June 13, 1939. H. P. LETARTE 2,162,438

PITCHER'S TARGET

Filed Dec. 12, 1938 2 Sheets-Sheet 1

Fig. 1.

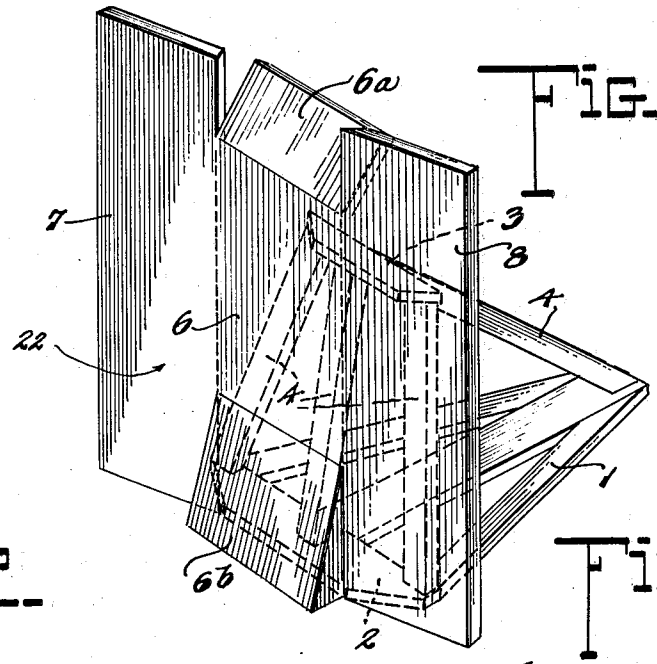


Fig. 2.

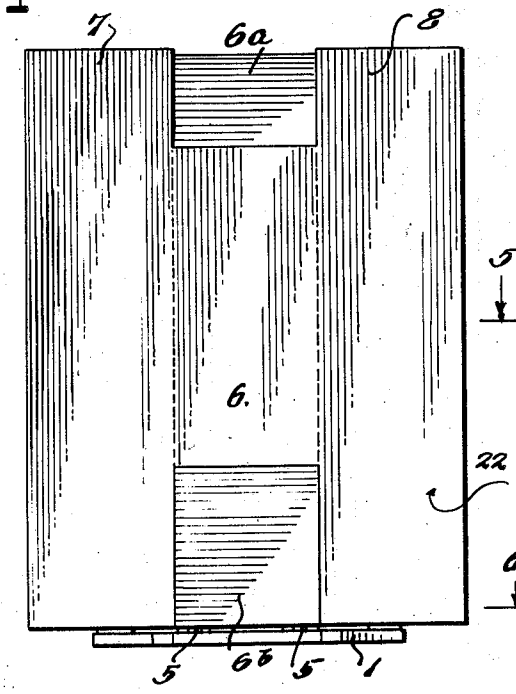
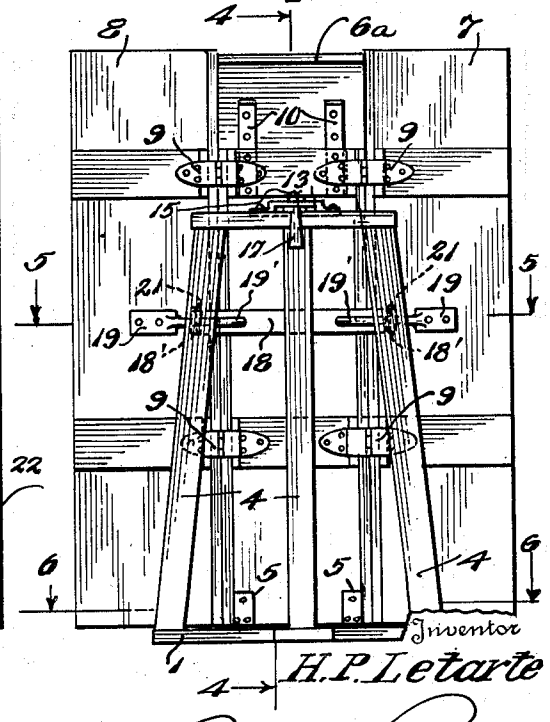


Fig. 3.



