United States Patent

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[54] GOLF COURSE

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[52] **U.S. Cl.** ..... **273/176 AB,** 273/176 J

[51] **Int. Cl.** **A63b 67/02**

[58] **Field of Search** 273/176

[56] **References Cited**

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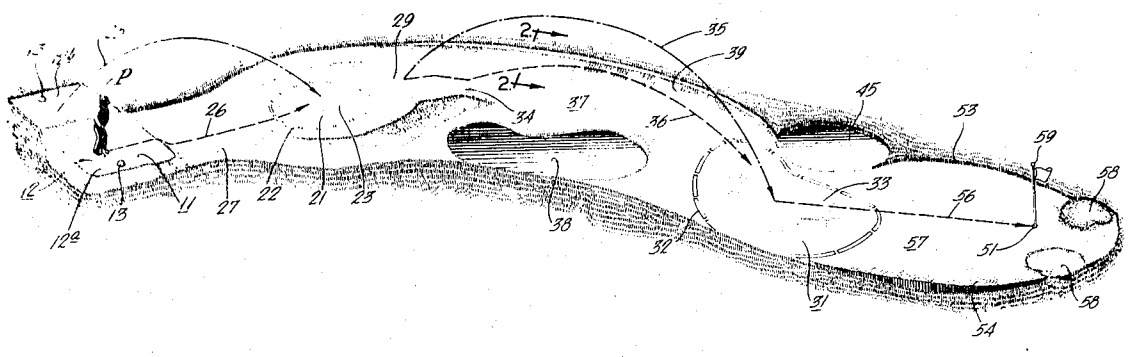
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[57] **ABSTRACT**

A golf course layout having a plurality of holes in which each hole includes a T-area, at least one landing zone having a limited landing area, and a green having a cup therein. The landing area may be a depression, inclined toward the tee, delineated by surface markings and made either of a turf-like putting grass material or a material such as sand to impede the ball. The game is played so that the player must land the ball in the limited landing area prior to advancing the ball toward the green for eventual sinking of the ball in the cup. The layout provides different paths of varying difficulty for each of the different stages of play so that the rules may be tailored to accommodate the game to the skill of the player. Varying degrees of difficulty are provided by interposing hazards in the direct path between the tees and the landing areas which require the player to advance the ball airborne over the hazard or putt the ball along the ground surface around the hazard in a curved circuitous path. Assistance is provided in maintaining the ball in the curved path by banking the ground surface in a manner to assist the circuitous travel of the ball.

7 Claims, 4 Drawing Figures



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SHEET 1 OF 2

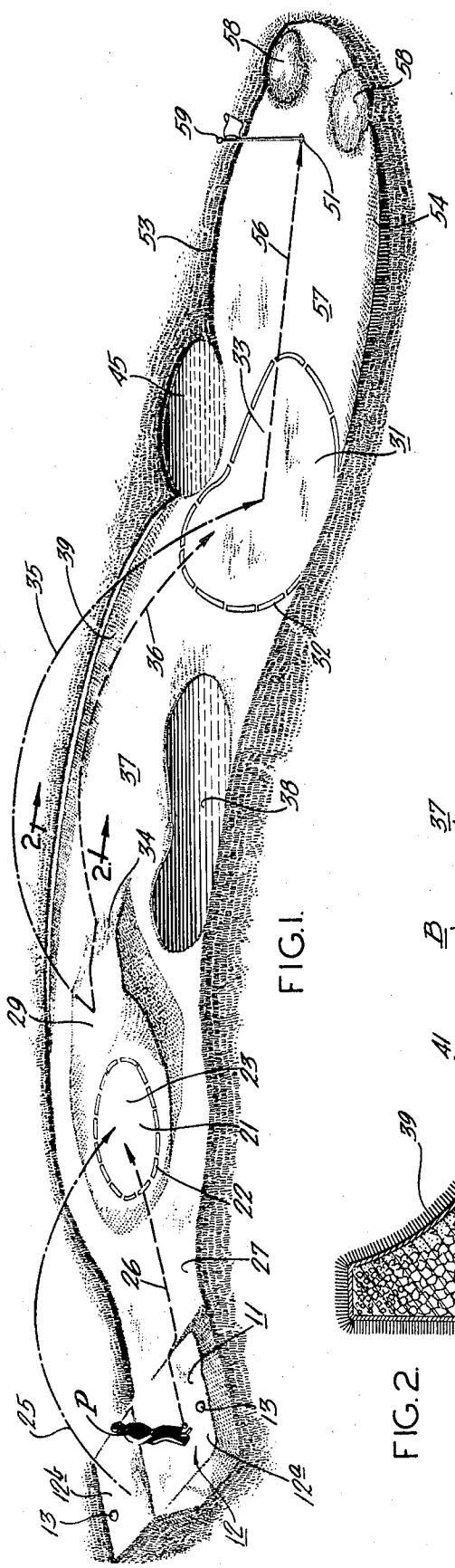


FIG. 1.

