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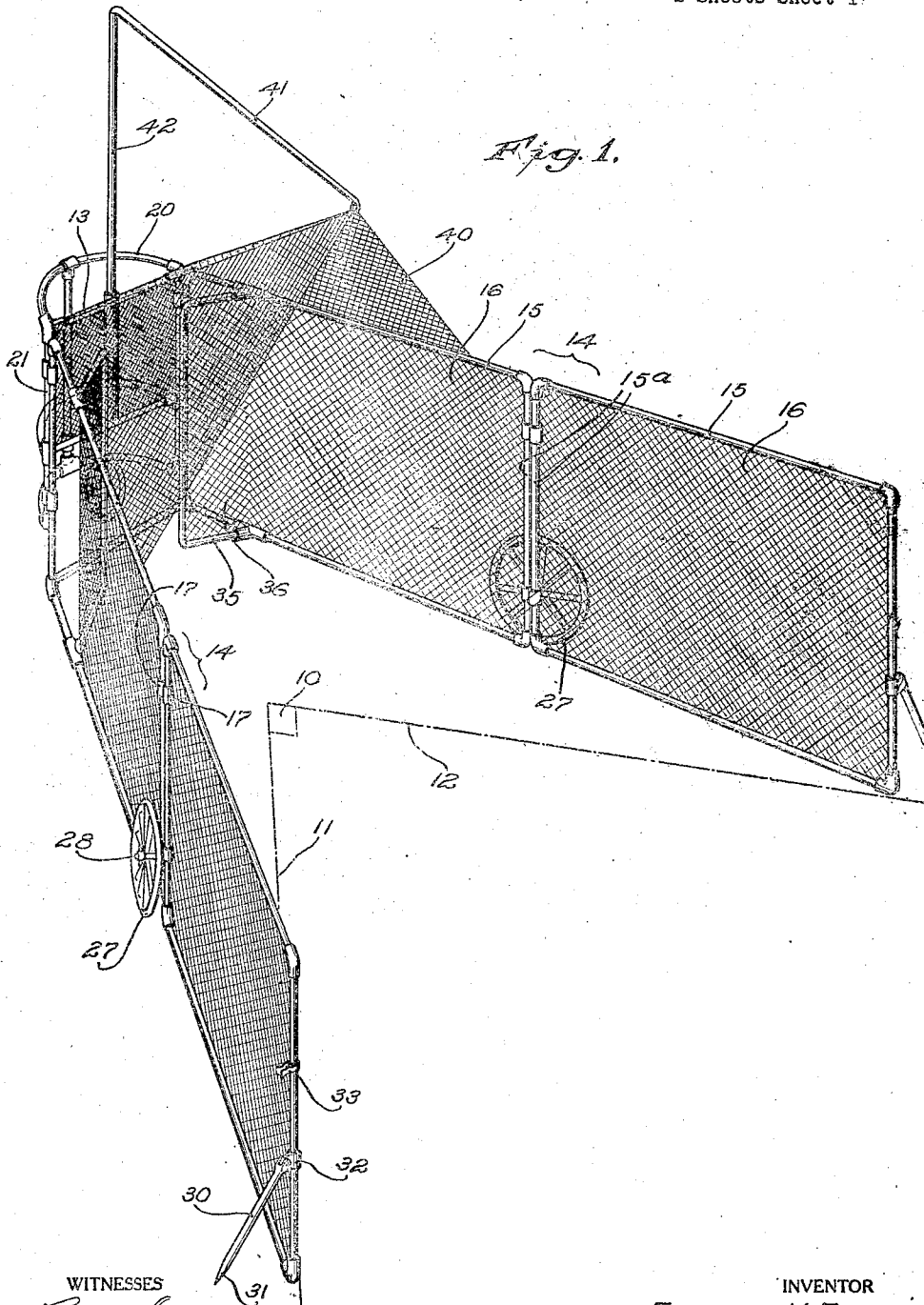
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1,591,753

