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(54) **GOLF TEE CONTAINER AND DISPENSER**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

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The present invention provides a golf tee container and dispenser having an elastomeric body with a plurality of apertures through which golf tees can be dispensed. Also provided by the invention are ready-packs of dispensable golf tees, as well as methods for containing and dispensing golf tees.



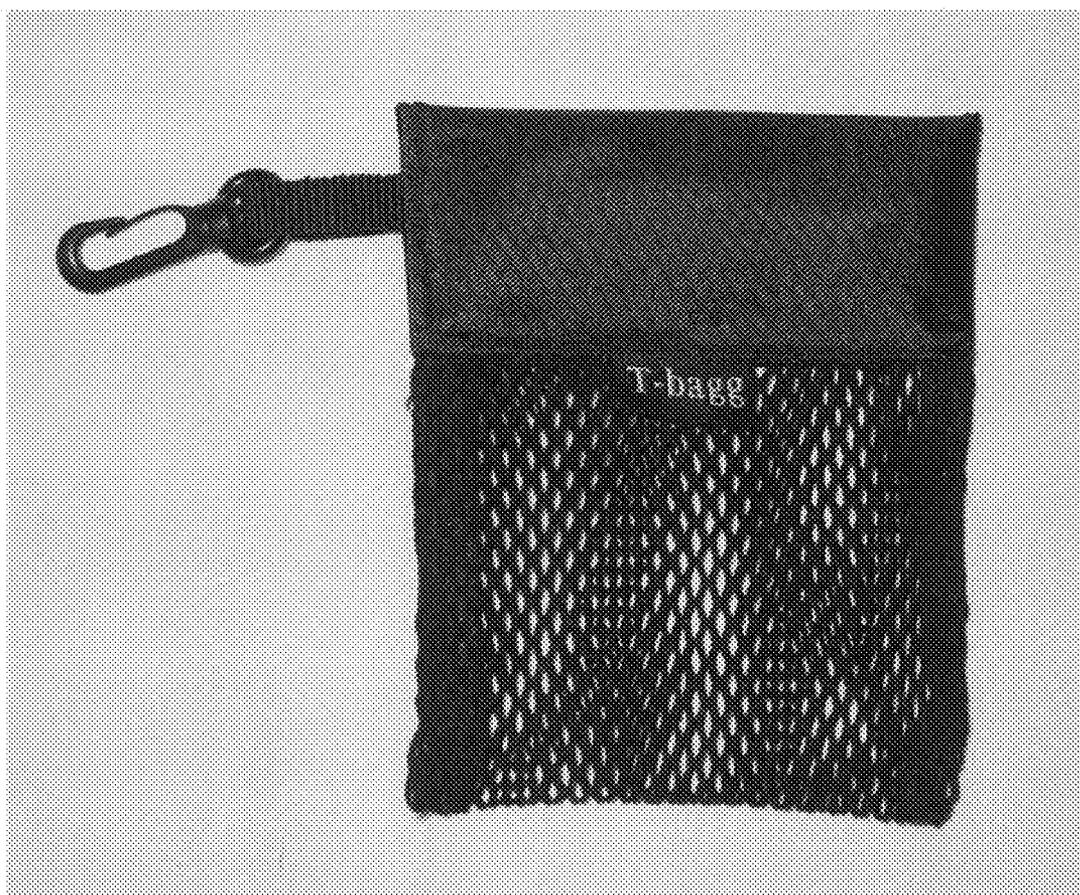


Figure 1

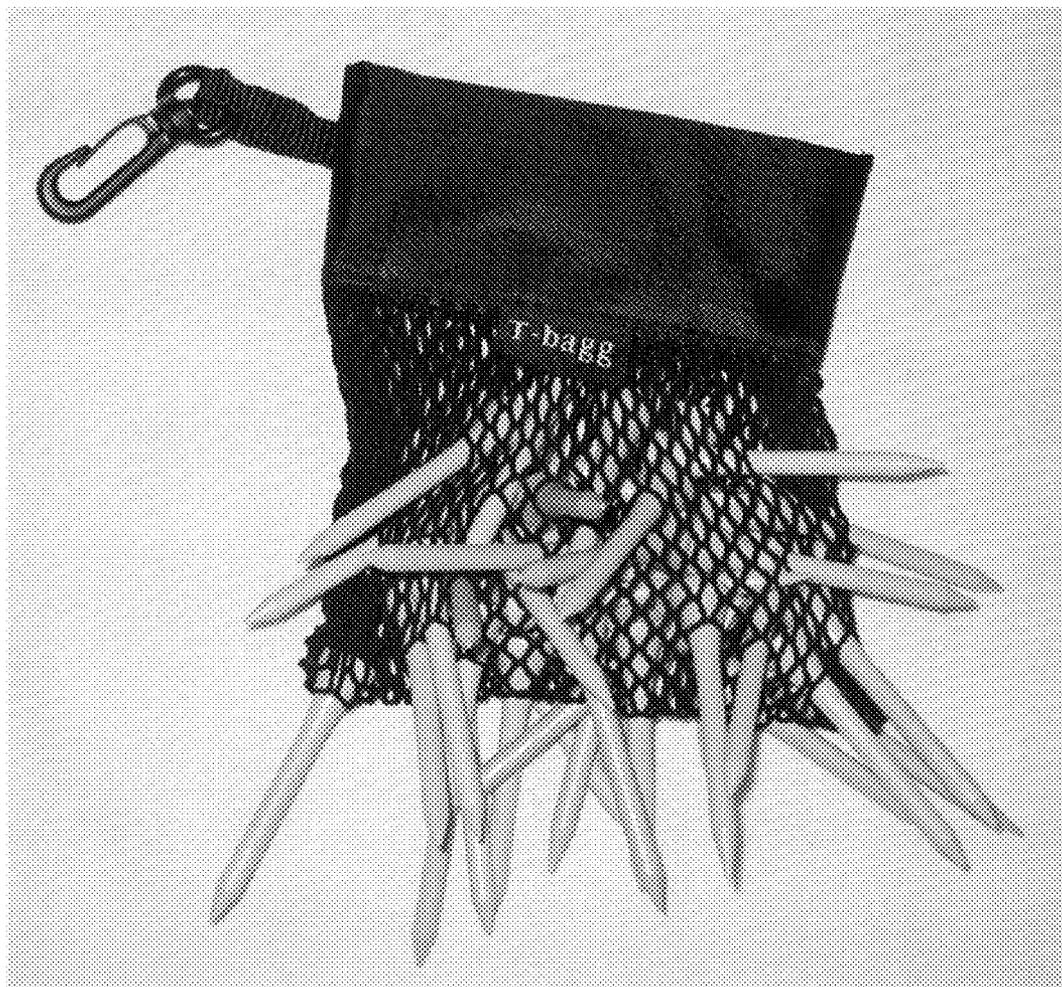


Figure 2

GOLF TEE CONTAINER AND DISPENSER

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] This application claims the benefit of priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119 of U.S. Provisional Applications Ser. No. 61/020,131 filed Jan. 9, 2008, the contents of which is incorporated by reference herein in its entirety.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] A golf tee is a small peg inserted into the ground on which a golf ball is placed before being struck with a golf club at the beginning of play. Golf tees position the ball such that it can more easily be hit by a club. Tees are generally provided by the golfer and removed after hitting the ball. Although they can be reused, their small size results in frequent loss and they are often damaged by the force of a golf club. Therefore, golfers generally carry a stock of tees with them while playing golf.