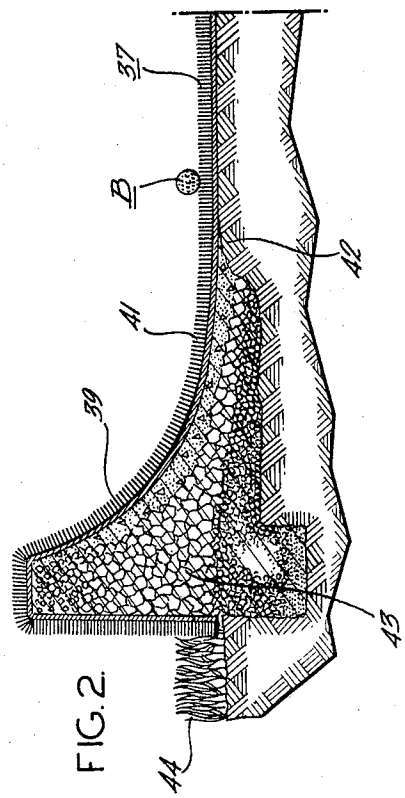


FIG. 2.

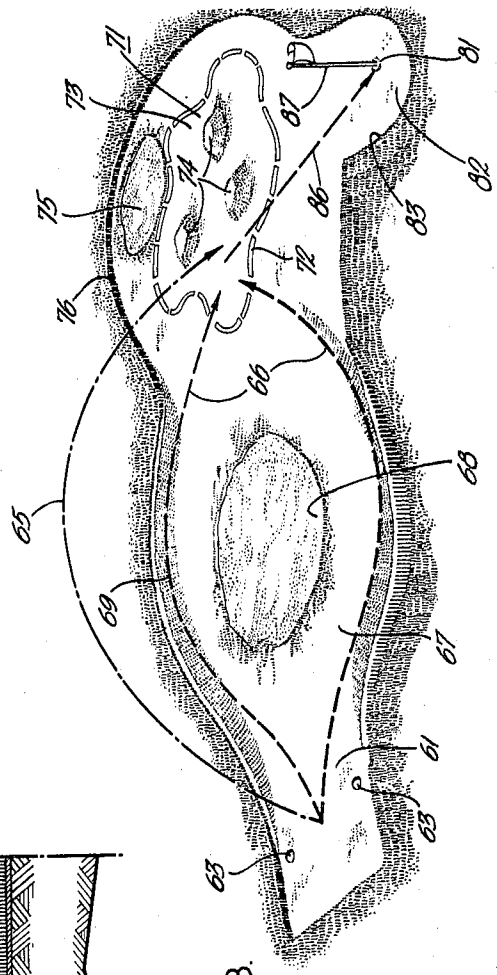


FIG. 3.

