Feb. 16, 1960 P. C. NEWHART 2,925,274

BATTING PRACTICE BALL AND GAME DEVICE

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Fig. 1

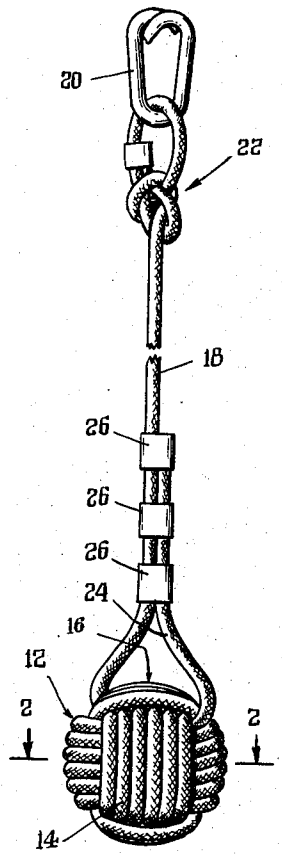


Fig. 2

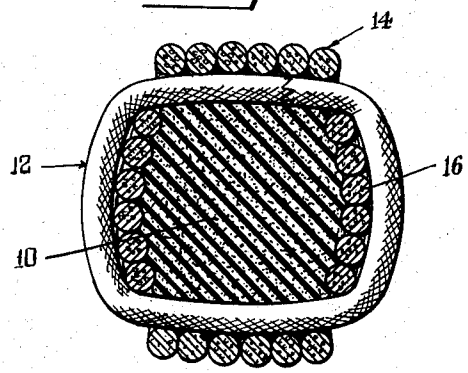


Fig. 3

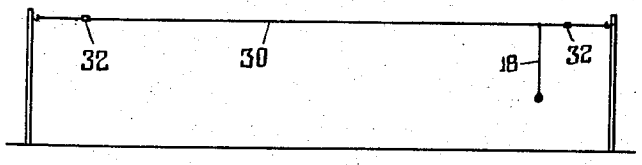
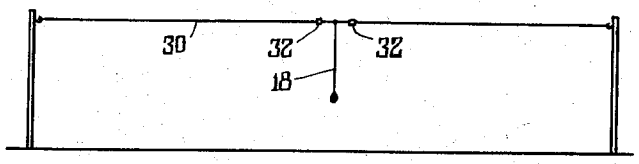


Fig. 4



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BATTING PRACTICE BALL AND GAME DEVICE

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12 Claims. (Cl. 273—26)

This invention relates to baseball constructions adapted to provide batting practice, and to games intended to be played with such baseball constructions.

One object of the invention is to provide a novel and improved baseball construction adapted to be used for batting practice purposes, which construction is extremely rugged, resistant to wear and rough use, and capable of having a long and extended, useful life.

Another object of the invention is to provide a novel and improved baseball construction as above characterized, which is especially useful and advantageous as an aid to perfect the techniques of hitting, bunting and catching baseballs.

A further object of the invention is to provide an improved batting practice ball structure in accordance with the foregoing, which may be readily used not only outside or outdoors, but also indoors, in restricted or limited spaces.

A still further object of the invention is to provide an improved practice ball construction for batting, bunting and catching practice, which is especially adaptable for use with a tightly strung horizontal line such as a washline or the like.

A still further object of the invention is to provide an improved practice ball construction which is characterized by extreme simplicity and compactness, with relatively few components.

A feature of the invention resides in the provision of an improved practice ball construction which utilizes relatively inexpensive materials, and which may be economically fabricated and produced while still retaining all of the above properties and advantages.

Another feature of the invention resides in the provision of a novel practice ball construction wherein a major portion of the ball and also a suspension means therefor, including the outside or wrapper structure, is constituted of flexible cord or line, as for example cotton washline, nylon line and the like.

A still further feature of the invention resides in the provision of a novel practice ball construction formed largely of washline or the like, wherein the said line or cord is arranged and organized in a novel manner, with interrelated and locking portions, so as to provide a sturdy and rugged construction not likely to come apart and one which is characterized by great simplicity.

A still further and important object of the invention is to provide an improved practice ball construction with suspension means wherein the said suspension means is securely attached to the ball against separation while still maintaining desirable simplicity in the structure with a minimum of components.

Other features and advantages will hereinafter appear.

In the accompanying drawings, similar characters of reference are used to designate like components throughout the several views, in which:

Figure 1 is a side elevational view of the improved batting practice ball construction as provided by the invention, including the suspension means for the ball.

Fig. 2 is a sectional view of the ball construction taken on the line 2—2 of Fig. 1.

Fig. 3 is a diagram showing the practice ball carried by a long cord or line such as a washline, for playing a batting game, hereinafter termed a "monkey" game.