[0003] Golf tees are generally cylindrical pegs about 2-3" in length and made of wood or plastic. A golf tee has a pointed end for inserting into the ground and a larger, flattened end for holding a golf ball. The body or shank of the tee is usually about 5 mm in diameter while the ball-holding end is typically about 13 mm or more in diameter, and may have a concave shape adapted to hold a golf ball.

[0004] Golfers can carry tees in their pockets or golf bags, but the tees can be lost, difficult to locate, or may stab the golfer when trying to retrieve a tee. A simple, yet efficient means for storing and dispensing golf tees would improve the enjoyment of the game of golf.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0005] The present invention provides a golf tee storage container and dispenser that includes a body defining an interior for containing golf tees. The body is made of an elastomeric material and has a plurality of apertures disposed therethrough, each aperture having a diameter larger than the shank of a golf tee and smaller than the ball-holding end of the golf tee. The golf tee storage container and dispenser also has an opening in the body for inserting golf tees and a means for closing the opening. In certain aspects of the invention, the body has a generally rectangular shape.

[0006] The elastomeric material can be, for example, a mesh fabric, and/or can be made of materials such as latex, spandex, rubber, neoprene, isoprene, viton, silicon, or nylon. In one embodiment of the invention, the apertures in the body have a diameter of about 2 to about 12 mm and may be regularly spaced throughout the body.

