United States Patent [19]

Hermo

[11] **3,815,906**

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[54] **BATTING PRACTICE TRAINER**

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[52] **U.S. Cl.** ..... **273/26 R,** 273/187 R

[51] **Int. Cl.**..... **A63b 69/40**

[58] **Field of Search**.... 273/25, 26 R, 183 B, 183 A, 273/55 R, 54 D, 187 R, 187 A, 187 B; 272/59 A

[56] **References Cited**

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1,709,832	4/1929	Barron	272/59 A
1,785,968	12/1930	Nicholson et al.	272/59 A
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FOREIGN PATENTS OR APPLICATIONS

959,628	10/1949	France	272/59 A

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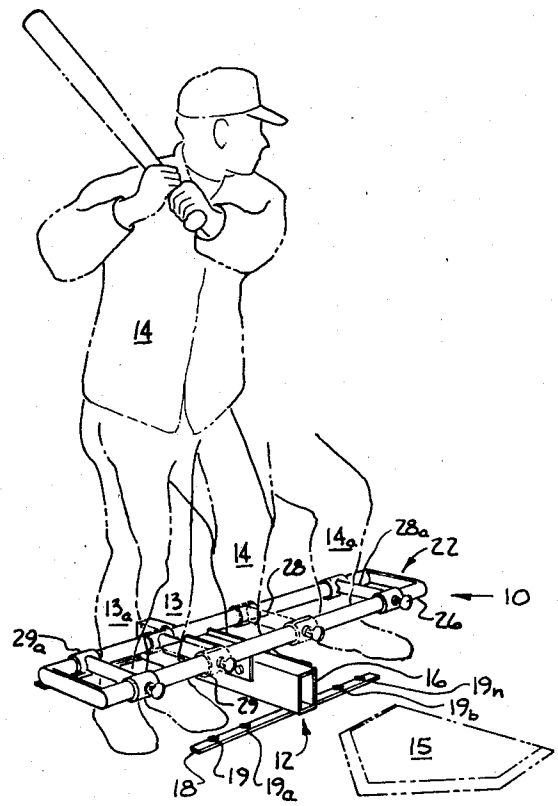
[57] **ABSTRACT**

A batting practice training device, for teaching a player proper batting stance and stride technique, includes a laterally extending base and an elevated longitudinally extending rectangular frame mounted for lateral adjustment thereon. A pair of retaining members for controlling the player's stance and stride interconnect the respective longitudinal side portions of the frame member on either side of the base and are adjustable longitudinally in either direction from the base. Auxiliary support means attachable to the base permit the training device to be readily used indoors.

