Jan. 31, 1967 R. M. HAMILTON, JR., ETAL 3,301,556

BALL-HOLDING DEVICE

Filed July 17, 1964

Fig. 1.

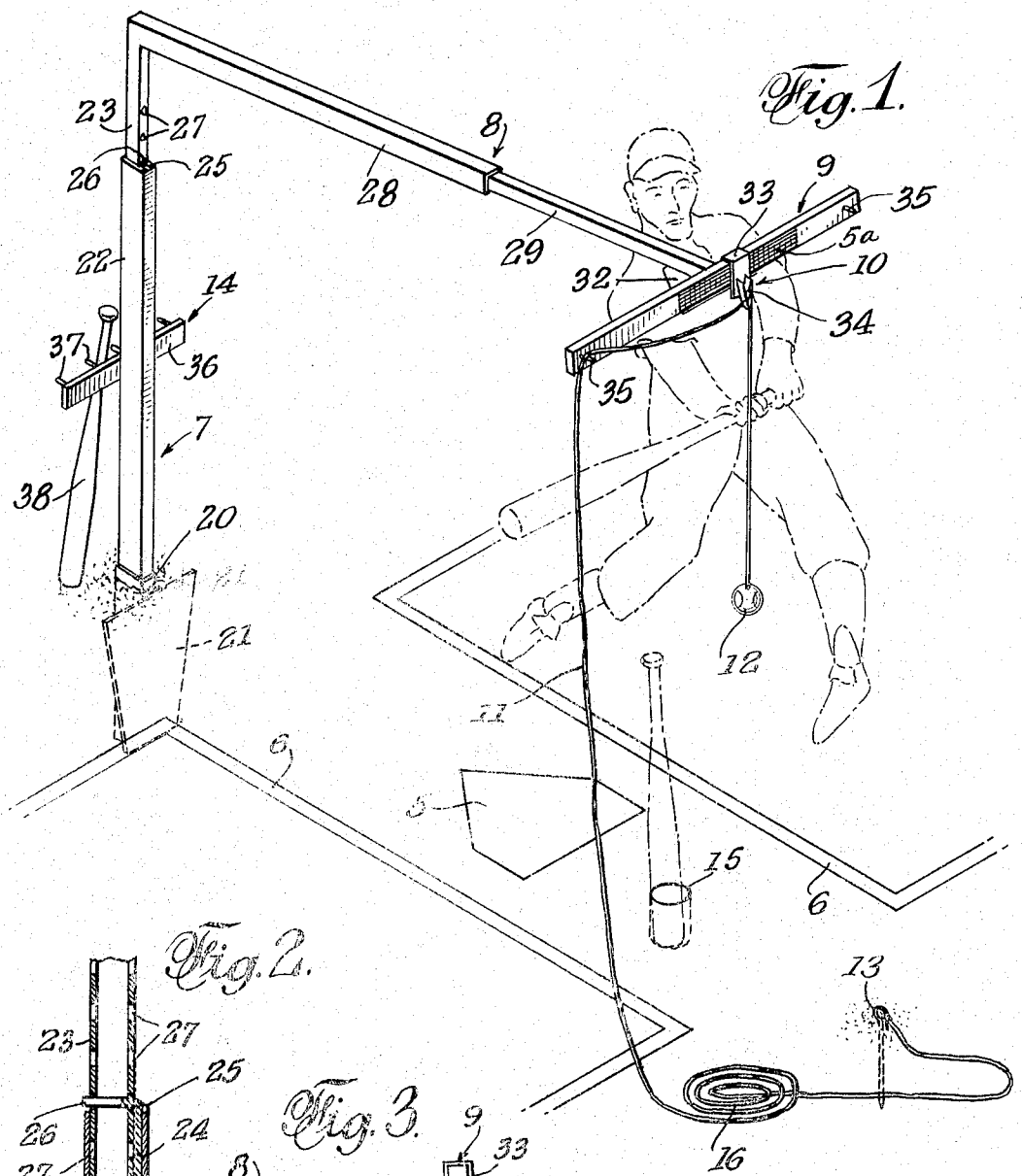


Fig. 2.

