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F. FORTINO
GOLF DRIVING RANGE

2,701,140

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2 Sheets-Sheet 1

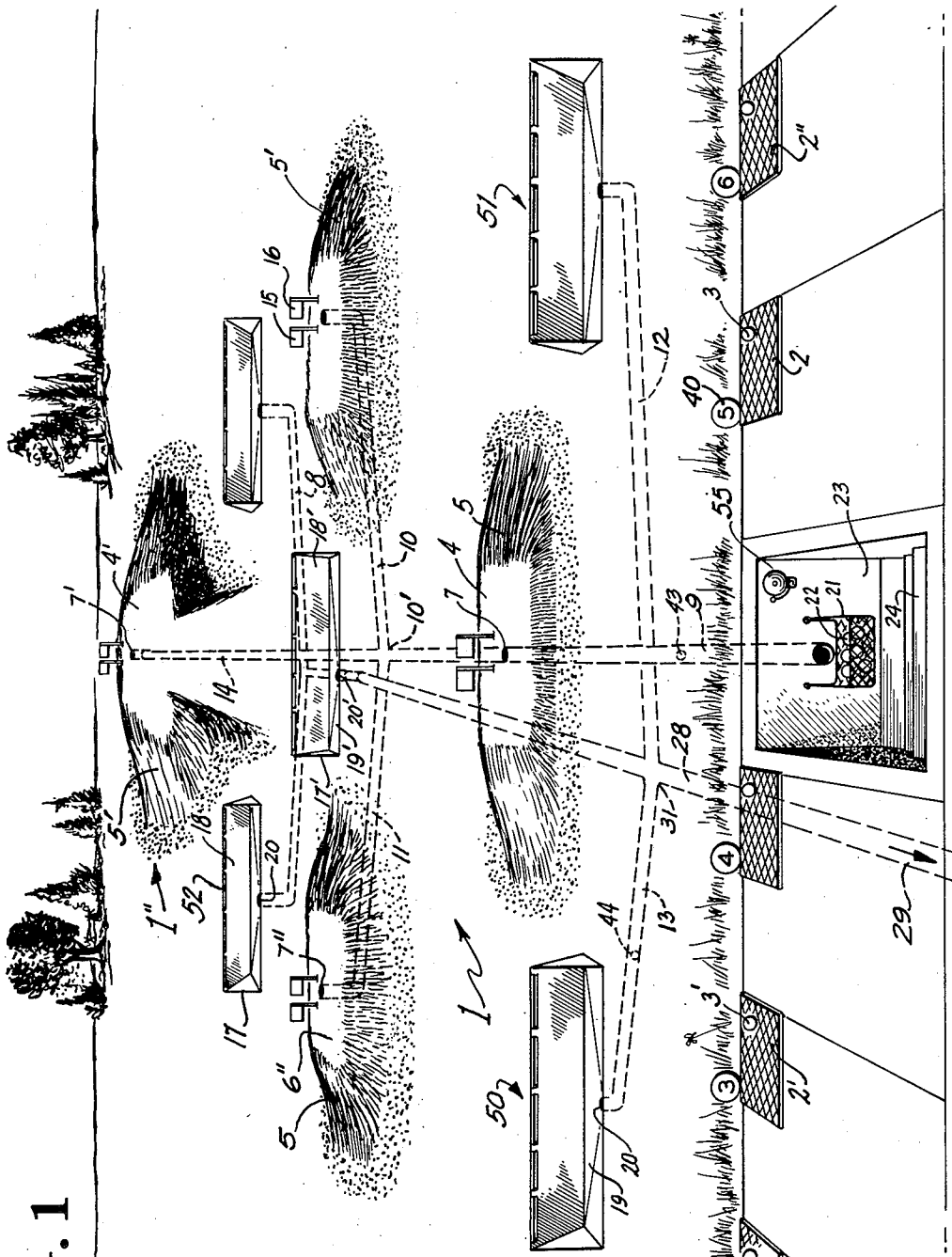


FIG. 1

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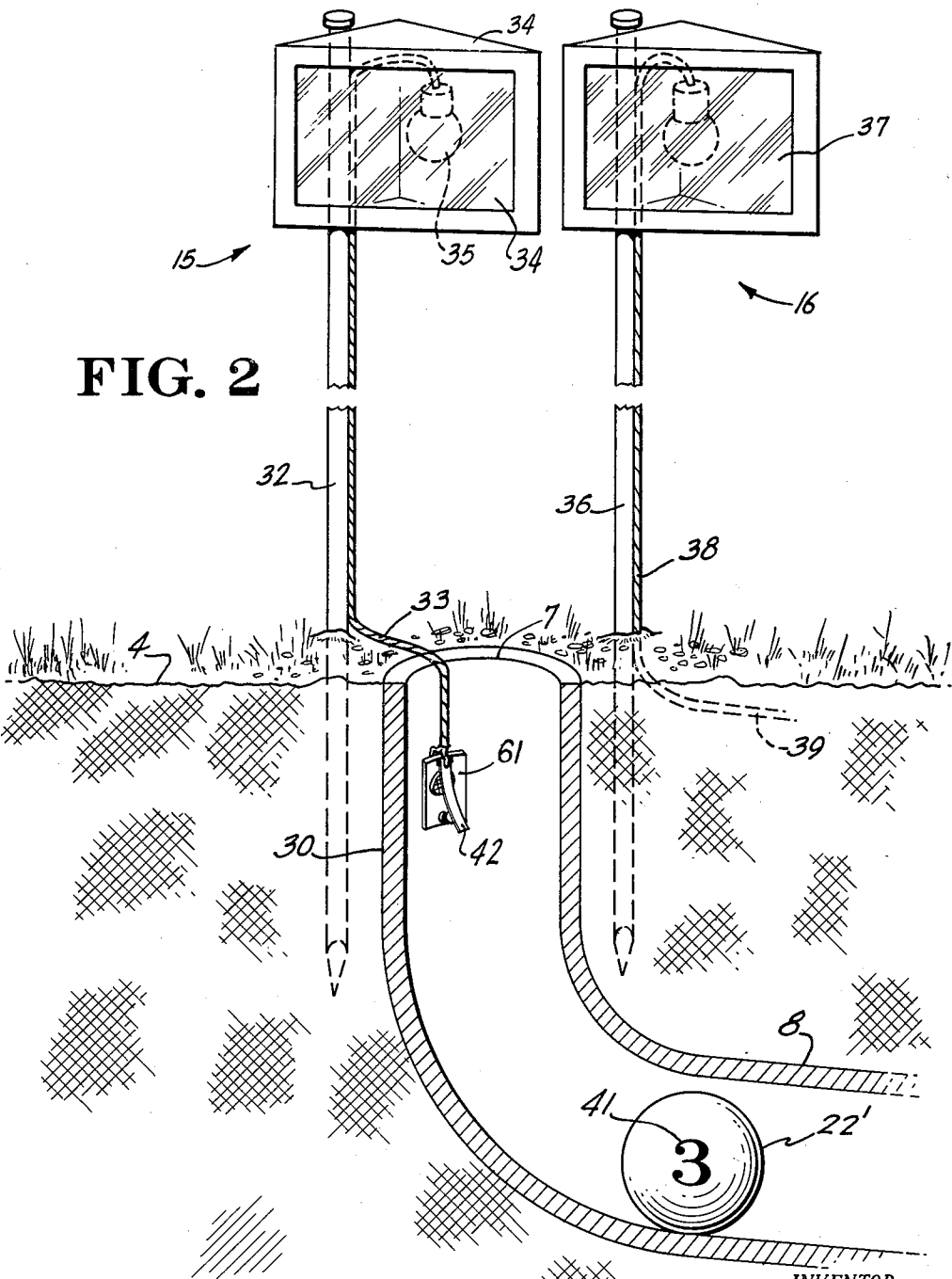


FIG. 2

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GOLF DRIVING RANGE

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1 Claim. (Cl. 273—176)

This invention deals with a practice golf driving range having greens with underground conduits leading from the holes to a central forward collecting station through which balls entering the holes may be collected. It includes provision for signaling means actuated when a hole is made. Also, traps are included as hazards and as means for collecting balls driven away from the greens. Besides these, other novel features are involved.

Practice golf driving ranges are in use now, but they do not have popular appeal, mainly because they lack a personal incentive. In the case of the present invention, there is an incentive, first to get on the green aimed for, and to obtain a hole in one. When the latter occurs, a signaling means is provided to immediately notify the player and the attendant, which makes possible the development of immediate competitive interest, and also allows the awarding of prizes in any predetermined manner.

The invention can be more readily understood by reference to the drawings in which Figure 1 shows a perspective view of a practice driving range laid out according to the present invention. An enlarged cross-sectional side view of one of the holes on the greens is depicted in Figure 2, which also shows details of the signaling means that may be employed. Similar numerals refer to similar parts in the figures.

Referring again to the drawings, numeral 1 represents a golf course or range, with individual playing units 1', on which the driving is to be done. Players stand on rubber mats 2, 2', 2'', on which golf ball 3, or 3' is teed. Each teeing location 2 may be provided with a readily visible numeral, color, or letter 40 or other indicia, and the balls 3 driven therefrom are preferably marked with a corresponding color, numeral, letter or other indicia.