4 Claims, 3 Drawing Figures



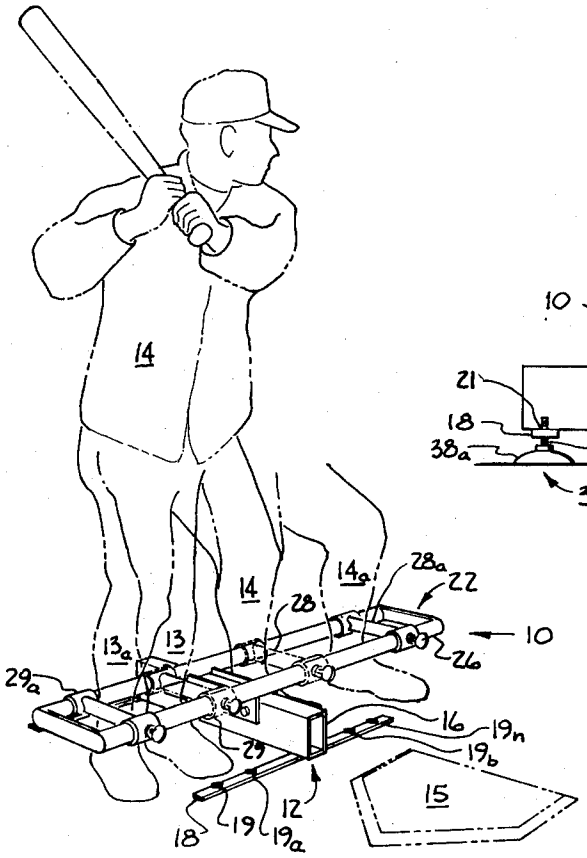


FIG. 1

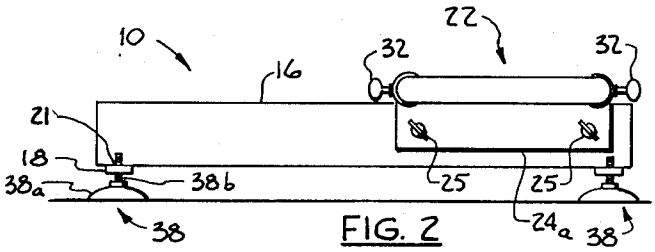


FIG. 2

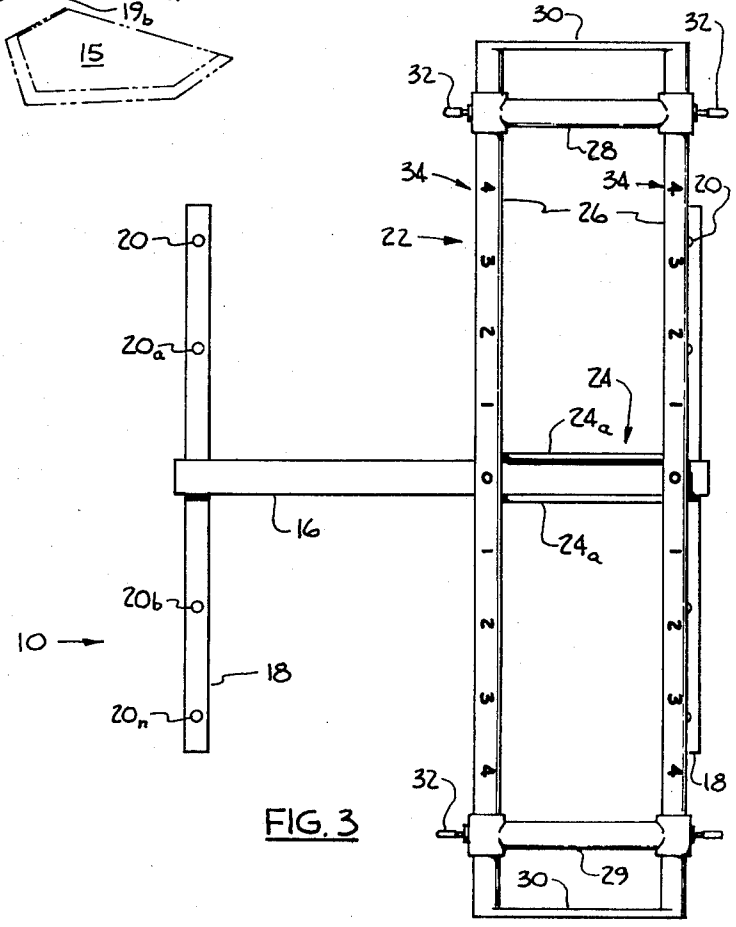


FIG. 3

BATTING PRACTICE TRAINER

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to a batting training device which is readily adjustable for individual batters having different stances and strides. Organized baseball today has a multitude of programs varying in scope from Little League to competition by seasoned professional baseball veterans. In instructing these players regarding proper batting techniques, common problems frequently arise with respect to initially assuming a correct batting stance and the correct stride motion when swinging at the ball — the latter including overstriding, i.e., improper longitudinal over-extension in moving the front foot when hitting the ball, and "stepping in the bucket," i.e., improper lateral extension of the front foot on striding, which causes an off-balance swing.

Various types of training devices for teaching proper hitting techniques to a batsman are known to the prior art. For example, David U.S. Pat. No. 3,342,487 is directed to a rectangular plate member having attached to its top facing a pair of ridges extending along the respective longitudinal and lateral sides of the plate and a second pair of parallel ridges extending diagonally with the center portion of the plate. A batter with his rear foot abutting against the inner side of the laterally extending ridge, on swinging, strides forward with his front foot moving to a position in communication with the second angularly inclined ridge. The David patent does not include any means for adjusting the length of the batter's stride since the distance between the angularly inclined ridges remains fixed no matter where the batter stands. Therefore, a short batter employing a stride smaller than the distance between the angularly inclined ridges would not be properly accomodated by the fixed stride of the David trainer. Secondly, a batter would not be able to adjust his position with respect to home plate after establishing his proper batting stance with the David trainer. He would first have to remove the means of attaching the plate to the ground, move the entire structure to a new position, and finally reattach the plate to the ground. Additionally, the David device requires a batter to lift his foot and step over the first diagonallyextending ridge in order to stride into the ball on swinging. This could interject an unwanted hitch in the batter's swing and throw off his timing.