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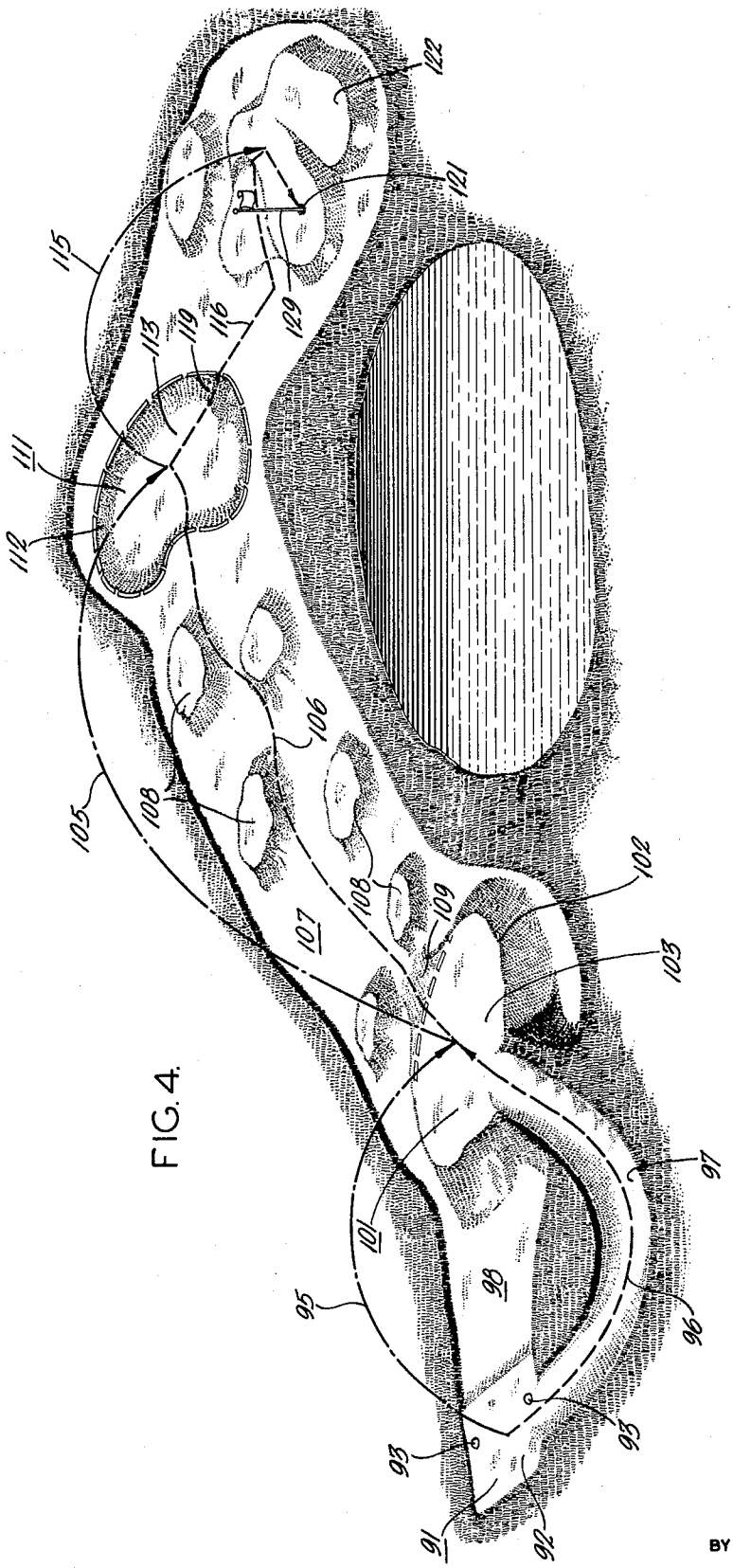


FIG. 4.

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GOLF COURSE

The present invention relates to golf course layouts and has particular application to a layout in which the series of holes provide the opportunity for an interesting pastime for both the unskilled golfer and the golfer who is proficient.

The standard full-size golf course is designed for the golfer with at least a reasonable amount of skill in playing the game. For the unskilled golfer, the play of the full standard course requires an inordinate amount of time and may lead to severe frustration.

Various attempts have been made to design courses which reduce the distance which must be traveled by the player when playing the full course, but in every instance, the shortening of the course renders the course unsuitable for the skilled player as being too easy so that the game is not appealing to a proficient golfer, and does not assist the novice in obtaining the skills which are required to permit the player to enjoy playing a full course.

The course layout of the present invention may be accommodated to various sites of widely differing acreage, and is particularly adapted for a site of small acreage which is sufficiently compact to be heated for use in chilled climates and/or to be floodlighted for play after dark.

The layout permits the use of standard components which may be fabricated from the natural elements at the site, or may be prefabricated and erected at the site. The various components are selected to impart varying degrees of difficulty to the play and may have novel characteristics which challenge the skills which are required of the golfer on a full course and thus enable the skilled golfer to obtain practice of those shots with which he is experiencing difficulty on the full course.

The present invention contemplates that the course may be used by the golfer to improve his putting game, and the layout has provision for enabling the player to putt the ball throughout the entire course.

All of the objects of the invention are fully set forth hereinafter with reference to the accompanying drawings wherein:

FIG. 1 is an illustration of the layout for one hole of a course showing in broken lines the alternate routes for approaching the two landing areas.