Fig. 4 is a diagram similar to Fig. 3, but showing the practice ball and suspension as confined to a smaller area.

Referring first to Figs. 1 and 2, there is shown my novel batting practice ball construction which is constituted essentially of two basic components, a core member and a wrapping disposed about the core member. The core member, indicated by the numeral **10**, is preferably of flexible and resilient material such as sponge rubber or similar substance which may be readily compressed and deformed and has the ability or property to return to its original shape. The core member **10** is also preferably made in the shape of a ball or sphere, although an exact shape of this nature is not essential.

For the purposes of the invention I have found that when the core member **10** is constituted of sponge rubber having a diameter on the order of 2 inches the resultant size and characteristics of the practice ball are generally all that would be desired, for the purpose of using the practice ball for hitting, bunting and catching practice, both indoors and outdoors.

By the present invention the wrapping which is placed about the core member **10** is constituted of heavy cord or line, preferably on the order of ¼ inch in diameter, and I have found that sash cord or washline cord of such diameter serves the purpose admirably. The wrapping about the core member **10** is constituted in a novel manner, in accordance with the invention, preferably by using but a single long piece of cord and wrapping or encircling the core member with a plurality of groups of convolutions or turns in such a manner that an interlocking of the convolutions is effected, thereby to securely hold all of the convolutions in place about the core member regardless of rough usage and the like.

In forming the wrapping, referring to Figs. 1 and 2, I initially provide about the core member **10** a first series of turns, indicated by the numeral **12**, the said turns being disposed side by side and wrapped tightly about the core member to form in effect an annular wrapping thereabout. Upon completion of the first series of turns the same cord preferably is used to provide a second series of turns, also disposed side by side but this time at right angles to and overlying the first series of turns. The second series of turns is designated by the numeral **14** in the figures. Upon completion of the second series of turns I then utilize the remaining cord to form a third series of turns which is now disposed at right angles to both the first and second series of turns. All of the said series of turns are constituted of complete convolutions of the cord or rope, disposed tightly against one another in side-by-side relation.

The third and final series of turns is made to overlie the second series of turns, and is made to underlie the first series of turns, and in accomplishing this latter any suitable tool, threading device or needle may be utilized, to pull the cord under the first series of turns and between the same and core member **10**. This construction is clearly illustrated in the figures, and the third series of turns is indicated by the numeral **16**. By so arranging the three series of turns all at right angles to each other with the third series overlying the second and underlying the first, there is an interlocking of the series in such a manner that the turns will not become loose and will not be inadvertently undone from the core member **10**. This is because the turns initially are especially tightly wrapped around the core, and because there is a frictional retention of the third series of turns by the first series, and also a frictional retention of the second series by the

third series. In a like manner there is a frictional retention of the first series by the second series, since a completely interlocking organization is effected by so winding the turns in the aforesaid manner.

Upon completion of the three series of turns it will be found that the two ends of the cord or rope will come out at different locations from the wrapper, and that the turns directly connected to the said ends will be securely frictionally retained in place by the overlapping arrangements of the various turns.

In accordance with the invention I utilize the said ends of the cord or rope to constitute a reliable suspension means for the ball. As seen in Fig. 1, a long end **18** of the rope, leading from the last turn of the third series **16** may be secured to a split chain link **20** as by means of a suitable knot **22** in a manner well understood. The remaining short end **24** of the rope, coming from the first turn of the first series **12**, may then be secured to the long end **18** in any suitable way, as for example by means of groups of fine cord lashings or wrappings, or wrappings of strong adhesive tape or the like. As shown in the figures, wrappings of adhesive tape are employed.

The above completes the construction of the ball and the suspension means immediately associated therewith.

I have found that with a ball construction as above set forth and characterized it is possible to subject the ball to severe use without the cord wrapping becoming undone. Therefore this type of ball construction lends itself admirably to use as a practice ball, to perfect hitting and bunting practice and also to perfect catching technique both indoors and out of doors. The ball may be suspended from any suitable support, and the user may swing at the ball while it is at rest or he may make the ball swing back and forth, and strike at the ball while it is swinging.

I have found that a ball construction as above set forth, while being extremely rugged, is somewhat softer than a regular baseball and consequently will not effect as serious an injury if a person should be struck with it. The practice ball is essentially quite light in weight and the cord wrapping with the sponge rubber provides for a certain amount of give or yieldability, which characteristics are of considerable advantage in a practice ball. Moreover, because of the secure anchorage of the end ropes **18** and **24**, the ball cannot part from the suspension means and is accordingly at all times securely anchored. This is an important feature of the invention, since it minimizes the likelihood of damage or injury which might occur if the ball should become loose from its moorings after being struck a solid blow.

Even if the wrapping **16** would for some reason or other become loose, the ball would still not be released from the suspension, inasmuch as it is securely anchored at all times by the long end **18** which is integral with the entire wrapping about the sponge rubber core member **10**. Such construction constitutes an important feature of the present invention.