Inventor

H. P. Letarte

By Robb & Robb

Attorneys

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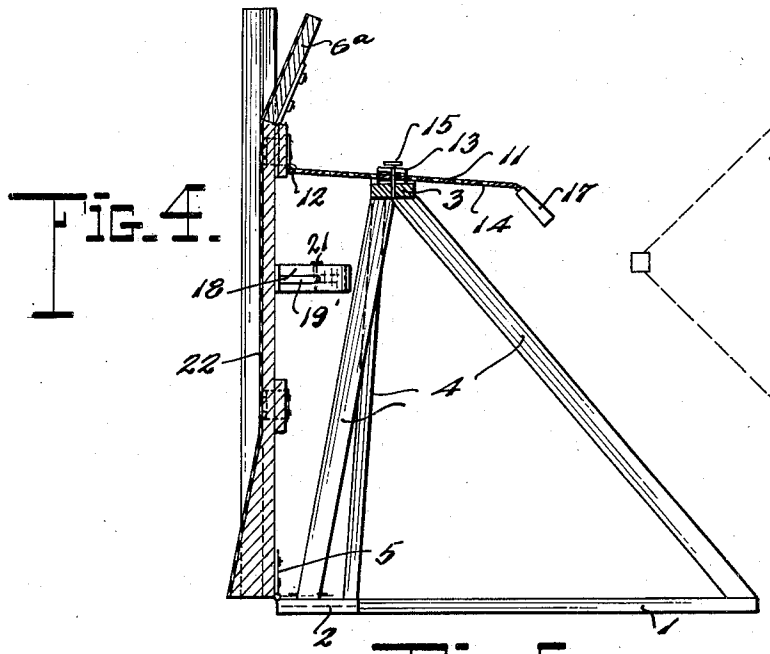


Fig. 4.

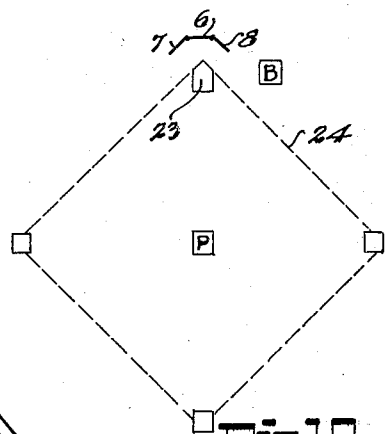


Fig. 10.

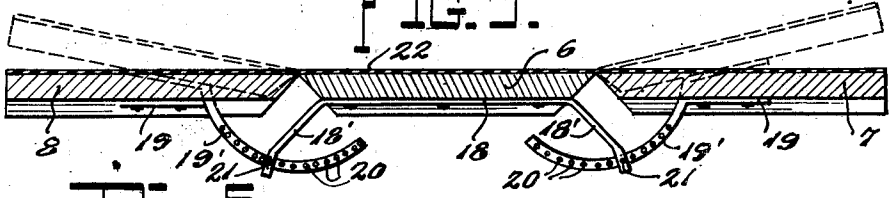


Fig. 5.

Fig. 6.

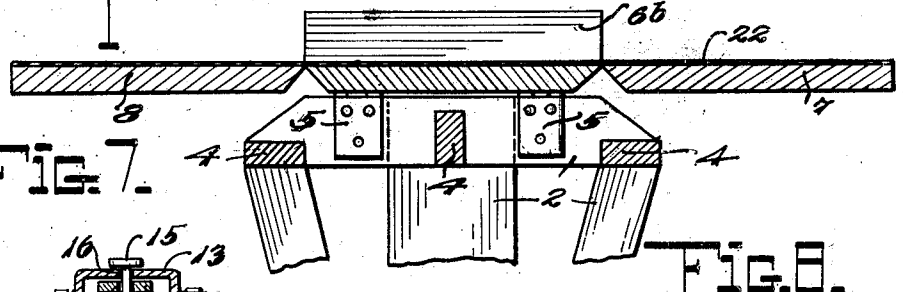


Fig. 7.

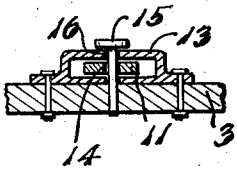


Fig. 8.

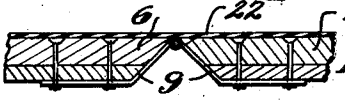
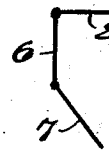


Fig. 9.