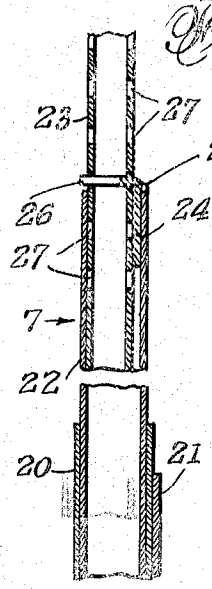


Fig. 3.

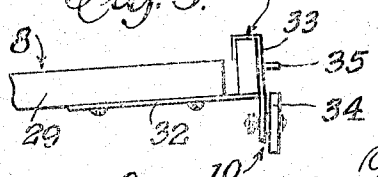
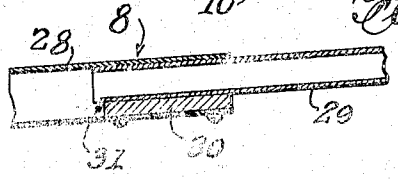


Fig. 4.



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BALL-HOLDING DEVICE

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This invention relates to a device for holding a ball, particularly a baseball, in position to be swung at for practicing batting and, therefore, improving proficiency of a batter.

An object of the invention is to provide a device that may be used in a limited area, as in a backyard.

Another object of the invention is to provide a ball-holding device that includes adjustability for right- and left-hand batters, and for location of the ball being swung at, as desired, to enable sharpening of bat-swinging techniques with respect to the disposition of the ball in relation to home plate. Thus, the batter may practice swings for striking a ball, whether at rest or moving in a swinging path, at a designated position over the plate, i.e., wide, close, high or low.

A further object of the invention is to provide a ball-holding device that releasably holds the ball which, when struck, remains tethered so that recovery is greatly facilitated.

This invention also has for its objects to provide such means that are positive in operation, convenient in use, easily installed in a working position and easily disconnected therefrom, economical of manufacture, relatively simple, and of general superiority and serviceability.

The above objects are realized in an overhanging crane-like structure provided with means to hold a tethered ball in position to be struck by a bat, the structure being adjustable as to height and front-to-back arrangement, as well as adjustable to bring the ball at a desired elevation above home plate and over the middle and lateral parts of home plate.

The invention also comprises novel details of construction and novel combinations and arrangements of parts, which will more fully appear in the course of the following description and which is based on the accompanying drawing. However, said drawing merely shows, and the following description merely describes, one embodiment of the present invention, which is given by way of illustration or example only.

In the drawing, like reference characters designate similar parts in the several views.

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a ball-holding device according to the present invention.

FIG. 2 is an enlarged and broken vertical sectional view of the support portion of the device.

FIG. 3 is an enlarged side elevational view of the ball-suspending portion of the device.

FIG. 4 is a longitudinal sectional view of an adjusting feature provided in the overhanging crane portion of the device.

FIG. 1 shows a home plate **5** and the markings **6** usually provided to circumscribe the batter's boxes for right- and left-hand batters.

The present device is shown in operative relation to said home plate and batter's boxes and comprises, generally, a standard **7** that is adapted to be staked into the ground rearward of and in a direct line from the middle of home plate, an overhanging arm **8** extending from the upper end of the standard and preferably directed at an upward angle from the horizontal so as to be aligned with and above home plate, a cross-bar **9** at the end of said arm **8**, and means **10** on the bar **9** to releasably engage an intermediate portion of a length of cord **11** on one

end of which is secured a ball **12** to be swung at and struck by the bat of a batsman positioned in one of the batter's boxes, the opposite end of said cord being connected to a stake **13** that is adapted to be embedded in the ground at a point forward of home plate. A bat rack **14** may be provided on the rearward side of the standard **7**, and a bat-holding recess **15** may be provided in the ground as a convenient place for the batter to leave the bat so he may retrieve a struck ball for replacement in position to be again struck.

