This invention relates to target devices, and more particularly to a target device adapted to be employed for practice in baseball pitching.

A main object of the invention is to provide a novel and improved baseball pitching practice target device intended to be used for developing accuracy in the throwing of a baseball, the device being relatively simple in construction, being easy to install, and providing a means for establishing accuracy in the throwing of a baseball so that a person using same in a systematic and regular manner will greatly improve his throwing accuracy and his ability to throw a baseball so that it reaches a batter at an accurately predetermined position with relation to said batting area.

A further object of the invention is to provide an improved baseball pitching practice target device which is relatively inexpensive to manufacture, is durable in construction, and is relatively compact in size, while at the same time providing a highly visible target placed so as to clearly indicate a target zone approximating that toward which a pitcher is required to throw a baseball during an actual game.

Further objects and advantages of the invention will become apparent from the following description and claims, and from the accompanying drawings, wherein:

FIGURE 1 is a top plan view of an improved baseball pitching target device constructed in accordance with the present invention.

FIGURE 2 is a front elevational view of the pitching target device of FIGURE 1.

FIGURE 3 is a transverse vertical cross sectional view taken substantially on the line 3—3 of FIGURE 2.

FIGURE 4 is a fragmentary vertical cross sectional view taken substantially on the line 4—4 of FIGURE 3.

FIGURE 5 is a transverse vertical cross sectional view taken on the line 5—5 of FIGURE 3.

FIGURE 6 is a transverse vertical cross sectional view taken on the line 6—6 of FIGURE 3.

FIGURE 7 is a front elevational view of a modified form of ring member employed as a target element in the present invention.

FIGURE 8 is a side elevational view of the ring member and the associated ball-receiving receptacle employed therewith, utilizing the modification illustrated in FIGURE 7.

FIGURE 9 is a front elevational view of a further modification of target ring member which may be employed in the present invention.

FIGURE 10 is a rear perspective view of a target ring and ball-receiving receptacle combination according to the present invention, illustrating a typical arrangement of separable fastener elements provided in the walls of the flexible cover associated with the ball-receiving receptacle.

FIGURE 11 is a perspective view of the elements of a target ring and ball-receiving receptacle combination according to the present invention with the parts thereof shown in separated positions, the device being somewhat similar to that illustrated in FIGURE 9 but with the transverse zone-defining element omitted.

Referring to the drawings, and more particularly to FIGURES 1 to 6, 11 generally designates a baseball pitching practice target device constructed in accordance with the present invention. The target device 11 comprises a support comprising a pair of spaced vertical standards 12, 12, each standard being provided with a circular horizontal base plate 13. A plurality of ground-engaging stud elements 14 are provided in the base plate 13, said stud elements being adapted to be embedded in the ground to prevent lateral shifting of the base plate 13. The base plates are preferably of substantial weight so that they will not be easily dislodged from their original locations after the device has been set up for use. The vertical standards 12 are rigidly connected at their top ends by a horizontal cross bar 15, said cross bar 15 being bent downwardly at its opposite ends, as shown at 16, 16, and the downwardly bent end portions 16 being rigidly connected to the top ends of the standards 12, 12 by conventional pipe couplings 17, 17.

Designated at 18 is an annular target ring member, said target ring member comprising an outwardly flaring forward portion 19 and a generally cylindrical rear portion 20, the flaring forward portion 19 projecting rearwardly a short distance from the cylindrical portion 20 to define a rearwardly convergent abutment flange 21. The rear end of the cylindrical portion 20 is formed with an outwardly projecting peripheral flange 22. Rigidly secured to the opposite sides of the forwardly flaring front portion 19 are respective outwardly projecting horizontal stud members 24, 24 which are received in and clamped in respective sleeves 25 provided on respective bracket assemblies 26, 26 engaged on the vertical standards 12, 12. Thus, each bracket assembly 26 comprises a pair of generally semi-cylindrical mating flanged clamping segments 27 and 28 having apertured outwardly projecting apertured corner lugs 29 which are registrable and which are secured together by fastening bolts 30. The segment 28 of each assembly 26 is integrally formed with the horizontal sleeve member 25 which receives the associated stud element 24. Each sleeve element 25 is provided with a clamping screw 31 which may be tightened to clampingly engage the associated stud member 24, as is clearly shown in FIGURE 4. Respective stop collars 32 and 33 are provided on the standards 12 above and below the sleeve assemblies 26 to positively retain vertical displacement of said sleeve assemblies and on thewardly projecting Peripheral flange 35, having a cushioning ring 26 of resilient deformable material, such as rubber or the like, is secured in the front rim portion of the annular flaring member 19 at the inner edge of the outwardly projecting annular flange 35.