[0007] According to one embodiment, the golf tee storage container and dispenser of the invention is designed to hold at least about 20 golf tees within the interior, which can be inserted through the opening, which can be, for example at least about 2-3 inches wide. The opening can be closed by means of zippers, snaps, buttons, hook and loop closures, ties, drawstrings, ziplocks or the like.

[0008] In yet other embodiments, the golf tee storage container and dispenser of invention also includes fastening means such as a hook, snap, clip, key-type ring, tie, magnet, or a hook-loop fastener for attaching to, e.g. a golf bag, and may also include a label, tag, pouch or pocket.

[0009] The present invention also provides a ready-pack of dispensable golf tees which includes a plurality of golf tees contained in a golf tee storage container and dispenser having

a body defining an interior for containing golf tees, the body being made of an elastomeric material having a plurality of apertures disposed therethrough, each aperture having a diameter larger than the shank of a golf tee and smaller than the ball-holding end of the golf tee. The ready-pack may be disposable and therefore not need an opening or it may have a closable opening, thereby being refillable and reusable.

[0010] Also provided by the present invention is a method for containing and dispensing a golf tee by inserting golf tees in a golf tee container and dispenser or ready-pack of the invention through an opening in the body of the golf tee container and dispenser, thereafter closing the golf tee container and dispenser through a means for closing the opening to contain the golf tees. For dispensing, a contained golf tee is allowed to pass through one of the apertures of the golf tee container and dispenser, thereby exposing the golf tee to the exterior of the golf tee container and dispenser. The tee is then grasped from the outside of the container and dispenser and pulled out to dispense it.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0011] FIG. 1 shows a golf tee container and dispenser of the invention.

[0012] FIG. 2 shows a golf tee container and dispenser of the invention with golf tees. As shown in FIG. 2, the shank portion of golf tees placed inside the body of the container and dispenser protrude exteriorly through apertures, but the ball-holding end of each tee is retained within the interior of the container and dispenser. The protruding shank of a golf tee can be grasped and pulled out to dispense the tee.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0013] The present invention provides a storage container and dispenser for golf tees. The container is generally a bag (body) into which a plurality of golf tees can be deposited. Accordingly, the bag or sack has an opening through which a plurality of golf tees can be inserted and a means for closing the opening. The body can be any shape or size, provided that it is large enough to accommodate at least one golf tee. Typically, the golf tee container/dispenser of the invention is at least about 3 to about 12 inches wide and long. In certain embodiments, the golf tee container/dispenser of the invention can be, for example, 3"×3", 3"×4", 3"×5", 3"×6", 3"×7", etc. In other embodiments, the golf tee container/dispenser of the invention can be 4"×3", 4"×4", 4"×5", 4"×6", 4"×7", etc. In certain embodiments, the body is substantially rectangular. In other embodiments, the body has a rounded or circular shape.

[0014] Preferably, the interior of the golf tee container/dispenser will hold at least about 20 golf tees. In certain embodiments, the golf tee container/dispenser will hold at least about 50 golf tees. In yet other embodiments, the golf tee container/dispenser will hold at least about 100 golf tees or more.

[0015] The opening of the golf tee container/dispenser must be large enough for at least one tee to pass through. Thus, the minimum opening is about 13-15 mm, or slightly larger than the width of the large, ball-holding end of a tee. In other embodiments, tees are inserted into the golf tee container/dispenser lengthwise. According to these embodiments, the opening is larger than the length of a golf tee or at least about 2-3 inches wide. In certain embodiments, the opening of the golf tee container/dispenser of the invention is

large enough to insert multiple golf tees at one time. In yet further embodiments, the opening is larger than a man's fist, conveniently allowing the golfer to deposit a fistful of golf tees into the bag without dropping them.

[0016] Means for closing the golf tee container/dispenser can be any suitable means, including but not limited to zippers, snaps, buttons, hook and loop closures ("Velcro"), ties, drawstrings, ziplocks and the like. A variety of closures will be well known to those skilled in the art.

[0017] The body of the golf tee container/dispenser of the present invention is made of a flexible, generally deformable material such as an elastomeric material. In certain embodiments of the invention, the elastomeric material is latex, spandex, rubber, neoprene, isoprene, viton, silicon, nylon or the like. The body can be formed from knitted, woven, or non-woven elastomeric material (e.g. a membrane). In certain embodiments, part or all of the elasticity of the bag can be imparted by the method of construction, e.g. via knitting that yields a stretchable fabric.

[0018] The golf tee container/dispenser of the invention can be constructed by any means suitable for making a bag of the desired material. In certain aspects of the invention, mesh fabric is sewn into a bag of the desired shape and size. In other embodiments, the body is knitted as a single piece. In yet further embodiments, the body is molded, extruded, fabricated, welded, or seamed of a flexible non-woven material.