BATTING PRACTICE CAGE

Filed Feb. 18, 1926

2 Sheets-Sheet 1.



WITNESSES
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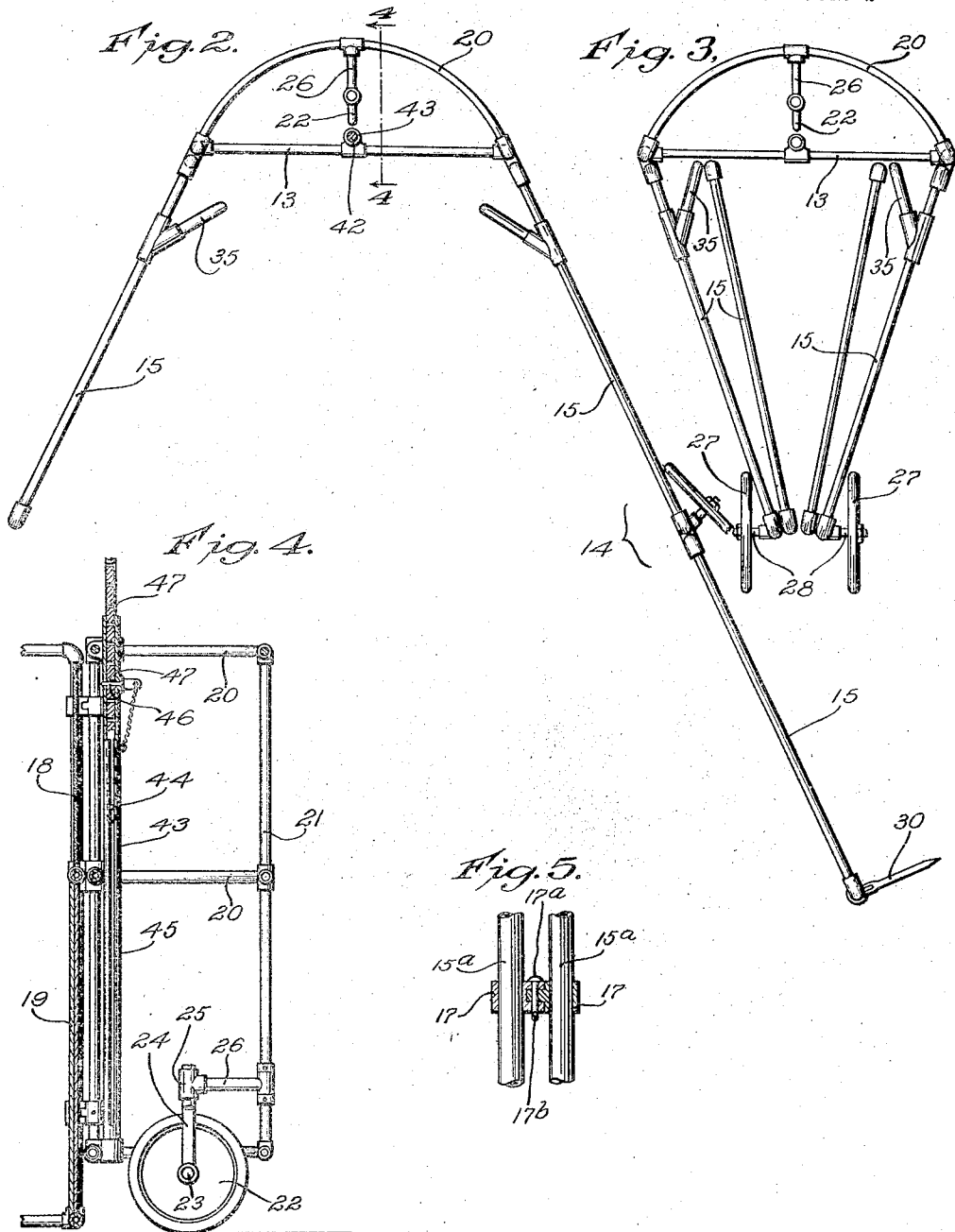
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WITNESSES

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UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE.

FREDERICK K. FLAUGH, OF NEW YORK, N. Y.

BATTING-PRACTICE CAGE.

Application filed February 18, 1926. Serial No. 89,232.

The present invention is concerned with the provision of a portable batting practice cage for outdoor use, a primary object of the invention being to provide a cage which will greatly reduce the number of balls fouled into the stands and lost during batting practice.

There are at present in use, a number of so called batting cages which serve no practical purpose, except as a back stop when there is no catcher behind the batter. These relatively small cages serve to stop only such low fouls as are deflected directly rearwardly from the bat. In consequence, even with these cages in use, every major league ball club loses thousands of dollars worth of baseballs in a season during the batting practice period in addition to all of the balls which are necessarily lost during the course of a game.

The cage of the present invention is adapted to greatly reduce this waste by providing an apparatus which will catch a great majority of the balls which are fouled off the bat during batting practice regardless of the direction in which the balls may be struck.

A further object of the invention is to provide a batting cage of this character of simple, practical construction, which will be rugged, durable and efficient in use, which may be readily transported to and from its position on the field, and which may be folded or collapsed so that it will occupy a relatively small amount of storage space.

Further objects of the invention are to provide a batting practice cage so constructed that there is no danger of injuring a batter or catcher by foul balls which carom off the frame work of the cage, and a cage which may be manufactured with comparative economy.