Designated at 37 is a generally cylindrical frame member which is telescopically received in the cylindrical portion 20 of the ring member 18 and which is engageable against the inwardly projecting convergent annular flange 21, as clearly shown in FIGURE 3. The frame member 37 is formed with the outwardly projecting annular flange 36, said flange 36 being located at the forward portion of the frame member 37 and being aranged so as to be located rearwardly adjacent the flange 22 when the front rim of the frame 37 engages the flange 21. The flanges 38 and 39 are secured together by a plurality of fastening bolts 39, as is clearly shown in FIGURE 3. When the bolts 39 are tightened, the front rim of the frame 37 is urged tightly against the flanges 38, so that the frame 37 is rigidly secured to the ring member 18.

The frame 37 comprises the generally cylindrical forward portion 40, the cruciform rear frame member 41 and the longitudinally extending peripheral bar element 42, integrally connecting the cylindrical member 40 with the cruciform member 41.
Secured on the frame member 37 is a cover member 43 of flexible material, such as canvas, or the like, the flexible cover 43 being secured to the various elements of the frame 37 by suitable fastening means, such as by the fastening screws 44 shown in FIGURE 6. The flexible cover 43 is provided with an externally operable conventional slide fastener assembly 45 at one side thereof, which may be opened to provide access to the interior of the receptacle defined by the cover 43 and associated frame element, for example, to retrieve baseballs from the interior of said receptacle.

In using the device shown in FIGURES 1 to 6, said device is set up at a suitable distance from the person having same, for example, at the same distance as the distance between the pitcher and the home plate in a conventional game of baseball. As shown in FIGURE 2, the lower portion of the interior of the flaring member 19 may be suitably inscribed with a marker 46 of the proper size and shape to present to the user the appearance of a batter in an actual game of baseball. In practicing with the device, the thrower attempts to place the ball inside the ring member 18, and preferably directly within the cylindrical rear portion of the ring member, namely within the enclosure defined by the frame 37. The cruciform element 41 defines four quadrants, namely, upper right, lower right, lower left, and upper left, which may be employed as special target areas into which the user may attempt to throw a baseball in order to improve the thrower's control.

As shown in FIGURE 7, a transverse rod member 47 may be secured diametrically across the cylindrical rear portion of the annular target ring member of the device, apertures 48 being provided for the reception of the transversely extending rod member 47, said rod member being provided at one end with a head portion 49 and being fastened at its opposite end by a wing nut 50 threaded thereon. A thick cushioning sleeve 51 of rubber, or similar resilient deformable material is mounted on the rod member 47, extending transversely across the circular aperture defined within the flange 21, as shown in FIGURE 7, to give a more definite demarcation between the upper and lower target zones. As a further modification of the invention, additional transversely extending zone-defining rods 52 and 53 may be secured in the cylindrical rear area of the target ring member, being engaged in apertures 54 and 55 provided in the members 40 and 20, the rod members 52 and 53 being suitably secured, for example, in the same manner as the rod member 47.

As illustrated in FIGURE 9, parallel longitudinally extending rigid partition plates 55, 55 are secured in the generally cylindrical receptacle-defining frame, shown at 37; the plates 55 being substantially the same length as the cylindrical portion of the ball-receiving receptacle and terminating at their forward ends immediately behind the transversely extending bars 52 and 53. Three relatively short rubber sleeve elements 56, 57 and 58 are mounted on the intermediate horizontal rod member 47 in the manner illustrated in FIGURE 9, the sleeve members 56, 57 and 58 being disposed in front of the three vertical spaces defined in the generally circular ball-receiving zone by the partition plates 55, 55. Thus, in combination with the transversely extending rods 52 and 53, the arrangement of FIGURE 9 defines nine different target zones towards which a pitcher may aim a baseball, thus enabling the pitcher to further improve his accuracy in hitting the ball at a designated target area.

In the arrangement illustrated in FIGURE 10, an additional slide fastener 59 may be provided in the rear wall 60 of the flexible cover of the receptacle, the slide fastener 59 being located centrally and extending vertically so as to provide access to the intermediate zone of the ball-receiving area, namely, the space between the partition plates 55, 55. Slide fasteners 45 may be provided on both of the sides of the flexible cover to provide access to the spaces between the partition plates 55 and the side wall portions of the flexible cover.

An upwardly converging plate member 61 may be mounted on the top portion of the flange 35, said plate member serving as an area on which the name of the team or league owning the practice device may be inscribed.

In the modification illustrated in FIGURES 9, 10 and 11, any suitable number of longitudinally extending peripheral frame bar elements 42 may be employed, provided that sufficient space is allowed between frame bar elements to give free access to the interior of the ball-receiving spaces to allow retrieval of baseballs therefrom when the slide fasteners 45 are opened.

If so desired, the ball-receiving receptacle portion of the target device may be omitted and the ring member may be provided with merely zone-defining means, such as bar elements similar to those shown in FIGURES 7 and 9 and vertically extending zone-defining means, similar to the plates 55. Employed in this manner, a person is positioned behind the target device to act as a catcher and the target device is merely employed as a means for increasing the accuracy of controlling the flight of the ball toward the catcher. With such an arrangement, the cylindrical frame 37 and the flexible cover 43 may be omitted and a simple ring member carrying the zone-defining means may be secured to the flange 22 in place of the frame 37.