In addition to the above advantages, the practice ball has a certain amount of resilience by which it will rebound with appreciable force when struck a stout blow by a bat. This is of importance since it provides a degree of personal satisfaction when the ball is struck a square blow by the user.

The nature and characteristics of the sash or washcord are such that they resist wear and abrasion to a considerable extent. Usually such cord or rope is impregnated or permeated with a wear-resistant substance, such as wax or the like, to make it weather resistant, and such substance may act as a lubricant and prevent tearing or rupturing of individual fibers which make up the wrapping. In consequence, the wrapping constituted of the interwoven turns of rope has great durability, and the entire practice ball has been found to have a long, useful life.

Various interesting games may be played with a practice ball as above constructed. For example, as shown in Fig. 3, a horizontal line **30** such as a washline or the like, may be strung between two sturdy supports, and the ball may be suspended from the washline by means of the split chain link **20**. A pair of stops **32** may be located on the washline **30**, to restrict the movement of the ball and suspension means along the line. These stops, for example, may be advantageously constituted of split rubber stoppers, and such stoppers may be taped to the washline for security to prevent their shifting. Two players may engage in a game with the above organization. One player may stand under each of the stoppers **32**, and the ball may be impelled along the washline **30** by one player toward the other. When the ball reaches the other player he may swing at it. If he effects a solid blow with the bat this will be counted as a point for him. If he should miss the ball it would be counted as a point against him. If the impelled ball does not approach the player within a fair zone suitable for batting, he may decline to swing at it, and accordingly it would be counted as a point for him or against the other player. If he should swing at such a poorly placed ball, and not strike it, it would be counted a point against him or for the player who has impelled the ball. I have termed the above game a "monkey" game since the ball in traveling between the two contestants may be likened somewhat to the actions of a monkey or similar creature.

Another game, which I term a "rotation" game, is illustrated in Fig. 4. This game may be played by one player, and other players may take turns after the first player has completed a certain amount of practice. In the rotation game the stoppers **32** which are located on the clothesline are placed close together, thereby restricting the travel of the ball greatly. The player stands adjacent the ball, and either swings at it while the ball is at rest, or else pushes the ball to start it swinging and then strikes at it with the bat as the ball swings back toward him, or away from him.

It should be noted that in both of the described games the player can pitch to himself, so to speak, by placing the ball in motion before swinging with the bat, and this is an important feature of the games. In so placing the ball in motion, he may hold it approximately at ear height and then allow it to swing over the plate. Upon the ball's return the player then strikes at it with the bat. The ball may be also made to swing back toward the player in a position known in baseball as the "outside corner." When balls are in such position they are more difficult to hit, and accordingly by so manipulating the ball the player may secure excellent batting practice.

Preferably the height of the ball when it is suspended from the clothes line should be such as to locate it at the midwaist, for best efficiency.

In connection with the monkey game above illustrated in Fig. 3, homeplates may be located below the stoppers **32** and when a ball which has been impelled crosses the plate without being struck it may be scored as a run for the player who has impelled the ball. Various other rules may be readily conceived and put into use.

It will now be understood that by the foregoing I have provided a rugged and simplified batting practice ball construction which is constituted of relatively few components, which is safe in use, and which will withstand severe usage without appreciable deterioration. The practice ball is so constituted that it will be securely held by its mooring, thereby minimizing to the greatest possible extent the likelihood of a struck ball going out of bounds or doing possible damage or injury.

Variations and modifications may be made within the scope of the claims, and portions of the improvement may be used without others.

I claim:

1. A batting practice ball comprising a core member; and a wrapping disposed about said core member, comprising heavy cord arranged in a first series of turns disposed side by side and wrapped tightly about the core member, a second series of turns disposed side by side at right angles to and overlying the first series of turns,

and a third series of turns disposed side by side at right angles to both the first and second series of turns, said third series of turns overlying the said second series and underlying the said first series, thereby to interlockingly connect the said first and second series.

2. A batting practice ball comprising a core member; and a one-piece wrapping disposed about said core member, comprising a piece of heavy cord arranged in a first series of turns disposed side by side and wrapped tightly about the core member, a second series of turns disposed side by side at right angles to and overlying the first series of turns, and a third series of turns disposed side by side at right angles to both the first and second series of turns, said third series of turns overlying the said second series and underlying the said first series, thereby to interlockingly connect the said first and second series.

3. A batting practice ball comprising a core member; and a wrapping disposed about said core member, comprising heavy cord arranged in a first series of turns disposed side by side and wrapped tightly about the core member, a second series of turns disposed side by side at right angles to and overlying the first series of turns, and a third series of turns disposed side by side at right angles to both the first and second series of turns, said third series of turns overlying the said second series and underlying the said first series, thereby to interlockingly connect the said first and second series, said first, second, and third series of turns each having on the order of six complete turns and said cord having a diameter on the order of one quarter inch.