With the above noted and other objects in view, the invention consists in certain novel features of construction and combinations and arrangements of parts, as will be more fully hereinafter set forth and pointed out in the claims. The invention may be more fully understood from the following description in connection with the accompanying drawings, wherein—

Fig. 1 is a perspective view of a batting practice cage embodying the present invention, the dotted lines indicating the position of home plate, and the base lines which run

from home plate to first and third base respectively.

Fig. 2 is a fragmentary top plan view of the cage showing the upper netting removed.

Fig. 3 is a view similar to Fig. 2, but showing a cage folded and ready for transportation.

Fig. 4 is a fragmentary vertical sectional view on the line 4—4 of Fig. 2.

Fig. 5 is a sectional detail showing the hinge connections for the vertical frame posts of adjacent frame sections.

In the drawings I have used the dotted lines to diagrammatically represent the home plate corner of a baseball diamond, numeral 10 being used to designate the position of home plate, and numerals 11 and 12 representing the general location of the first and third base lines. A batting cage embodying the present invention preferably includes a back stop section 13, and a pair of wing portions indicated generally by the reference characters 14. The plane of the back stop when the cage is in operative position, is transverse to the direction in which the balls are delivered from the pitcher's box toward home plate. The back stop is disposed an appreciable distance behind the plate, providing ample room for a catcher to stand behind the batter if desired. The wings 14 diverge from the back stop when the cage is in use, and preferably terminate approximately at the base lines 11 and 12 some twenty or thirty feet from home plate. The wings 14 are composed of a series of frames 15 carrying heavy wire netting 16. Ordinarily two of the frames 15 will suffice, and the frames are preferably formed of relatively light tubular frame members in the nature of piping.

The adjacent vertical frame members 15^a of the two frame sections are hingedly connected together by sleeves 17. As seen in Fig. 5, the sleeves may include aligned apertured tongues 17^a pivotally connected by a pin 17^b. Obviously various other types of hinge connections might be provided.

Similar hinges are used for connecting the rear frame sections 15 to the back stop section 13. The back stop section is also covered with wire netting 18 at its upper portion, but preferably mounts a solid sheet of material 19 at its lower portion. Inasmuch as the majority of balls which strike the cage at all, will strike the lower half of the back

stop, the provision of relatively substantial sheet material in the lower half of the back stop frame, serves to prolong the life of the batting cage.

5 In order to render the cage more substantial and less likely to tip over, as well as to provide a convenient lounging place for players who are awaiting their turn at bat, I preferably connect a series of arcuate horizontal frame bars 20 to the rear of the back stop section. These frame members may be connected by any suitable series of uprights 21. The skeleton frame defined by the members 20 and 21 serves the further useful purpose of protecting one of the traction wheels 22 upon which the cage is rolled to and from its position on the field. Preferably the traction wheel 22 is the steering wheel of the device and has its axle 23 mounted in a fork 24, the upper end of the fork freely swiveling in a sleeve 25 carried by rigid horizontal arm 26 projecting rearwardly from the central vertical frame member 21.

Additional traction wheels 27 are also provided, these wheels being mounted on axles 28 projecting laterally from the forward vertical frame member of the rear frame sections of each wing.

30 As a further safeguard against the cage accidentally tipping over, I may provide ground engaging bracing means at the free ends of the outer wing sections 15. For the sake of illustration I have shown pivot bracing bars 30 formed with ground engaging pointed ends 31. The other ends of the arms 30 are pivoted to collars 32 on the forward vertical frame members of the forward wing sections 15. To move the bracing arms 30 to inoperative position, it is merely necessary to swing them upwardly about their pivots and cause their free ends to be received and held by spring clips 33.

The use of such long wing sections may result in some slight delay when one batter is replaced by another in the event that the new batter is compelled to walk around the ends of the wings in order to reach his position at the plate. To overcome this difficulty, I provide entrance openings in the rear ends of the rear wing sections, these openings being preferably protected by inwardly and rearwardly projecting rigid frame portions 35 covered with netting 36.

Obviously the structure as above described would serve to intercept low fouls going in any direction. In order to catch the high fouls, or the fouls which are directed upwardly from the bat, I utilize a net 40 preferably of some sturdy netted fabric. The edges of the net are connected to the upper edge of the back stop sections, and to the upper edges of the rear wing sections. The slack forward edge of the net is engaged at its intermediate portion with the forward end of a horizontal arm 41 carried by an ad-

justable vertical standard 42 rising from behind the back stop section.

As best seen in Fig. 4, the standard 42 is guided for vertical adjustment in a hollow vertical guide member 43 rigid with the back stop section. Rotation of the standard in its guide is prevented by pin 44 on the standard working in a slot 45 in the guide. The standard may be locked in any desired position of vertical adjustment to tautly stretch the net 40 by the use of a pin 46 projected through aligned openings 47 in the guide and standard.