In Kile et al. U.S. Pat. No. 3,350,096, a batting trainer comprising a pair of parallel wire-like track members, held in position by spikes, includes a transverse slide assembly having its opposite ends slideably attached to the respective tracks and carrying a shoe piece attachable to the front foot of the batter. The Kile device requires clamping the shoe piece to the batter's front foot each time he gets in and out of the batter's box. In addition, there is no means provided for establishing a proper batting stance as well as no forward restraint to limit the length of the batter's stride. Finally, the Kile device does not define an area in which the batter can visualize the parameters between which he must define a stride while hitting, which is a particularly effective learning tool in instructing younger hitters. Sertich U.S. Pat. Nos. 3,372,930 and 3,466,040 provide a fixed pivotal positioning device for clamping onto the rear shoe of a batter and holding his foot in place as he strides forward with his front foot. Since the front foot of a hitter employing the Sertich trainer is free to move in any direction, the problem of stepping into the bucket is not solved.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The apparatus of the present invention, which solves the limitations present in the aforementioned prior art training devices for teaching proper batting techniques, comprises a base section supporting an adjustable longitudinally-extending rectangular frame assembly. The base section is positioned with respect to home plate and secured to the ground by attachment means. The frame includes a guide member which engages the base section for adjustable movement in a side-to-side direction. The ability to change the lateral position of the frame in this manner permits batters to assume a variety of hitting positions with respect to home plate without having to move the entire device. The frame member is held above ground level by the base section thereby effectively confining the batter's foot movement within the predetermined parameters set during instruction and preventing him from stepping in the bucket. The proper stance and stride for the batter are predetermined by adjusting the longitudinally-extending boundary of the device which is accomplished by moving a pair of retaining members along the respective longitudinal sides of the frame towards or away from the base. An individual batter's proper stance is established by setting the rear retaining member with respect to the base member, so that the batter's front foot is adjacent to the base member and his rear foot is communicating with the rear retaining member. The position of the front retaining member with respect to the base member can then be set so that the correct distance for the batter's stride, or forward leg movement, is established. Numbered spaced indicia are provided on the device so that the settings of the frame and retaining members for individual batters can be noted and quickly reset for different batters. Auxiliary support means, such as a suction cup attached to a threaded rod, are connected to the base member for securing the device to a floor surface when it is used indoors, as in a gymnasium.

It is therefore a principal objective of the present invention to provide a new and improved training device for establishing the proper stance and stride of a batter which readily permits the proper positioning of a hitter with respect to home plate, which teaches the player how to properly stride without introducing an unwanted hitch in the batter's swing and prevents him from stepping in the bucket, which permits the player to enter and exit the device easily and quickly during batting practice and which readily defines a visible area in which the batter's feet will be confined while he is hitting at the ball.

It is a principal feature of this invention to provide in such a batter training device adjustment and marking means which permit the device to be quickly set up for batters of different sizes.

The foregoing and other objectives, features and advantages of the present invention will be more readily understood upon consideration of the following detailed description of the invention taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of the batting practice training device of the present invention.

FIG. 2 is an end view of the device of FIG. 1 adapted for indoor use.

FIG. 3 is a plan view of the device shown in FIG. 1.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

As shown in FIGS. 1–3 a batting practice training device, generally designated as **10**, for controlling the player's batting stance and stride when hitting a baseball, is comprised of a laterally extending base portion **12** which supports above ground level an adjustable longitudinally-extending rectangular frame member **22** for providing an effective area of confinement for the batter's feet during batting. The base portion **12** includes a support beam **16** and pair of bracing means **18**, preferably formed by a pair of rigid metal strips, connected at either end of the base. The device is positioned at a desired distance from home plate **15** and then attached to the ground by anchor means **19***a*–**19***n*, preferably metal spikes, engagable within a series of openings **20***a*–**20***n* provided within the bracing means **18**.