While certain specific embodiments of an improved baseball pitching practice target device have been disclosed in the foregoing description, it will be understood that various modifications within the spirit of the invention may occur to those skilled in the art. Therefore, it is intended that no limitations be placed on the invention except as defined by the scope of the appended claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A baseball pitching practice target device comprising a support including a pair of spaced standards, means rigidly connecting the top ends of said standards, an annular target ring member, means rigidly connecting diametrically opposite portions of said ring member to said standards and supporting said ring member in a substantially vertical position between said standards, a generally cylindrical rigid frame member of substantially axial length, means securing said frame member in a rearwardly extending position coaxially with and perpendicular to said ring member, and a flexible cover secured on and supported by said frame member, to define a ball-receiving receptacle.

2. A baseball pitching practice target device comprising a support including a pair of spaced standards, means rigidly connecting the top ends of said standards, an annular target ring member, means rigidly connecting diametrically opposite portions of said ring member to said standards and supporting said ring member in a substantially vertical position between said standards, a generally cylindrical rigid frame member of substantially axial length, means securing said frame member in a rearwardly extending position coaxially with and perpendicular to said ring member, a flexible cover secured on and supported by said frame member, to define a ball-receiving receptacle, and zone-defining bar means secured in said ring member.

3. A baseball pitching practice target device comprising a support including a pair of spaced standards, means rigidly connecting the top ends of said standards, an annular target ring member, means rigidly connecting diametrically opposite portions of said ring member to said standards and supporting said ring member in a substantially vertical position between said standards, a generally cylindrical rigid frame member, means securing said frame member in a rearwardly extending position coaxially with and perpendicular to said ring member.
member in a rearwardly extending position coaxially to said ring member, a flexible cover secured on said frame member, to define a ball-receiving receptacle, zone-defining bar means secured in said ring member, and axially extending partition means secured in said frame member and defining separate compartments behind said bar means.

4. A baseball pitching practice target device comprising a support including a pair of spaced standards, means rigidly connecting the top ends of said standards, an annular target ring member, a peripheral outwardly extending flange on the rear portion of said ring member, means rigidly connecting diametrically opposite portions of said ring member to said standards and supporting said ring member in a substantially vertical position between said standards, a generally cylindrical rigid frame member of substantial axial length, an outwardly extending peripheral flange on the forward portion of said frame member adjacent said first-named peripheral flange, means connecting said peripheral flanges, whereby to secure said frame member in a rearwardly extending position coaxially with and perpendicular to said ring member, and a flexible cover secured on and supported by said frame member, to define a ball-receiving receptacle.

5. A baseball pitching practice target device comprising a support including a pair of spaced standards, means rigidly connecting the top ends of said standards, an annular target ring member, a peripheral outwardly extending flange on the rear portion of said ring member, means rigidly connecting diametrically opposite portions of said ring member to said standards and supporting said ring member in a substantially vertical position between said standards, a generally cylindrical rigid frame member of substantial axial length, an outwardly extending peripheral flange on the forward portion of said frame member adjacent said first-named peripheral flange, means connecting said peripheral flanges, whereby to secure said frame member in a rearwardly extending position coaxially with and perpendicular to said ring member, a flexible cover secured on and supported by said frame member, to define a ball-receiving receptacle, and intersecting horizontal and vertical zone-defining means secured in said ring member.

6. A baseball pitching practice target device comprising a support including a pair of spaced standards, means rigidly connecting the top ends of said standards, an annular target ring member, a peripheral outwardly extending flange on the rear portion of said ring member, means rigidly connecting diametrically opposite portions of said ring member to said standards and supporting said ring member in a substantially vertical position between said standards, a generally cylindrical rigid frame member of substantial axial length, an outwardly extending peripheral flanges on the forward portion of said frame member adjacent said first-named peripheral flange, means connecting said peripheral flanges, whereby to secure said frame member in a rearwardly extending position coaxially with and perpendicular to said ring member, a flexible cover secured on and supported by said frame member, to define a ball-receiving receptacle, and axially extending partition means secured in said frame member and defining separate compartments in said frame member.

7. A baseball pitching practice target device comprising a support including a pair of spaced standards, means rigidly connecting the top ends of said standards, an annular target ring member, said target ring member comprising a forwardly flaring front portion and a generally cylindrical rear portion, a peripheral outwardly projecting flange on the rear end of said cylindrical portion, said front portion extending inwardly from said cylindrical portion to define an abutment flange, means rigidly connecting diametrically opposite portions of said ring member to said standards and supporting said ring member in a substantially vertical position between said standards, a generally cylindrical rigid frame member of substantial axial length having a cruciform vertical rear end wall portion telescope receiving in said rear end wall port engag-0

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RICHARD C. PINKHAM, Primary Examiner.

DELBERT B. LOWE, Examiner.