In Fig. 3 I have shown the batting cage folded for transportation purposes, so that it may be wheeled to or from its position on the field. As seen in this figure, the outer wing sections 15 are folded inwardly within the inner wings sections. The free ends of the inner wing sections are then also folded inwardly until the two traction wheels 27 assume approximately a parallel position.

One of the frame members 20 may then be grasped and the cage wheeled about. The traction wheel 22 provides means for readily steering the folded cage.

Obviously a great many changes and alterations might be made in the general form and arrangement of parts described without departing from the invention. Hence I do not wish to limit myself to the details set forth, but shall consider myself at liberty to make such changes and alterations as fairly fall within the spirit and scope of the appended claims.

I claim:

1. A batting practice cage including a back stop section adapted to be disposed a sufficient distance behind home plate on a baseball diamond to provide room for a catcher behind the plate, a pair of diverging wings pivoted to the sides of the back stop section, the free ends of said wings adapted to be disposed adjacent the base lines at points well removed from the home plate, said wings having openings therein to permit the entrance of a batter through the wings.

2. A batting practice cage including a back stop section adapted to be disposed a sufficient distance behind home plate on a baseball diamond to provide room for a catcher behind the plate, a pair of diverging wings pivoted to the sides of the back stop sections, the free ends of said wings adapted to be disposed adjacent the base lines at points well removed from the home plate, said wings having openings therein to permit the entrance of a batter through the wings, and inwardly directed screens preventing the passage of a ball through the openings.

3. A batting practice cage including a back stop section adapted to be disposed a sufficient distance behind home plate on a

baseball diamond to provide room for a catcher behind the plate, a pair of diverging wings pivoted to the sides of the back stop section, the free ends of said wings adapted to be disposed adjacent the base lines at points well removed from the home plate, a flexible netting connected to the tops of the rear portions of the wings and to the top of the back stop section.

4. A batting practice cage including a back stop section adapted to be disposed a sufficient distance behind home plate on a baseball diamond to provide room for a catcher behind the plate, a pair of diverging wings pivoted to the sides of the back stop section, the free ends of said wings adapted to be disposed adjacent the base lines at points well removed from the home plate, a flexible netting connected to the tops of the rear portions of the wings and to the top of the back stop section, and a vertically adjustable element connected to the slack free edge of the net for tensioning the same.

5. A batting practice cage including a back stop section adapted to be disposed a sufficient distance behind home plate on a baseball diamond to provide room for a catcher behind the plate, a pair of diverging wings pivoted to the sides of the back stop section, the free ends of said wings adapted to be disposed adjacent the base lines at points well removed from the home plate, said wings including a plurality of folding sections, and traction means supported on certain of said wing sections.

6. A batting practice cage including a back stop section adapted to be disposed a sufficient distance behind home plate on a baseball diamond to provide room for a catcher behind the plate, a pair of diverging wings pivoted to the sides of the back stop section, the free ends of said wings adapted to be disposed adjacent the base lines at points well removed from the home plate, each of said wings including a pair of foldable sections, and traction wheels at the forward ends of the rear sections.

7. A batting practice cage including a back stop section adapted to be disposed a sufficient distance behind home plate on a baseball diamond to provide room for a catcher behind the plate, a pair of diverg-

ing wings pivoted to the sides of the back stop section, the free ends of said wings adapted to be disposed adjacent the base lines at points well removed from the home plate, a skeleton frame projecting rearwardly from the back stop section, a swivelled traction wheel carried by said frame, and traction wheels carried by the wings.

8. A batting practice cage including a back stop section adapted to be disposed a sufficient distance behind home plate on a baseball diamond to provide room for a catcher behind the plate, a pair of diverging wings pivoted to the sides of the back stop section, the free ends of said wings adapted to be disposed adjacent the base lines at points well removed from the home plate, a flexible netting connected to the tops of the rear portions of the wings and to the top of the back stop section, and a vertically adjustable element connected to the slack free edge of the net for tensioning the same, said element including a horizontal arm projecting forwardly from a standard vertically adjustable in a guideway disposed behind the back stop section.

9. A batting practice cage including a back stop and a pair of wings pivoted to the back stop, said wings being of sufficient length to reach the base lines at points well forwardly of home plate when the back stop is disposed behind the plate a sufficient distance to provide room for a catcher.

10. A batting practice cage including a back stop and a pair of diverging wings pivoted thereto, said wings including a plurality of folding sections.

11. A batting practice cage including a back stop, a pair of diverging wings pivoted thereto, said wings including a plurality of folding sections, and ground engaging bracing means carried by the free ends of the outer sections.

12. A batting practice cage including a back stop, and a pair of diverging wings pivoted thereto, said wings including a plurality of folding sections, said back stop including a solid lower portion and a recessed upper portion, said wing sections being covered with heavy wire mesh.

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