Inventor
H. P. Letarte

By Robb & Robb

Attorneys

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PITCHER'S TARGET

Henry P. Letarte, Graniteville, Vt.

Application December 12, 1938, Serial No. 245,306

7 Claims. (Cl. 273—26)

This invention appertains to targets, and more especially to pitchers' targets which may be advantageously employed in the practice and perfection of pitching and fielding a baseball or similar projectile. Since proficiency of control of speed and accuracy of delivery are the prime requisites of baseball pitching, practice by throwing the ball at a target has been found to serve a very useful purpose. In addition to the utility of the invention as a practice or exercise device, it may be employed for other purposes, such as a game of skill to be played by one or more participants, an automatic umpire for baseball games, a foul screen, etc.

In carrying out the purposes of the invention, it has been my aim to provide a simple, economical, and rugged device which is preferably of portable construction, and which embodies a plurality of panel members or sections having impact surfaces which serve to impart rebound in various directions to a pitched ball. In the preferred embodiment of the invention, the target comprises impact surfaces arranged at different angles with respect to each other, certain of the impact surfaces being adjustable to afford a variation in the direction of rebound of the ball according to the particular use to which the target is put, and also to adapt the target to various conditions of play and purposes.

By virtue of the predetermined angular positions of the respective impact surfaces, the target automatically acts as an umpire by imparting different rebounds to the ball in accordance with the accuracy or inaccuracy of delivery and speed of the ball.

Other and further objects and advantages of the invention will be hereinafter referred to and the novel features thereof defined in the appended claims.

In the drawings:

Figure 1 is a prespective view of my improved target;

Figure 2 is a view of the target in front elevation;

Figure 3 is a view of the target in rear elevation;

Figure 4 is a vertical sectional view taken approximately on the line 4—4 of Figure 3;

Figures 5 and 6 are horizontal sectional views taken approximately on the lines 5—5 and 6—6 of Figure 3;

Figure 7 is a sectional view taken on the line 7—7 of Figure 4;

Figure 8 is a fragmentary detail sectional view illustrating the hinged interconnection between one of the wing panels and the central or main panel of the target;

Figure 9 is a diagrammatic view illustrating the use of the invention as a foul screen in batting practice; and

Figure 10 is a diagrammatic view illustrating the use of the target as an automatic umpire in a game of baseball.

Like reference characters designate corresponding parts in the several figures of the drawings, wherein 1 generally designates a frame or support which includes base members 2 and a head member 3 disposed above the same and suitably supported upon the base members by standards and braces generally designated 4. This frame or support may be constructed of wood, metal, or partly wood and partly metal, or other suitable materials, and it is to be understood that I do not wish to be limited to the specific construction which has been shown in the drawings for illustrative purposes only. The head member 3 is preferably disposed somewhat to the rear of the forward extremity of the base 2, for purposes which will hereinafter become more fully apparent.

Mounted at the front of the frame or support 1 is the target surface which is preferably composed of a plurality of panels preferably united with each other in the form of a unit and hingedly connected to the bottom of the frame 1 at its forward end by means of the hinges 5. The target proper includes a central panel 6 to which the hinges 5 are fastened, and a pair of wing panels 7 and 8 hingedly connected to the central panel 6 by means of hinges 9, and disposed at the respective sides of the central panel. The central panel 6 is provided at its upper end with a rearwardly inclined portion 6*a*, and at its lower extremity with a forwardly inclined portion 6*b*, these portions being rigidly secured to the panel 6 in any suitable manner. In the case of the rearwardly inclined section 6*a*, brackets 10 may be employed to secure the same to the section 6. In the preferred embodiment of my invention, the height of the rearwardly inclined panel section 6*a* corresponds approximately to the distance from the top of an average player's head down to his shoulders, and the height of the forwardly inclined sections 6*b* corresponds approximately to the distance from the ground to the knees, thus making the target about as tall as the player. Of course, these dimensions may be varied as desired, and I do not intend to limit the target to any particular size.