FIG. 2 is an enlarged transverse section taken on the line 2—2 of FIG. 1.

FIG. 3 is an illustration of another hole in a course embodying the present invention showing different hazards than those present in the hole shown in FIG. 1; and

FIG. 4 is an illustration of still another hole of a course laid out in accordance with the present invention.

Referring now to the drawings, it should be noted that each hole of the course layout includes a T-area from which play is initiated for that hole and a cup into which the balls are sunk to terminate the play for that hole. Intermediate the tee area and the cup, preferably a substantial distance from each, is located at least one landing zone having a landing area of limited extent. Each hole is designed to provide alternate paths of travel for the ball, and preferably the paths are designed to require degrees of skill varying from limited skill to proficiency. Where persons of different skill or proficiency are playing the course together, rules may be adopted which require the more skilled player to follow the more difficult paths and to be penalized for missing targets or failing to follow the prescribed path. In any event, it is contemplated that each player must stroke the ball from the T to each intermediate landing area and finally to sink the ball into the cup.

The drawings illustrate typical holes of a course layout, but it should be understood that each course embodying the present invention will have its own unique characteristics, in accordance with the climate or the terrain where the course is installed. Referring to the hole shown in FIG. 1, the tee area 11 comprises an elevated surface 12 of turf or the like having markers at 13 which serve as indicators for the line from which play is initiated. In the present case, the elevated surface 12 is capable of withstanding the rigors of golfers stroking a golf ball with either a pitching wedge or a putter. The surface

may be a hardy natural grass turf as at 12*a*, may be an artificial turf as at 12*b*, or may be a pile fabric such as indoor-outdoor carpeting, where appropriate. In FIG. 1, a combination of different surfaces is provided to accommodate to the use of different clubs by the players. The selection of the material for the surface of 12 is determined by the climatic or atmospheric conditions, the exposure, and the traffic which is anticipated.

As indicated by the broken lines in FIG. 1, the Player must stroke the ball into a limited landing area of a landing zone 21. In the present instance, the landing zone 21 has a marking or indicia 22 defining a generally circular landing area 23 of limited size. The surface of the landing area 23, in the present instance, is inclined toward the player P on the T 11. The ball may be stroked into the landing area 23 either through the air as indicated by the dot-and-dash lines 25 or along the ground surface as indicated by the dashed lines 26. It is noted that the surface path 26 requires the ball to be putted from the elevated surface 12 down onto a wide pathway 27 which merges gradually into the inclined surface of the landing area 23. The wide pathway 27 is preferably a turf which provides smooth and direct travel of the ball along the surface thereof. The turf may be either natural or artificial, and is preferably similar in surface effect to the surface of a standard putting green. Thus when the ball is stroked, as in putting, from the T-spot determined by the markers 13—13, it will be projected along the surface of the pathway 27, as indicated by the dashed lines 26 into the landing area 23.

Alternatively, the ball may be pitched into the landing area by the use of a pitching wedge from the initiating spot on the T 11. This airborne stroke is indicated by the dot-and-dash lines at 25. It is noted that the front of the T along the surface 12*b* has an abrupt drop-off since it is not used by the players who putt. The landing area 23, being inclined in this instance, is of a character to inhibit the bounce of the ball when it is pitched thereinto, and impedes the roll or other travel of the ball along the surface thereof. The surface of the area 23 may be a specially designed turf of natural or synthetic character, or may comprise a sandy, pebbly or other particulate material which will absorb the impact of the ball and cushion the normal resilient reaction forces thereof. The nature of the surface in the area 23 renders it difficult to stroke the ball from the surface to the next landing area and accordingly a secondary T-area is provided at 29 in the landing zone 21 adjacent the area 23. The rules of the game for this hole may provide that once the ball lands within the indicia 22, it may be transferred to the T-area 29 without loss of stroke or other penalty. Thus the secondary tee area 29 is deemed to be part of the landing zone 21.

In the hole illustrated in FIG. 1, the player must stroke the ball from T-area 29 in the landing zone 21 into a second landing zone 31. The landing zone 31 has indicia means 32, in the present instance surface markings on a level with the surrounding area, defining a limited landing area 33. In the continuing play of the hole, the players must propel the ball from the tee 29 into the landing area 33, and as in the approach to the first landing area 23, the players have alternate paths respectively airborne as indicated in dot-and-dash lines at 35, and along the surface as indicated by the dashed line 36. It is noted that the dashed line 36 follows a broad path 37 which curves around a hazard, in the present instance a water hazard 38 in the form of a pond or pool. Since the secondary T 29 is elevated above the pathway 37, a gradual slope or ramp from the secondary T-29 onto the path 37 is provided as indicated at 34.