The above generally described means provides for holding a ball at rest so practice may be had for hitting it while at selected positions relative to home plate, as well as when supporting a ball while it swings along various paths of movement relative to home plate in simulation of "curve ball" pitches. A struck ball will, by its momentum, cause the cord **11** to become detached from the means **10**, said cord stretching out to full length from its coiled portion at **16** and, when fully stretched out from stake **13**, not only arresting the flight of the ball, but serving to retract it by elastic reaction on the cord in a direction toward home plate. The more solidly hit balls will return to the vicinity of home plate to render replacement thereof to striking position easier on the batsman.

The standard **7** is shown as a preferably rectangular-sectioned tube **20** that is provided with a stabilizing fin **21**, both of which being adapted to be sunk into the ground as an anchor for the device. A smaller rectangular-sectioned post tube **22** is telescopically set into tube **20** to have a firm yet removable position in said tube. A still smaller rectangular-sectioned tube **23** is telescopically engaged in the post **22**, the same being vertically adjustable by means of a lock plate **24** that slidingly fits between two sides of the tubes **22** and **23**, and is provided with stop lugs **25** that are adapted to come to rest upon the upper edge of post tube **22** and with a rearwardly directed finger **26** that, according to which of a series of holes **27** in tube **23** said finger is engaged with, determines the height adjustment of the latter tube. Adjustment is simple. The finger **26** is first entered into the selected hole **27**. Then with the plate held against the tube **23**, the latter is allowed to drop into the post tube **22** until the lugs **25** encounter the top of the latter tube.

The overhanging arm **8** comprises an integral extension **28** of the tube **23**, the same as above indicated and as best shown in FIG. 4, being preferably directed at a slight upward angle from the horizontal although the same may be at right angles to the standard. An upward angle of about 8°, or one approximating it will provide for a desired release engagement of the cord **11** by the means **10** and obviate dislodgement of the cord by wind action. Said arm is extensible. To this end a slide tube **29** is telescopically engaged in the outer end of extension **28** and may be slidably adjusted so that the cross-bar **9**, at the end of said tube **29** and the means **10** thereon hold the cord **11** so that the ball is in desired forward-rearward relation to home plate. A block **30** secured in the end of extension tube **28** cooperates with a lug **31** on the end of the tube **29** to limit the extension movement of the latter. It will be understood that sufficient friction between tubes **28** and **29** may be provided to assure retention of the adjusted position of the latter even when the ball is being struck to effect release movement of the cord **11** from the means **10**.

The cross-bar **9** on the outer end of tube **29** is rigidly affixed to said tube, as by a brace plate **32**, the width dimension of said bar being at a rearward angle to the vertical according to the angle of arm **8** to the horizontal.

The means **10** is shown as a slide member **33** that is mounted on bar **9** for adjusted position therealong and,

therefore, for adjusted lateral position relative to home plate. A clip **34** is carried by said slide, the same preferably being a spring-type clothes pin or of similar construction. Said means further includes two forwardly extending pins or dowels **35**, one at each end of the bar **9** and each having the upwardly angled position of the arm **8**. An area *5a* on the bar **9** is marked to the width of home plate **5** and may guide the lateral adjustment of the ball relative to the "corners" of home plate.

The cord **11** is preferably elastic in addition to being pliable, plastic or woven hemp, cotton or other fibers of suitable strength and elasticity being exemplary of the desired cord construction. The cord is connected by the clip **34** to the arm **8**, the point of connection being chosen to locate the ball **12** at a desired level above home plate. The cord, according to whether a right- or left-hand batter is to strike the ball thus suspended, is trained over the dowel **35** on the side opposite to the batter's side, the remainder of the cord to the stake **13** being coiled at **16** or otherwise disposed to be in a loose or limp condition.