By virtue of the construction just described,

through provision of the hinges 5, the panels may be swung as a unit toward and away from a vertical position, whereby to permit variation in the height of rebound of a ball thrown against the panels. This adjustment is facilitated by employing a bar 11 which is pivotally connected at 12 to the rear side of the central panel 6 so as to extend rearwardly therefrom across the upper side of the head member 3 which carries a bracket 13. The bar 11 extends loosely through the bracket 13, as best shown in Figure 7, and is provided with a plurality of spaced apertures 14 for the reception of a pin or bolt 15 which may be inserted through an aperture 16 in the bracket, and through a selected one of the apertures 14 in the bar. The rearward extremity of the bar 11 preferably terminates in a handle 17, which may be employed to manipulate the bar 11 in the bracket 13 in the adjustment of the angular position of the target as a whole.

Disposed at the rearward side of the panels and fixedly connected to the central panel 6 is a bracket 18, having angular extensions 18', 18', projecting rearwardly from the panel 6, as best seen in Figure 5. The free extremities of the extensions 18', 18', are slotted and slidably receive the arcuate extremities 19' of the respective brackets 19 which are secured to the rear side of the respective wing panels 7 and 8. The arcuate portions 19', 19' of the brackets 19, 19 are each provided with a plurality of spaced apertures 20 for selectively receiving pins or bolts 21, 21, insertable through a corresponding opening formed in the respective bracket extensions 18', 18' at the slots, this construction being generally similar to the adjusting instrumentalities for the panelled target as a whole. Obviously, the wing panels 7 and 8 may each be swung independently of the other toward and away from a position coextensive with the central panel 6, and the pin and bracket instrumentalities above described serve to retain the wing panels in their various positions of adjustment.

As shown in the drwings, the contiguous edges of the panel sections are preferably beveled, as best shown in Figures 5 and 8, for the purpose of receiving the central portion of the hinges 9 which are generally V-shaped at the center, thus disposing the pivotal axis substantially in or near the plane of the impact surface of the central panel 6.

The panels forming the target proper may be constructed of wood, metal, or other suitable material, which will impart a substantial rebound to the ball. In the case of a regular baseball, the impact surfaces of the panels are preferably covered by a resilient covering 22, such as sheet rubber, which is of sufficient thickness to impart rebound to the baseball at a comparatively fast speed when thrown against the target. Where the rubber covering is applied to the face of the panels, the hinges 9 hingedly interconnecting the wing panels 7 and 8 with the central panel 6 may be omitted if desired, and the rubber sheet utilized as the hinge.

The target may also be used in connection with a rubber ball, in which case the panels would be made of relatively rigid and hard material, and the rubber covering 22 omitted.

In the use of the target as a practice or exercise device, the target is positioned at a suitable distance from the pitcher and adjusted to the preferred inclination respecting the vertical by manipulation of the handle 17 and lock pin 15 in the manner hereinbefore described. Also, the angular adjustments of the wing panels 7 and 8 may be effected to their preferred positions. Thereupon, when the ball is thrown against the target, it will rebound in accordance with the portion of the target which is struck. For example, if the ball strikes the central panel 6, it will rebound toward the pitcher at a relatively low elevation, whereas if the ball strikes either of the wing panels 7 or 8, the ball will rebound to the right or left of the pitcher as the case may be, assuming the wing panels are angularly disposed relative to the central panel 6. On the other hand, if the ball should strike the upper rearwardly inclined panel section 6*a*, the ball will rebound high in the air in front of the target, much on the order of a "pop-fly". The impact of the ball against the lower forwardly inclined panel section 6*b* causes the ball to rebound toward the pitcher at a relatively high elevation. Thus it will be seen that the accuracy of the pitch is determined automatically by the nature of the rebound of the ball. Rebound from the central panel 6 would thus be the only rebound comparable to a "strike" ball. By tilting the target panels as a whole rearwardly on the hinges 5, the elevation of the rebound may be increased. This adjustment in a measure should depend upon the speed of delivery of the pitched balls and the distance between the pitcher and the target, the latter being preferably equal to the distance between the pitcher and home plate on a regular baseball diamond.

In Figure 9, there has been diagrammatically illustrated another type of use of the target device, wherein the same is so positioned and adjusted as to constitute a foul screen during batting practice. As shown, the target is positioned somewhat in the rear of the batter standing at B, thus being in a position corresponding to the normal position of a catcher in front of the pitcher standing at P. One of the wing panels (8 in case of a right-handed batter) is adjusted susbtantially perpendicular to the central panel 6, thus preventing any balls rebounding from the target following a "foul-back" or a "ball" pitch, from striking the batter.