Since the hazard 38 is positioned in the direct line from the secondary T 29 to the landing area 33 of the landing zone 31, the surface route 36 is arcuate or curved as shown. In order to assist the player using the surface route and enable the player to reach the landing area 33 in a single stroke, the pathway 37 is banked as indicated at 39 to direct the ball in the curved path shown. With reference to the sectional view shown in FIG. 2, it is apparent that the pathway 37 and the banking at 39 serves to deflect the ball B from its straight-line path of nor-

mal travel into a gentle curve, for example as indicated by the dashed lines at **36**. The shallow banking illustrated in FIG. **2** may be increased or reduced to accommodate the course to the rolling action applied to the ball B by the surface of the pathway **37**. A frictionless surface, of course, will require a steeper banking to insure deflection of the ball from the normal straight-line path of propulsion whereas a surface with greater friction will require less banking.

In the present instance, the path **37** is shown having a surface of artificial turf **41** laid on a substrate **42** of earth and having the banking support provided by curbing at **43**. Beyond the curbing in FIG. **2**, the out-of-bounds area is being composed of natural turf at **44**. The rules of the course may or may not provide for penalties in the event that the player propels the ball beyond the pathway **37** into the out-of-bounds area, or may require the players to stroke the ball back into the playing area. A lateral hazard is provided at **45** adjacent the landing area **33** in the landing zone **31** to impart a further degree of difficulty to this stage of the play.

In the present instance, the surface from the secondary tee **29** to and through the landing area **33** is of uniform texture which insures the proper roll of the ball along the surface, for example when stroked by a putter or similar golfing iron.

When the ball has come to rest in the limited landing area **33**, the player may then stroke the ball toward the cup **51** which is beyond the landing area. In the present instance, the cup **51** is positioned sufficiently close to accommodate putting from the landing area **33** directly into the cup **51**. The surface of the course between the landing area **33** and the cup **51** is preferably of the uniform texture which is characteristic of putting courses and putting greens. In the present instance, the normal putting path is indicated by the dashed line **56** and the cup identified by the usual flag marker **59**. Hazards may be provided nearby the cup **51**, for example by sandtraps **58**.

In the hole illustrated in FIG. **1**, the ball travels over a pathway **57** between the landing area **33** and the cup **51**, and the pathway **57** is of substantial width terminating along one side in a banked edge **54** and along the other side and beyond the hole in the edge of a fringe **53** of natural turf or the like. It is noted that the cup **51** is spaced a good distance from the fringe so that overshooting of the cup in approaching it does not severely handicap the player.

In the hole layout shown in FIG. **1**, the landing areas in each zone are limited in size so that their greatest transverse dimension is approximately one-fourth of the distance which the ball must travel in approaching the landing zone. It is believed that this ratio provides a sufficient challenge for a reasonably proficient golfer without excessively handicapping the novice golfer. If it is desired to provide a greater challenge to the proficient golfer, the landing area may include a central secondary landing area of smaller size into which the skilled golfer must land his ball before proceeding to the next landing area or to the cup, as the case may be. Of course, the distance between the various zones of the hole may be expanded or contracted to accommodate to the land available for the course and the placement of the hazards may be varied.

As a variation, FIG. **3** shows a hole which is short relative to the hole shown in FIG. **1**. Throughout this hole the course is level, having a tee area **61** which is on a level with the remainder of the course and which has T-markers **63—63** for indicating the proper point from which the play of the hole should be started. From the T-area **61**, the players must propel the ball to the landing zone **71** having a limited landing area **73** defined by marking indicia **72** on the ground surface. Within the landing area **73**, hummocks **74** are provided to impart a degree of difficulty to the play. The landing zone **71** also includes a sandtrap **75** adjoining the landing area **72**. The landing zone **71** is defined on its outer perimeter by an edging **76** of grass fringe or the like.

