Apparatus for catching a projectile such as a golf ball that has been directed to a selected location includes a cup mounted in a basket and a pole to support the cup and basket. A plurality of straps are arranged to adjust the position of the cup and basket relative to the pole.
APPARATUS FOR CATCHING A PROJECTILE

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] This invention relates to apparatus for practicing a sport or activity that involves causing a ball to follow a trajectory toward a location or target such as a cup or the like.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The present invention provides a convenient device for practicing golf strokes such as chipping in a small space. The invention is directed to apparatus for catching a projectile such as a golf ball that has been directed to a selected location. The invention includes a basket supported by a pole. The invention may further include a cup mounted in the basket to serve as a target that is smaller than the basket. The invention preferably further includes a plurality of straps arranged to adjust the position of the cup and basket relative to the pole.

[0003] The basket preferably includes an outer ring and a first fabric having an outer edge connected to the outer ring. The first fabric is arranged to form the basket supported by the outer ring. The cup preferably comprises an inner ring and a second fabric connected to the inner ring. The second fabric is arranged to form the cup to have an edge bounded by the inner ring. The cup and basket are formed to catch a projectile directed thereto. A ball that has been hit correctly should fall into the cup. The basket is formed to catch projectiles that have missed the cup.

[0004] The basket may include a plurality of bands that extend generally radially between the inner ring and the outer ring. The straps are connected to corresponding members of the plurality of bands.

[0005] A lower end of the pole preferably extends through the cup. The lower end of the pole may include a spike that may be inserted into the earth to mount the pole in a generally vertical orientation. Alternatively, the invention may include a base having a hole therein that is arranged to receive the lower end of the pole to support the pole.

[0006] The structure and function of the invention may be best understood by referring to the drawings, which are not to scale, and to the following detailed description.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0007] FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a first embodiment of the invention showing a fabric basket and a fabric cup mounted to a pole;

[0008] FIG. 2 is a perspective view of a second embodiment of the invention showing netting mounted to the ring;

[0009] FIG. 3 is a side elevation view of the invention as shown in FIG. 1 showing the pole mounted to a base;

[0010] FIG. 4 is a side elevation view of the invention as shown in FIG. 1 showing the pole inserted into the ground to hold the pole in a generally vertical orientation;

[0011] FIG. 5 is a side elevation view of a fitting that may be mounted to the pole;

[0012] FIG. 6 illustrates a strap and connector that may be used to mount the basket to the pole; and

[0013] FIG. 7 is a cross sectional view showing the basket and cup being formed of a single sheet of fabric.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0014] The following detailed description refers to golf as an activity in which the invention may be used. It should be noted that the invention is not limited to golf, but instead, has wide applicability in activities where a projectile such as a ball is directed toward a target.

[0015] FIG. 1 shows a golf practicing device 10 according to the invention. An outer ring 12 is covered by a webbing 14. A first fabric 16 may be secured to the webbing 14 by suitable stitching 18, indicated by a dashed line. As used herein the term “fabric” refers to any relatively soft flexible material such as cloth or a sheet of synthetic material. The outer ring 12 preferably is formed of an elastomeric material that may be folded into a figure eight configuration without being permanently deformed. The outer ring 12 preferably has the form of a circle when it is unstressed. As shown in FIGS. 3 and 4, the first fabric 16 sags inside the outer ring to form a basket 31.

[0016] An inner ring 20 having a smaller diameter than the outer ring 12 is mounted to the outer ring 12 by a plurality of fabric bands or straps 32-35. The inner ring 20 thus is suspended in the basket 31 formed by the outer ring 12 and the first fabric 16. The outer ring 12 and the outer ring 12 preferably are generally concentric. Webbing 24 preferably covers the inner ring 20 and is arranged so that a second fabric 28 may be connected thereto by suitable stitching 26. The bands 32-35 preferably are stitched to the webbing 18 and to the webbing 24. The second fabric 28 is dimensioned such that it sags inside the inner ring 20 to form a cup 29.

[0017] A pole 40 extends through the center of the cup 31. A plurality of straps 42-44 extends between a fitting 45 that is mounted to the pole 40 and outer ends 46-48 of the bands 32-34. As shown in FIG. 3, the pole 40 has a lower end 50 that may be mounted in a base 52 that has a hole 54 arranged to receive the lower end 50 of the pole 40. Alternatively, the lower end 50 of the pole 40 may be forced into the ground. In either arrangement, the pole 40 is preferably generally vertically mounted. The straps 42 and 44 being on opposite sides of the outer ring 12 are used to lift the outer ring 12 to place the cup 29 and basket 31 in desired positions. The rear strap 43 is used to tilt the basket and cup away from the vertical if the user so desires. The straps 42-44 preferably include means such as buckles, hooks or the like for adjusting their lengths, which allows adjustment of the height and angular orientation of the basket 31. The straps 42-44 are examples of support members that could be used to support the basket 31 on the pole 40. Other flexible support means such as strings, ropes, wires, chains or the like could be used instead of the straps 42-44.