In Figure 10, there has been shown still another typical use of the target device where others in addition to the pitcher may participtate with the pitcher in playing a game. In this case, the panels 6, 7, 8, are adjusted in the manner described for the device when used as a practice or exercise device, the same being positioned behind home plate 23 of the baseball diamond generally designated by the outline 24. In other words, the target is substituted for the usual catcher, and the pitcher at P throws the ball against the target so as to cause the same to rebound onto the diamond, according to which portion of the target is struck by the ball. The game may be played without a batter, in which case the players may set their own rules. For instance, if the pitcher at P throws four "balls" before throwing three strikes, the first baseman takes the place of the pitcher and the pitcher goes to the last position in the order of succession of the players who move up one position each time the pitcher is changed.

If desired, the game may be played in accordance with the usual rules of baseball, with batters who would stand at B in the case of a righthand batter. Under such circumstances, the target composed of the panels 6, 7, 8 would automatically umpire the game in an obvious manner. Still other and different kinds of games can be played in the use of the invention.

While the specific details have been herein shown and described, the invention is not confined thereto as changes and alterations may be made without departing from the spirit thereof as defined by the appended claims.

Having thus described my invention, what I claim as new and desire to secure by Letters Patent is:

1. A target device of the class described, comprising a support, a panel carried by said support and disposed in a generally vertical position, the upper portion of said panel being rearwardly inclined, and the lower portion of said panel being forwardly inclined, with a generally vertical portion disposed intermediate said inclined portions.

2. A device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the height of the upper rearwardly inclined portion of the panel generally corresponds to the distance from the top of a player's head to the shoulders, and the height of the lower forwardly inclined panel generally corresponds to the distance from the ground to the player's knees.

3. A target device of the class described, comprising a support, a panel carried by said support and disposed in a generally vertical position, the upper portion of said panel being rearwardly inclined, and the lower portion of said panel being forwardly inclined, with a generally vertical portion disposed intermediate said inclined portions, wing panels disposed one at each side of the aforementioned panels and hingedly interconnected therewith for adjustment to different angular positions, and means for locking said wing panels in selected positions of adjustment.

4. A target device of the class described, comprising a support, a panel carried by said support and disposed in a generally vertical position, the upper portion of said panel being rearwardly inclined, and the lower portion of said panel being forwardly inclined, with a generally vertical position disposed intermediate said inclined portions, wing panels disposed one at each side of the aforementioned panels and hingedly interconnected therewith for adjustment to different angular positions, and means for locking said wing panels in selected positions of adjustment, said last-named means comprising independently adjustable locking means, one for each wing panel.

5. A target device of the class described, comprising a support, a panel carried by said support and disposed in a generally vertical position, the upper portion of said panel being rearwardly inclined, and the lower portion of said panel being forwardly inclined, with a generally vertical portion disposed intermediate said inclined portions, wing panels disposed one at each side of the aforementioned panels and hingedly interconnected therewith for adjustment to different angular positions, and means for locking said wing panels in selected positions of adjustment, said last-named means comprising a bracket disposed at the rear side of the central panel, and a bracket disposed at the rear side of each of the wing panels and cooperating with the first-mentioned bracket to selectively secure the wing panels in different positions of adjustment.

6. A target device of the class described, comprising a support, a panel carried by said support and disposed in a generally vertical position, the upper portion of said panel being rearwardly inclined and the lower portion of said panel being forwardly inclined with a generally vertical portion disposed intermediate said inclined portions, wing panels disposed one at each side of the aforementioned panels and hingedly interconnected therewith for adjustment to different angular positions, and a resilient surface material of sheet form applied to the impact surfaces of the respective panels.

7. A target device of the class described, comprising a support, a panel carried by said support and disposed in a generally vertical position, the uper portion of said panel being rearwardly inclined and the lower portion of said panel being forwardly inclined with a generally vertical portion disposed intermediate said inclined portions, wing panels disposed one at each side of the aforementioned panels and hingedly interconnected therewith for adjustment to different angular positions, and a resilient surface material applied to the impact surfaces of the respective panels, said resilient surface material constituting the means for hingedly interconnecting the wing panels with the central panel.

HENRY P. LETARTE.