As in the previous hole, the ball may be advanced to the landing area **73** by either an airborne route or a surface route. The airborne route is indicated by the dot-and-dash line **65**, whereas the surface route is indicated by the dashed line **66**. It is noted that the direct path between the tee zone **61** and the landing zone **71** is interrupted by a large sandtrap hazard **68** and the surface route **66** must circumvent the trap **68**. In this instance, alternate surface routes are provided on the opposite sides of the trap and each of the two alternate routes includes a level pathway **67** bordered on one side by the hazard **68** and bordered on the other side by a banked curbing **69**. The curbing **69** is similar to the curbing **39** described above and serves to assist in directing the ball being stroked along the surface toward the landing area in a circuitous path around the hazard **68**.

After the player causes the ball to stop in the limited landing area **72**, he may then putt the ball into the cup **81** having a small green **82** surrounding it, the limits of the green **82** being defined by a fringe edging at **83**. The surface path from the landing area **72** to the cup **81** is indicated by the dashed line **86**. As in the previous hole, the cup is marked by a flag marker **87**.

FIG. **4** illustrates a hole embodying further variations within the scope of the invention. In this hole, the T-area **91** comprises a teeing surface **92** which is level with the ground surface on three sides and is elevated above the ground surface on the fourth side. Markers are provided **93—93** to indicate the proper starting point for the ball. In the present instance, the elevated side of the tee area **91** faces a landing zone **101** to which the ball must be stroked. The landing zone **101** includes an elevated landing area of limited size as indicated at **103** having a smooth level surface terminating at the periphery **102**. The space between the tee **91** and the landing zone **101** forms a valley **98** which constitutes a hazard interrupting the direct line between the T and the landing zone. The sharp fall-off from the T to the valley floor and the sharp rise from the valley floor to the landing area require the provision of an alternate pathway bypassing the valley floor **98**. The alternate pathway is provided at **97**, and in this case, the pathway is of limited width, as shown, in the form of a trough or gutter having sloping sides which assist in directing the ball in a curved path extending from the tee **91** to the landing zone **101** as indicated by the dashed lines **96**. With a more proficient golfer, an airborne route directly over the valley may be employed as indicated by the dot-and-dash line **95**.

From the landing area **103**, the ball is stroked to the next landing zone **111**, which in this case comprises a depressed landing area **113** defined by a gradually sloping periphery as indicated at **112**. Alternate air and ground routes are provided as indicated by the dot-and-dash line **105** and the dashed line **106** respectively. The ground route is hazardous by reason of the presence, in the direct line between the landing areas **103** and **113**, a series of hummocks **108** which rise from the surface of the pathway **107** intermediate the landing areas. Preferably the hummocks are staggered as shown and their sides are banked so that by proper stroking of the ball, the elevated sides of the hummocks which are in the path of the ball serve to deflect the ball around the hummocks. With developed skill, or with good fortune, the ground route between the landing areas **103** and **113** may be traversed in a single stroke of the ball. To assist in this, the rear portion of the landing zone **101** is graded to form a ramp **109** which initiates the travel of the ball from the landing area **103** in the proper direction to attain the landing area **113**.

From the landing area **113**, the all is stroked toward the cup **121** which in this instance is positioned in an elevated green **122**. The green **122** has multiple levels which substantially increase the difficulty of minimizing the strokes necessary to sink the ball in the cup **121**. In this case, alternate air and ground routes are provided from the landing area **113** as indicated by the dot-and-dash lines **115** and the dashed lines **116**. In order to facilitate exit of the ball from the depressed landing area **113**, the rim **112** of the area is graduated to provide an exit ramp as indicated at **119** to provide a substantially smooth path of ground travel along the line **116**. Similarly, because of the multiple levels which make up the green **122**, the ground travel must be circuitous so that it is practically im-

possible to sink the ball in one stroke using the ground route from the landing area **113**. As with the holes in the course layout previously discussed, the cup **121** is marked with a suitable flag **129** and the surface treatment is such as to permit directed putting of the ball over the ground surface.

As indicated above, the course of the present invention may be in a very compact area, utilizing a minimum space when necessary. The entire area may be floodlighted for use after dark, and may even be heated for use in chilled climates. With a compact course arrangement in which the various holes are spaced closely adjacent one another, the requirement for landing the ball in a limited landing area discourages the players from stroking the ball with excessive vigor and endangering other players on the course with erratically propelled balls. When the course is laid out in a larger area, the distances between the tees, the landing areas, and cups are sufficiently great to require forceful strokes of the ball, the spacing between adjacent holes must be expanded, or barriers must be provided between the holes, in order to prevent injury to players from balls propelled on adjacent holes.

