United States Patent

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[54] **BATTING PRACTICE DEVICE**
4 Claims, 4 Drawing Figs.

[52] **U.S. Cl.** ..... **273/26 E,** 273/58 C
[51] **Int. Cl.** **A63b 69/40**
[50] **Field of Search** ..... 273/26, 200, 58.5, 95 A, 58.3, 1 M

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ABSTRACT: A batting practice device that includes a spring arm carrying a ball and allowing the ball to be oscillated to present a moving target, the connection to the ball being separable when the ball is struck. A cord secured to the ball limits its travel and permits retrieval. The spring arm is a resilient plastic tube releasably connected at one end to the ball and having its other end frictionally fitted into a vertical pole mounted in the ground.

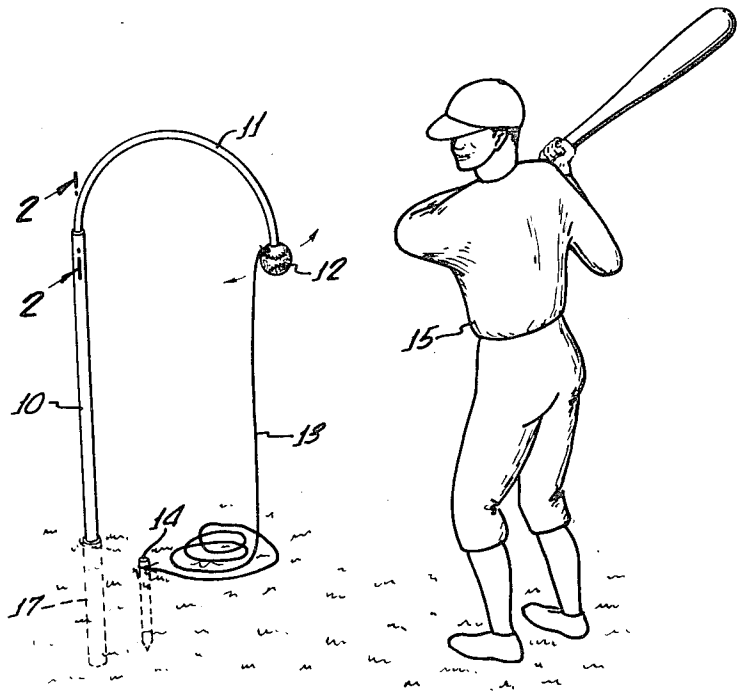
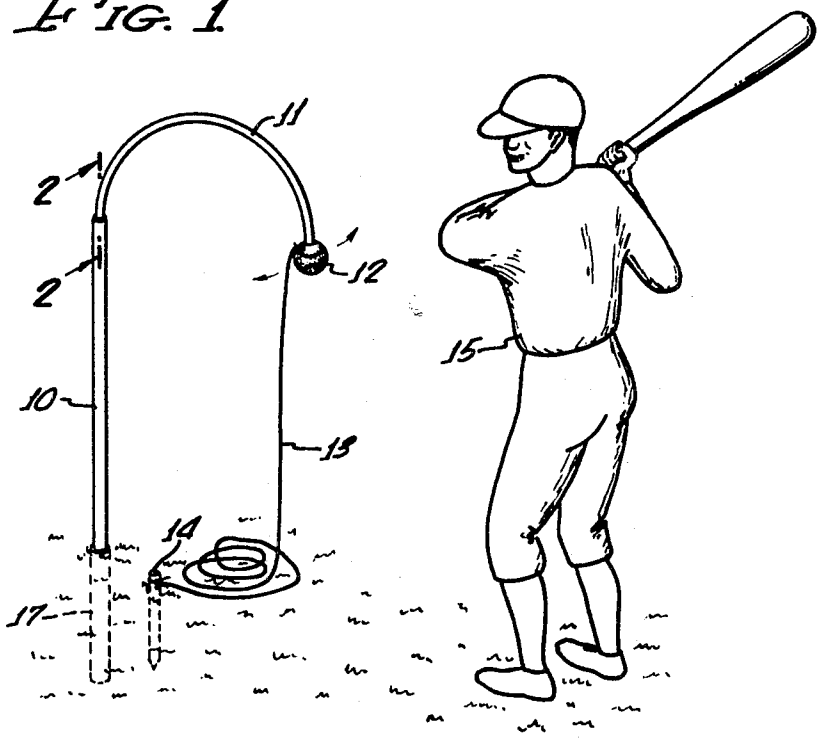


