flexible member **11** which also encloses said golf balls thereby to form a substantially unitary dumbbell-like article. The article may be produced by molding or any other suitable technique. In this way an article is produced in which no binding is required.

Alternatively, the golf balls may be joined by a flexible member such as a rubber rod or strip which is adapted at each end to contain a golf ball-like sphere. A coating of the type generally used in golf ball covers such as, for example, balata, may then be applied over the sphere-containing end portions of the flexible member. In this manner, the surface of the portion or portions of the article to be struck with a golf club substantially duplicates that of a regulation golf ball.

When one end of my device is struck with a golf club, the portion struck starts to move (FIG. 2). The flexible member bends, thereby absorbing some of the energy imparted by the blow and the entire article is propelled through the air (FIG. 5). In flight, the flexible member bends first one way and then another, thereby substantially continuously altering the center of rotation of the device. Thus, the practice device flies through the air in an eccentric manner. Apparently, this eccentric flight is a major factor in impeding the travel of my device through the air. When the practice device comes to rest a few feet away, it is ordinarily in its normal dumbbell-like shape with the flexible member substantially straight.

Previously known light weight articles are usually blown about in haphazard fashion by even minor gusts of wind. My device is not so affected. In spite of the eccentric behavior of my device in the air, its line of flight surprisingly is generally true. For example, if my device is struck in a manner which would produce a slice in an ordinary golf ball, my device will travel a line of flight corresponding to a slice. Similarly with a hook. When struck in the correct golf manner, my device travels a straight and true line of flight.

A better understandnig of the present invention may be obtained in light of the following example which is set forth to illustrate and is not to be construed to limit the present invention.

Example

Three rubber bands were produced by cutting ¾ inch wide cross-sectional strips from an automobile tire inner tube. A golf ball was coated with liquid rubber. A portion of each of the rubber bands was formed about the golf ball in overlapping fashion, thereby substantially to enclose and contain the golf ball. Nylon thread, soaked in glue, was tightly wound about the assembled golf ball and rubber bands, binding them together. This procedure was repeated with the other golf ball at the portion of the rubber bands remote from the first golf ball.

Portions of the rubber bands joining the substantially enclosed golf balls were then bound with glue-soaked

nylon thread to form an elongated flexible member having a maximum cross sectional dimension of about ¾ inch. Thus, a product was obtained in which the golf balls were held in dumbbell-like spaced relationship at a distance of about 9 inches, center to center.

When one golf ball-containing end of my device was struck a hard blow with a number one wood golf club, it travelled a distance, spinning eccentrically, of only about 40 feet and, surprisnigly, rose only slightly more than a foot above ground level. Further, the force of the blow was almost completely absorbed by the article rather than being transmitted back to the golfer's arms and the feel of the blow was satisfying like that of a regulation golf ball.

Various modifications may be made in the present invention without departing from the spirit or scope thereof, and it is to be understood that I limit myself only as defined in the appended claim.

I claim:

A golf practice device comprising:

a pair of spherical members joined in spaced apart relationship by a flexible member, each of said spherical members being of the approximate size and weight of a regulation golf ball,

said flexible member being about 5 to about 12 inches

in length and having a maximum cross section less than the diameter of said spheres, said flexible member being substantially longitudinally inelastic so that it does not stretch appreciably when said device is struck and propelled by a fully swung golf club and substantially transversely flexible and resilient so that it bends one way and than another when said device is struck and propelled by a fully swung golf club, said device, when struck with a full swing of a golf club, substantially duplicating the directional line of flight of a regulation golf ball while absorbing sufficient of the energy of the impact of said club to reduce the length of travel of said device to substantially less than the travel of a regulation golf ball struck with the same force.

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