The ball may be a conventional baseball, soft ball or a ball of any desired construction, or, if desired, made to be heavier than a regulation ball, preferably two to three times heavier, to provide inertia resistance when struck that will give a feeling comparable to that imparted by a fast ball from the hand of a pitcher. The manner of securing the ball to the cord may be varied, as desired.

The bat rack **14** is shown as a bar **36** having a set of dowels **37** aligned on the rear of said bar, the neck portions of bats **38** resting on the ground beneath said bar **36** being loosely confined between adjacent dowels to hold the bats in stored position.

The recess **15** may be formed in a can or container sunk in the ground, the same being preferably non-metallic and sufficiently soft so as not to bar a bat held therein, as shown.

While the foregoing has illustrated and described what is now contemplated to be the best mode of carrying out the invention, the construction is, of course, subject to modification without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. Therefore, it is not desired to restrict the invention to the particular form of construction illustrated and described, but to cover all modifications that may fall within the scope of the appended claims.

Having thus described this invention, what is claimed and desired to be secured by Letters Patent is:

1. A device for holding a ball in position for a batsman to strike at, said device comprising:

(a) a ground-supported cross-bar,

(b) clip means supported by said crossbar for separably engaging a cord with one end connected to the ball to hold such ball suspended, the other end of the cord being tethered to the ground, and

(c) a forwardly extending dowel at each end of the crossbar and over one of which, depending on whether the batsman is right- or left-handed, the cord between its tether and said clip is trained.

2. A device according to claim **1** in which a slide member mounts said clip means and is provided with portions having slidable engagement with the cross-bar for lateral adjustment therealong.

3. A device according to claim **1** the ground-supporting means comprising:

(a) a length-adjustable standard, and

(b) a length-adjustable arm extending at an angle from the upper end of the standard and to the forward end of which the cross-bar is connected.

4. A device according to claim **3** in which the standard is formed with a stabilizing fin adapted to be staked into the ground.

5. A device according to claim **3** in which the angle included between the standard and arm is greater than a right angle.

6. A device according to claim **3** in which the angle included between the standard and arm is approximately ninety-eight degrees.

7. Batting practice means for operative association with a home plate and batter's boxes marked on both sides of home plate for occupation by a batsman on one side or the other, said means comprising:

(a) a crane-like device having a standard adapted to be staked in the ground rearward of and aligned with home plate, and having a forwardly directed and upwardly angled arm extending from the upper end of the standard, toward and above home plate,

(b) a length of cord with a ball connected at one end, and a stake connected at the other and adapted to be driven into the ground forward of home plate to tether the ball to the ground and,

(c) means at the end of the mentioned arm to releasably connect to a point on the cord spaced from the ball to hold said ball ssupended above the ground and in position to be struck by a batsman occupying one of said boxes.

8. Batting practice means according to claim **7** in which the crane-like device is provided with means allowing for height adjustment of the standard and length adjustment of the arm.

9. Batting practice means according to claim **8** in which the arm is at an approximate angle of eight degrees to the horizontal.

10. Batting practice means according to claim **8** in which the means at the end of the arm comprises a clip, means mounting the clip for lateral adjustment, and laterally spaced dowels over one of which the cord between the stake and the point engaged by the clip is adapted to be trained.

11. Batting practice means according to claim **8** in which the mentioned clip has adjustable engagement with the cord end that suspends the ball to vary the level of the ball above the ground, as desired.

12. A device for holding a ball in position suspended above the ground to be struck by a batsman and in adjusted relation to a member representing home plate, said device comprising:

(a) a ground-supported cross-bar,

(b) a marked area on said cross-bar of the width of said representation of home plate and adapted to be vertically aligned therewith,

(c) clip means for separably engaging a cord with one end connected to the ball to hold such ball suspended, the other end of the cord being tethered to the ground, and said clip means having adjustably slidable engagement with said bar to locate a ball suspended therefrom laterally relative to said home plate, the marked area visually guiding such adjustment.

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