FIG. 1.



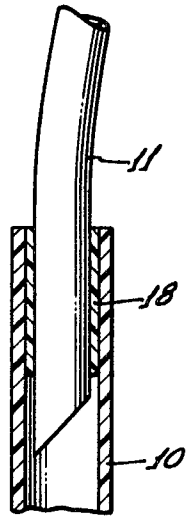


FIG. 2.

FIG. 4.

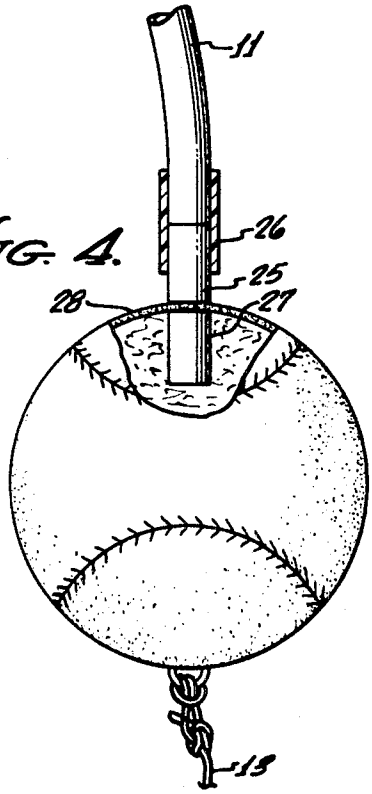
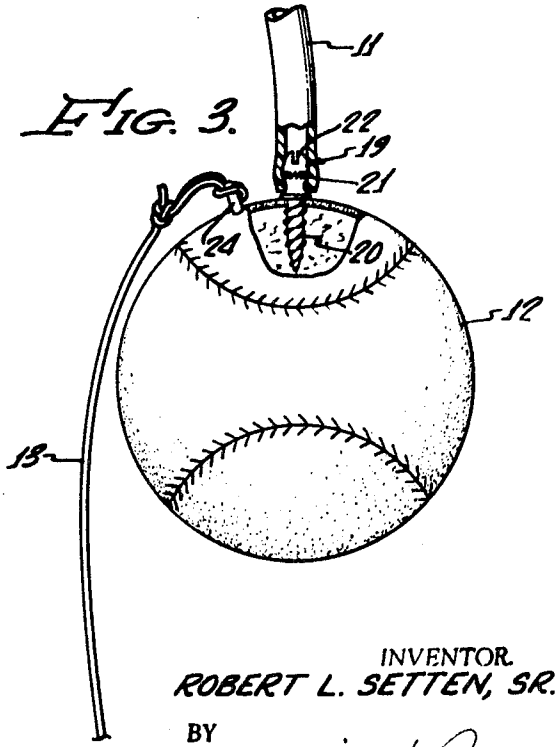


FIG. 3.



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BATTING PRACTICE DEVICE

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention

This invention relates to a device for practicing baseball batting.