It is apparent that the present invention, by the use of limited landing area intermediate the tee and the cup enables the design of widely varying degrees of inherent difficulty in a single course. As indicated, the surface texture may be varied, the sizes of the landing areas may be varied, the character of the subsurface may be altered to control the bounce or the run of the ball upon landing thereon.

Because of the variations which may be built into the course, the course may be accommodated to provide worthwhile competition among players of different skills. For example by requiring the more proficient players to utilize the more difficult avenues of play, the novice player may lose his competitive disadvantage, thereby enabling the skillful player to enjoy playing the course in competition with a novice and vice versa.

In drawings, the landscaping of the course has been omitted in order to clarify the illustration of the play of the game. If the characteristics of the climate and the terrain where the course location permit it obviously the course will be landscaped with shrubs and trees to enhance the ornamental characteristics of the course and to provide the natural conditions desirable to maintain the course in proper shape. The landscaping, if desired, may also be used as an element of the hazards which are utilized in the course. For example, instead of the hummocks **108**, the pathway **107** may be tree-covered, or may be provided with hedges or other shrubbery to intercept the direct path between the two landing areas.

The course may employ the natural elements in the terrain as hazards, or where the character of the terrain or the equipment available at the site limits the use of natural elements, prefabricated components may be used. For example, a preformed elevated T-structure having a covering of artificial turf may be set in place to define the T-area. Likewise the landing zones having the limited landing areas defined therein may be prefabricated and simply set in place in the projected course layout. The cups may be the conventional putting cup sunk into the surface, or raised artificial cups of the type used for indoor putting installations may be employed.

With the foregoing in mind, it is apparent that the invention is not limited to the particular embodiments disclosed and described herein in detail, but various changes and modifications may be made therein and thereto within the scope of the following claims.

I claim:

1. A golf course comprising a plurality of holes, each hole having a T-area, a cup, and at least one landing zone spaced intermediate said tee area and said cup at a substantial distance from each, the landing zone of at least one of said holes having indicia means comprising visually contrasting surface markings forming a closed border loop defining the outline of a predetermined landing area of limited extent within the landing zone of said one hole, said landing area having a turf-like surface texture therein, and means providing a putting pathway having a continuous turf-like surface texture extending from said landing area to the cup of said one hole to permit putting of said golf ball along said pathway away from said landing area into the cup of said one hole.

2. A course according to claim **1** wherein another of said landing zones comprises a landing area having a surface texture different from said turf-like surface texture and adapted to arrest the golf ball upon impact thereon without substantial bounce or roll therefrom.

3. A golf course according to claim **2** wherein said last mentioned differently textured landing area is inclined to face a T-area.

4. A golf course according to claim **1** wherein another of said landing zones includes a depressed landing area, and inwardly and downwardly sloping walls surrounding said depressed landing area.

5. A golf course according to claim **1** wherein another of said landing zones includes a limited landing area defied by an abrupt change in the contour of the surface around the periphery of the limited landing area.

6. A golf course according to claim **1** including hazard means providing a surface area which limits ground travel of the ball across the surface of said hazard means, said surface area of said hazard means being intermediate a T-area and a landing zone in a direct line therebetween, a continuous putting path between said last mentioned T-area and landing zone characterized by a turf-like surface texture and a uniformity of surface texture throughout its length which enhances the rolling of a golf ball along said path without its being deviated from said path by surface irregularity therein, said putting path circumventing said hazard means whereby said last mentioned landing area may be reached either by propelling the ball airborne from said last mentioned tee area to said last mentioned landing area, or by propelling said ball along the surface of said putting path around said hazard means.

7. A golf course comprising a plurality of holes, each hole having a T-area, a cup, and a landing zone having a predetermined landing area of limited extent defined by indicia forming a closed border loop defining the outline of said area, at least one hole having means providing a hazard including a surface area which makes difficult ground travel of the ball thereacross, said hazard surface area being located in either a direct line extending from the T-area to the landing zone or a direct line extending from the landing area to the cup, and a continuous putting path circumventing said hazard, said path characterized by a turf-like surface texture throughout its length and width, and a uniformity of surface texture throughout its length, said path being arcuate in plan to circumvent said hazard, the marginal portion of the path being banked throughout the arcuate part by having a shallow concave cross section whose exposed surface consists of said turf-like surface texture for gradually deflecting the ball into the arcuate path.

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