The frame member **22** is constructed of a pair of longitudinally-extending rigid side rods **26**, connected at their respective ends by a pair of reinforcing bars **30**, and a guide member **24** located in the center of the frame which movably engages the support beam **16**. The batting stance distance with respect to home plate is adjustable in the lateral direction by moving frame **22** along support beam **16**. Guide member **24** is formed of a pair of parallel, downward-extending plates **24***a*, attached at their respective longitudinal ends to side rods **26**, which provide a channel for slideable movement of the frame **22** with respect to the support beam **16**. Fastening means, such as a pair of thumb screws **25** are included within the plates to lock the frame member in place to the support beam **16** once it is properly positioned with respect to home plate.

In order to insure effective predetermined control of each individual player's batting stance and stride when he hits the ball, a pair of adjustable retaining members **28** and **29**, respectively, are connected laterally between the respective side rods **26** of the frame on either side of guide member **16**, the respective ends of each retaining member being in slideable communication with the rods. To establish a proper stance the batter places his front foot **14** against support member **16**, as shown in FIG. **1**, and slides the rear retaining member **29** to the position shown with his rear leg **13** resting against it in position **13***a*. Once the rear retaining member is correctly fixed in place the player will then be able to uniformly control his stance prior to each swing by simply moving his front and rear legs to the positions shown where they abut against the leading edges, respectively, of the beam **16** and the retainer member **29***a*.

The spacing of the batter's stride can then be set by moving front retaining member **28** forward to the position **28***a*, thereby permitting only a correct, limited amount of forward movement of the batter's front leg to the maximum distance illustrated in phantom lines in FIG. **1**, **14***a*. Lateral movement of the batter's front leg is controlled by the side rods **26** which limits the batter's side-to-side movement. Once respective retainer members **28** and **29** are set in place, fastening means, such as thumbscrews **32** are tightened to maintain them in their proper positions for that particular batter.

In order that the same parameters for stance and stride are quickly settable and uniformly maintained for each batter, a plurality of spaced numerical indicia **34***a*–**34***n* are inscribed on each side rod **26** so that the respective retainer members **28** and **29** can be set in their proper positions by the batter whether he is right or left-handed. An additional set of spaced numerical indicia can be provided on the support beam, if desired, for setting of the frame member relative to home plate.

The training device can be provided, as shown in FIG. **2**, with auxiliary support means **38** permitting its use indoors as well as outdoors. The device includes threaded openings **21** which can receive, for example, a series of suction cup assemblies each comprising a suction cup **38***a* attached to a threaded rod **38***b*. The threaded rod portion **38***b* is then screwed into the corresponding threaded openings **21** so that the batting stance training device **10** can be secured to a gymnasium floor or other indoor floor surface without marring its finish.

Although a wide range of materials can be employed for construction of the base and frame member portions of the batter training device, a lightweight metal material, such as aluminum, or an impact-resistant polymeric material is preferred.

The terms and expressions which have been employed in the foregoing abstract and specification are used therein as terms of description and not of limitation, and there is no intention, in the use of such terms and expressions, of excluding equivalents of the features shown and described or portions thereof, it being recognized that the scope of the invention is defined and limited only by the claims which follow.

What is claimed is:

1. A batting practice device for teaching proper batting techniques to baseball players which comprises:

a. frame means, elevated above ground level and enclosing a quadrilateral area, for locating the batter's feet in a proper batting stance and restricting the striding movement of the front foot within said quadrilateral area during batting, said frame means including positioning means, longitudinally-adjustable relative to the line of flight of a pitched ball, for controlling the length of said striding movement; and

b. supporting means for holding said frame means in an elevated position.

2. The batting practice device of claim **1** wherein said elevated frame means further includes second positioning means, longitudinally-adjustable relative to the line of flight of a pitched ball, for controlling the stance of said player.

3. The batting practice device of claim **2** incorporating indicia as an aid in setting said first and second positioning means.

4. The batting practice device of claim **1** wherein said elevated frame means is adjustable in a lateral direction with respect to the line of flight of a pitched ball for spacing the stance of said player relative to said line of flight.

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