The Prior Art

For amateur baseball playing, such as in Little League and for other teams, it is important yet very difficult to achieve effective batting practice. Frequently, the available practice has consisted of placing the ball on a fixed support from which the batter knocks it away. This practice does not develop necessary skills because the ball is a stationary target, unlike when it is pitched. Also, there is a need to retrieve the ball, so that such a practice device is impractical without fielders to return the ball after it has been hit. It cannot be used alone nor in confined areas.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides an improved batting practice device in which the ball may be moving at the time it is hit. Moreover, the ball is attached to a cord for ready retrieval and to limit the distance it is driven. The device includes a vertical support that carries a resilient member at its upper end. The outer end of the resilient member is adapted to be attached to the ball. The resilient member and ball can be made to oscillate before the batter swings, so that the ball is moving and made more difficult to hit, and the batter's eye is sharpened. The attachment to the ball is separable when the ball is struck. A cord is secured to the ball and to a stake, so that the flight of the ball is limited, allowing the device to be used in confined areas. Moreover, the ball may be retrieved by the cord without moving from the locale of the practice device. The unit is of simple economical construction that stores compactly and is readily assembled or disassembled.

An object of this invention is to provide an improved baseball batting practice device.

another object of this invention is to provide a batting practice device in which the ball may be made to present a moving target.

A further object of this invention is to provide a batting practice device usable in confined areas and which does not require the presence of fielders to retrieve the ball.

Yet another object of this invention is to provide a batting practice device of simple and economical construction, which is readily assembled and disassembled and which stores compactly.

These and other objects will become apparent from the following detailed description taken in connection with the accompanying drawing.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of the batting practice device of this invention as it is used;

FIG. 2 is an enlarged fragmentary sectional view taken along line 2—2 of FIG. 1, illustrating the attachment of the resilient support member to the upper end of the pole;

FIG. 3 is an enlarged fragmentary elevational view, partially broken away, showing the attachment of the ball to the end of the resilient support; and

FIG. 4 is a view similar to FIG. 3 for a different type of attachment to the ball.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

The device of this invention includes a pole **10**, to the upper end of which is secured a resilient member **11**, the outer end of which removably connects to a baseball **12**. The member **11** extends laterally away from the pole **10** and is inclined downwardly at its outer end. This means that a baseball bat, moving generally in a horizontal direction, can strike the ball **12** without hitting the arm **11** that supports it.

A length of cord **13** is connected to the baseball and also to a stake **14** that is driven into the ground. The member **11** is springy so that, with the weight of the ball **12** at its outer end, it is readily made to oscillate at the time the batter **15** wishes to attempt to strike the ball. Thus, the ball **12** will swing back and forth at the end of the member **11** as the member **11** flexes and swings somewhat as a pendulum. This presents a moving target to the batter, making it more difficult to strike the ball. As a result, the practice becomes much more effective, as the batter learns to improve his skill in striking a moving ball as he must when the game is played.

The components of the practice device conveniently are of plastic, which makes them light in weight, easy to handle and low in cost. Suitable for the pole **10** is a rigid plastic tube of around eleven sixteenth of an inch outside diameter. Preferably, for mounting the pole **10** in the vertical attitude, a short length of a larger tube or pipe **17** is buried in the ground. This provides a socket into which the lower end of the pole may be inserted when the practice is to take place.

The resilient member **11** also may be a plastic tube of springy characteristics, which may be secured to the upper end of the pole as shown in FIG. **2**. As seen in this illustration, there is a sleeve **18** received in the upper end of the pole **10** and bonded to it. This provides a socket that receives the inner end of the member **11** with a press fit. Therefore, at the time of the batting practice, the member **11** is forced into the sleeve **18** at the upper end of the pole **10**, where it is held by the press fit and without auxiliary fastening means. The end of the tube **11** may be scarfed as shown to facilitate its entry into the sleeve **18**.