The range is scattered with small greens 4, 4', preferably on a mound or raised ground 5, 5' having cups 7, 7', or 7'' leading to underground pipes or conduits 10, 11, 14, 9 etc. through which the balls 43, 22, etc., travel after they have entered the cup. These pipes obviously are larger than the balls and are pitched so as to slope toward the forward collecting area, thus enabling the golf balls to travel forwardly through the conduits 10, 9 etc. (which are preferably interconnected as at 10'), and drop into a collecting cage 21 or similar receptacle in a pit 23, which pit may be provided with steps 24 on which one may descend to remove the balls.

It will be observed that such a golf driving range is preferably situated on a forwardly descending slope which thus eliminates the need for deep excavation of conduits 10, 11, 14, etc., and also restricts the required depth of pit 23.

Traps 50, 51, etc. may be provided in random spaced relation, to collect some of the driven balls. Such traps may be made of rear canvas stops 18 and 18' supported by horizontal rods 52 which, in turn, are held by vertical supports 17. The bottoms 19 and 19' of these traps are preferably dug out and graded downwardly toward holes 20 and 20', to enable the ball to roll into holes 20 and 20' leading to sloping conduits 8, 12, 13, 28 etc. inclined forwardly with a pitch to enable the balls to roll there-through to the forward section of the range, through pipe 29 which terminates preferably in the basement of the attendant's stand, where the balls are collected. These pipes are preferably interconnected, as at 31.

Each hole (or cup) 7 on green 4 has adjacently disposed flags 15 and 16 acting as signaling means. The details of their operation are more readily apparent from Figure 2. Switch 61 mounted in the upright section 30 of con-

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duit 8, serving as the means forming hole 7, has a tripping mechanism such as sensitive lever 42 which is tripped by ball 22', as it falls into the hole. Electrical leads 33 from switch 61 pass up flagpole 32 and enter light 35 which is lighted by actuation of the switch. The latter may be connected with a timing mechanism which switches out the light after a preset time interval. Flag 15 may be made of plastic of a color different for each hole. Such a flag 15 may be made of a triangular plastic enclosure having sides 34. Another similar flag 16 having sides 37 and of the same color, may be adjacently mounted on pole 36 and remain lighted during the duration of the driving period to indicate the location and identity of the hole 7. The electric bulb in this flag may be fed electric current through lines 38 and cable 39 which is preferably led underground to the forward section of the range where a control switch therefor may be provided.

In playing the game, the player on location 3 (marked with a numeral 40) places ball 3' (which is marked with the location number 3, as at 41) on mat 2' and attempts to drive the ball into a preselected hole. If the driven ball lands in one of the traps 50, 51, etc., it falls into the hole 20 due to the grading 19, and travels forwardly through a conduit such as 13, thence through conduits 28 and 29 and is collected at the attendant's stand in the forward section of the range. A driven ball also may strike a green 4, 4', 6'', etc. and then roll off onto the adjacently disposed lower ground from where it may be picked up by the attendant. Or, the ball may be driven to roll into cup or hole 7, 7', 7'', etc., on the green, whereupon it passes over switch lever 42, tripping it and causing it to illuminate light 35 and ring bell 55 at pit 23, to bring the fact to the attention of the attendant. The ball then rolls forwardly, say through conduits 11, and 9 and into collecting cage 21, whereupon the attendant can remove the ball 22 and identify the player from the marking 41 thereon.

As is apparent from the foregoing, it is highly desirable to place the conduits at least partially underground and, in fact, it is preferable to have them completely underground. However, there can be instances where such conduits may be placed on or even above the ground, and such disposition is not to be excluded from the present invention.

I claim:

In a golf ball driving range having a forward ball collecting area, teeing mats in said area for teeing the balls, at least one green, a cup in said green into which the ball may roll, a conduit connected with said cup and extending, in forwardly pitched relation, to the forward ball collecting area, thereby enabling the ball to roll back from said cup to the ball collecting area, the improvement comprising distinctive indicia identifying each mat, corresponding distinctive indicia on the ball driven from a similarly identified mat, a collapsible switch projecting from the wall of said cup into the interior thereof and adapted to collapse as the ball passes through the cup into said conduit without impeding passage there-through of said ball, an electric circuit connected to said switch, which circuit is closed when said switch is collapsed, illuminatable flag signaling means over said cup, which is illuminated upon closing of said switch, distinctive visible indicia on said flag signaling means enabling a player who has teed off said mat to observe said signal as his identified ball reaches the ball collecting area, at least one upright stop disposed in said range, each stop acting as a trap, a graded area in front of each stop leading to a hole formed at the low point in said graded area, a conduit connected with the hole in each stop and extending, in forwardly pitched relation, to the forward ball collecting area, where the balls may be collected and retrieved.

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