4. A batting practice ball comprising a core member; and a wrapping disposed about said core member, comprising heavy cord arranged in a first series of turns disposed side by side and wrapped tightly about the core member, a second series of turns disposed side by side at right angles to and overlying the first series of turns, and a third series of turns disposed side by side at right angles to both the first and second series of turns, said third series of turns overlying the said second series and underlying the said first series, thereby to interlockingly connect the said first and second series, said core member having a diameter on the order of two inches and said cord having a diameter on the order of one quarter inch.

5. A batting practice ball comprising a core member; and a wrapping disposed about said core member, comprising heavy cord arranged in a first series of turns disposed side by side and wrapped tightly about the core member, a second series of turns disposed side by side at right angles to and overlying the first series of turns, and a third series of turns disposed side by side at right angles to both the first and second series of turns, said third series of turns overlying the said second series and underlying the said first series, thereby to interlockingly connect the said first and second series, the first turn of the second series being integrally connected with the last turn of the first series, and the first turn of the third series being integrally connected with the last turn of the second series.

6. A batting practice ball comprising a core member; and a wrapping disposed about said core member, comprising heavy cord arranged in a first series of turns disposed side by side and wrapped tightly about the core member, a second series of turns disposed side by side at right angles to and overlying the first series of turns, and a third series of turns disposed side by side at right angles to both the first and second series of turns, said third series of turns overlying the said second series and underlying the said first series, thereby to interlockingly connect the said first and second series, the first turn of the first series and the last turn of the third series being brought out as two end portions of the cord which constitutes the said wrapping, at least one of said end portions having an appreciable length whereby it constitutes a suspension for the said ball.

7. A batting practice ball comprising a core member; and a one-piece wrapping disposed about said core member, comprising a piece of heavy cord arranged in a first series of turns disposed side by side and wrapped tightly about the core member, a second series of turns disposed side by side at right angles to and overlying the first series of turns, and a third series of turns disposed side by side at right angles to both the first and second series of turns, said third series of turns overlying the said second series and underlying the said first series, thereby to interlockingly connect the said first and second series, the first turn of the first series and the last turn of the last series being brought out as two separate ends of the cord which constitutes the said wrapping, said end portions being fastened together adjacent the ball and at least one of said end portions having appreciable length whereby it constitutes a suspension means for the ball.

8. A batting practice ball comprising a core member; and a wrapping disposed about said core member, comprising heavy cord arranged in a first series of turns disposed side by side and wrapped tightly about the core member, a second series of turns disposed side by side at right angles to and overlying the first series of turns, and a third series of turns disposed side by side at right angles to both the first and second series of turns, said third series of turns overlying the said second series and underlying the said first series, thereby to interlockingly connect the said first and second series, said core member being constituted of resilient sponge rubber.

9. A batting practice ball comprising a core member; and a one-piece wrapping disposed about said core member, comprising a piece of heavy cord arranged in a first series of turns disposed side by side and wrapped tightly about the core member, a second series of turns disposed side by side at right angles to and overlying the first series of turns, and a third series of turns disposed side by side at right angles to both the first and second series of turns, said third series of turns overlying the said second series and underlying the said first series, thereby to interlockingly connect the said first and second series, the first turn of the first series and the last turn of the last series being brought out as two separate ends of the cord which constitutes the said wrapping, said end portions being fastened together adjacent the ball and at least one of said end portions having appreciable length whereby it constitutes a suspension means for the ball; and a plurality of separate fine tape lashings securing together the said end portions which are brought out from the ball, said tape lashings constituting the means by which the end portions are fastened to each other.

10. A batting practice ball comprising a core member; and a wrapping disposed about said core member, comprising heavy cord arranged in a first series of turns disposed side by side and wrapped tightly about the core member, a second series of turns disposed side by side at right angles to and overlying the first series of turns, and a third series of turns disposed side by side at right angles to both the first and second series of turns, said third series of turns overlying the said second series and underlying the said first series, thereby to interlockingly connect the said first and second series; line means comprising a length of line adapted to be strung horizontally above the ground; suspension means attached to the said wrapping; and a loop secured to said suspension means and adapted to encircle the said line whereby the ball and suspension means may be slid along the line when the latter is strung above the ground.

11. The invention as defined in claim 10, in which there is a pair of stops carried by the said line on opposite sides of the said loop, said stops being spaced closely together to limit the amount of sliding movement of the loop to a short distance.

12. The invention as defined in claim 10, in which there

is a pair of stops secured to the said line on opposite sides of the loop, said stops being spaced widely apart to permit the loop to have an extended travel along the said line.

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