The ball **12** may be held to the outer end of the resilient tube **11** in the manner shown in FIG. **3**. There is screwed into the ball a member **19** that forms the attaching means. Particularly suitable for the member **19** is the type of element that ordinarily serves as the movable portion of a cabinet catch. These devices include a threaded shank **20** and a bulbous somewhat spherical outer portion **21**. A driving slot **22** is included in the outer end of the portion **20**, allowing the shank **20** to be screwed into the baseball **12**. The bulbous portion **21** of the member **19** presents a rounded tapered part facing outwardly that easily enters the end of the tube **11**. The maximum diameter of the portion **21** is greater than the inside diameter of the tube **11** so that it wedges into the end of the flexible tube **11**, where it is held by friction. This provides the attachment for the ball to the member **11**. At the same time, this attachment is readily separated when the ball is struck.

In addition to the member **19**, a screw eye **24** is screwed into the baseball **12** to form the connection for the cord **13**. The cord merely is tied to the screw eye **24** and also to the stake **14**.

By this arrangement, therefore, the ball easily is attached to the flexible support **11** simply by forcing the bulbous portion **21** of the member **19** into the end of the tube that forms the member **11**. Then the member **11** is caused to oscillate as a spring so that a moving target is presented to the batter **15**. When the bat strikes the ball, the bulbous portion **21** of the member **19** is pulled easily from the end of the tube forming the support **11** and driven away. However, the cord **13** limits the travel of the ball, so that the practice device may be used even in confined areas. Also, the cord **13** provides a means to pull the ball back for retrieval without the necessity of moving from the area of the practice device.

The entire unit is disassembled simply by pulling the pole from the socket **17** and by removing the resilient arm **11** from the sleeve **18** at the upper end of the pole **10**. The lightweight components store compactly.

An alternate arrangement for attaching the ball to the practice device is shown in FIG. **4**. In this construction, a magnet **25** is held frictionally by means of an outer sleeve **26** to the end of the flexible tubular arm **11**. A second magnet **27**, or alternatively a piece of magnetic material, is buried in the ball **12** and may be beneath the cover **28**. Again, the ball will be held to the supporting device until such time as the ball is struck by the bat, after which the connection is readily severed.

The arm 11 may be made of other materials, such as spring wire, but the plastic tube offers advantages in facilitating the attachment of the ball.

The foregoing detailed description is to be clearly understood as given by way of illustration and example only, the spirit and scope of this invention being limited solely by the appended claims.

1. A batting practice device comprising
a pole adapted to be mounted in a vertical attitude,
an arm connected to said pole and extending laterally therefrom,
a ball,
and means for connecting said ball to the distal end of said arm in juxtaposition therewith,
said connecting means being separable in response to an impact on said ball,
said arm being a resilient plastic tube throughout the length thereof for allowing said ball to be oscillated while attached to said arm,
said pole including a socket in the upper end thereof,
one end of said plastic tube being received in said socket with a press fit for thereby attaching said tube to said pole.

2. A device as recited in claim 1 in which said connecting means includes a member having a first portion connected to said ball and a second portion exteriorly of said ball, said second portion being tapered for entry into the distal end of said plastic tube and being dimensioned to wedge therein for providing said connection of said ball to said arm.

3. A device as recited in claim 1 including in addition a tube and a supporting medium, said tube being received in said supporting medium with one end of said tube being substantially flush with a surface of said medium, one end of said pole extending into said tube, whereby said tube supports said pole in a vertical attitude.

4. In combination with a supporting medium having an upper surface, a batting practice device comprising
a tube,
said tube being received in said medium with one end thereof substantially flush with said upper surface of said medium,
an elongated pole,
one end of said pole extending into said tube for holding said pole in a substantially vertical attitude,
an inverted generally U-shaped arm of resilient tubular plastic material capable of oscillatory movement,
said pole including an opening at the upper end thereof, one end of said arm being received in said opening with a press fit,
a ball,
means securing said ball to the opposite end of said arm so that said ball is in juxtaposition with said opposite end and depends therefrom,
said means being releasble in response to an impact on said ball,
a cord, means securing one end of said cord to said ball, and means anchoring the opposite end of said cord to said medium,
whereby said cord allows retrieval of said ball and limits the travel thereof.

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