[0018] As shown in FIG. 5, the fitting may have hooks 60 that provide convenient means for connecting the straps 42-44 to the fitting 45. A flag 62 may be attached to an upper portion 64 of the pole 40. The straps 42-44 are connected to the hooks 60 by conventional fastening means well-known in the art. As an example FIG. 5 shows a connector 70 connected to the strap 42. The connector 74 includes a passage 74 that allows the connector 70 to be secured to the hook 60 as shown in FIG. 4.

[0019] The pole 40 preferably is formed of pole segments 40A, 40B etc. that fit together end-to-end in a conventional manner. The pole segments 40A, 40B etc. preferably are formed generally as elongate hollow cylinders. An elastic cord (not shown) may extend through the centers of the pole
segments and is secured to the end segments. The adjacent segments may thus be disconnected from one another for compact storage while keeping the pole segments in one location.

[0020] FIG. 2 shows an embodiment of the invention in which the fabrics 16 and 28 are replaced by netting 66 and netting 68, respectively.

[0021] FIG. 7 shows an embodiment of the invention in which the cup 29 and basket 31 are formed from a single piece of material. A generally circular region of the material is gathered and stitched to the webbing 24 on the inner ring. The material sags inside the inner ring to form the cup 29. The material is then stitched to the webbing 18 to form the basket 31 around the cup 29.

[0022] When the basket 31 is arranged as shown in FIGS. 1-3, the angular orientation of basket 29 and cup 31 may be adjusted to facilitate practicing a golf stroke commonly known as “chipping.” A person using the invention for practicing chipping should adjust the straps 42-44 to place the basket 31 and cup 29 at the desired height and angle. The person then places a golf ball a desired distance from the cup 29 and attempts to hit the ball in the cup 29 using a selected golf club. Ordinarily, a ball that misses the cup 29 will be caught by the basket 31 so that the user may practice chipping in a limited amount of space without having all the balls that miss the cup travel a significant distance.

[0023] The structures and methods disclosed herein illustrate the principles of the present invention. The invention may be embodied in other specific forms without departing from its spirit or essential characteristics. The described embodiments are to be considered in all respects as exemplary and illustrative rather than restrictive. Therefore, the appended claims rather than the foregoing description define the scope of the invention. All modifications to the embodiments described herein that come within the meaning and range of equivalence of the claims are embraced within the scope of the invention.

What is claimed is:

1. Apparatus for catching a projectile such as a golf ball that has been directed to a selected location, comprising:
   a basket;
   a pole extending outward from the basket; and
   a support structure connected between the basket and the pole, the support structure being arranged to support the basket and adjust its angle relative to the pole.

2. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the basket comprises a ring and a fabric mounted to the ring.

3. The apparatus of claim 2 wherein the support structure comprises a plurality of straps connected between outer portions of the basket and the pole.

4. The apparatus of claim 3, further comprising:
   a cup; and
   a support apparatus arranged to suspend the cup in the basket.

5. The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising:
   a cup; and
   a support apparatus arranged to suspend the cup in the basket.

6. The apparatus of claim 5 wherein the cup comprises a second ring having a second fabric connected thereto.

7. Apparatus for catching a projectile such as a golf ball that has been directed to a selected location, comprising:
   a basket and cup assembly that includes:
   an outer ring;
   a first fabric having an outer edge connected to the outer ring and arranged to form a basket supported by the outer ring;
   an inner ring arranged inside the basket and supported by the outer ring;
   a second fabric connected to the inner ring and arranged to form a cup having an edge bounded by the inner ring, the cup being formed to catch a projectile directed thereto, the basket being formed to catch projectiles that have missed the cup by a selected distance;
   a pole extending outward from the basket and cup assembly; and
   a plurality of support members connected between the basket and cup assembly and the pole, the plurality of support members being arranged to support the basket and cup assembly and adjust its angle relative to the pole.

8. The apparatus of claim 7 further including a plurality of bands connected between the inner ring and the outer ring, the plurality of bands being arranged to support the inner ring inside the basket.

9. The apparatus of claim 8 wherein the plurality of bands are connected to corresponding members of the plurality of support members.

10. The apparatus of claim 7 wherein the plurality of support members are comprised of a plurality of straps connected between the outer ring and the pole.

11. The apparatus of claim 7 wherein the pole extends through a central region of the cup and basket assembly.

12. The apparatus of claim 7 wherein the pole has a lower end that extends through the basket and cup assembly, wherein the lower end includes a spike that may be inserted into the earth to mount the pole in a generally vertical orientation.

13. The apparatus of claim 7 wherein the pole has a lower end that extends through the basket and cup assembly, further comprising:
   a base having a hole therein; and
   a spike located at the lower end and formed to extend into the hole to mount the pole in a generally vertical orientation.

14. Apparatus for practicing directing a projectile such as a golf ball to a selected location, comprising:
   a basket;
   a cup mounted in the basket to form a target for the projectile;
   a pole arranged to support the basket and cup; and
   apparatus for adjusting the position of the basket and cup relative to the pole.

* * * * *