[0019] The golf tee container/dispenser invention contains a plurality of apertures through which the narrow, pointed end of a golf tee can easily pass. According to the invention, the apertures are at least as wide as the shank of the golf tee, but narrower than the wider ball-holding end of the golf tee. The apertures are generally about 2 to about 12 mm in diameter, typically about 3 to about 10 mm in diameter, frequently about 4 to about 8 mm, and often about 5 to about 7 mm in diameter. In certain embodiments, the apertures are less than about 13 mm in diameter, less than about 12 mm in diameter, less than about 11 mm in diameter, less than about 10 mm in diameter, less than about 9 mm in diameter, less than about 8 mm in diameter, less than about 7 mm in diameter, or less than about 6 mm in diameter. The apertures are generally slightly bigger than the diameter of the shaft of a golf tee, for example, at least about 5.5 mm in diameter, at least about 6 mm in diameter, at least about 6.5 mm in diameter, at least about 7.0 mm in diameter, at least about 7.5 mm in diameter, at least about 8 mm in diameter, at least about 8.5 mm in diameter, at least about 9 mm in diameter, at least about 9.5 mm in diameter or at least about 10 mm in diameter.

[0020] The apertures can be randomly spaced or regularly positioned, such as in an array, pattern or grid. In one embodiment of the invention, the apertures are an integral part of the knitted or woven fabric from which the body is made, such as the holes formed in a mesh of fibers. In other embodiments, the apertures are punched or cut out of the material. Such a construction method may be suitable for a membrane type body. The apertures typically have a substantially circular shape, but can have any shape that the shank of a golf tee will easily pass through. In certain embodiments, for example, the apertures are square, pentagonal, hexagonal, octagonal or a combination of shapes.

[0021] In use, one or more golf tees is placed in the body of the golf tee container/dispenser through the opening and the opening is closed. The pointed end of at least one golf tee that is inserted into the container/dispenser passes through an aperture, exposing the shaft of the tee to the outside of the bag.

The ball-holding end of the tee, however, which is larger than the aperture, is retained inside the body of the container/dispenser. As the container/dispenser is moved and/or additional tees are added, more tees are randomly or deliberately exposed to the exterior. When dispensing of a tee is desired, the shaft of the tee protruding from the bag through an aperture is grasped and pulled out. The generally deformable nature of the body of the bag permits the aperture to stretch and yield under the force of pulling, thereby allowing the ball-holding end of the tee to pass through the aperture. Once the tee is dispensed, the aperture contracts back to its original diameter, ready to accept the narrow end of another golf tee yet retain the ball-holding end of that tee.

[0022] The golf tee container/dispenser of the present invention provides a compact, lightweight and simple solution to dispensing golf tees. The present invention contemplates that when not in use, the dispenser can be flattened or folded up and placed in a pocket, golf bag or other suitable container.

[0023] Optionally, the container/dispenser can include a fastening means for attaching to a golf or other bag, golf cart or to the golfer for convenient access during use. Such fastening means can, for example, be a hook, snap, clip, key-type ring, tie, magnet or the like. In one aspect, the fastening means is one member of a hook-loop pair (e.g. Velcro). According to this embodiment, the fastening device can be mated to the other member of the hook-loop pair which has been affixed e.g., to a golf bag.

[0024] In certain embodiments of the invention, the golf tee container/dispenser has disposed upon the body a label or tag. The label or tag can provide instructions for use and/or can be used to identify an advertiser, manufacturer or the owner. In yet further embodiments of the invention, the golf tee container/dispenser can include a pouch or pocket for inserting advertising, an identification card (e.g. a driver's license), keys, golf balls or other items.

[0025] The present invention also provides a ready-pack of dispensable golf tees including a golf tee container/dispenser as described above and a plurality of golf tees contained therein. The ready pack provides a convenient and useful system for delivering a quantity of golf tees for various purposes. For example, the ready-pack of dispensable golf tees may be sold as a single unit to the end consumer or given away as a promotional item. In certain embodiments, the ready-pack includes an opening and a means for closing the opening, and is thereby refillable and reusable. In other instances, a simplified ready-pack is contemplated, which would not have an opening, but would be pre-assembled with golf tees contained therein. According to this embodiment, the ready-pack of dispensable golf tees would be discarded after the tees were dispensed.

[0026] The present invention also provides methods for containing and dispensing golf tees by placing at least one or a plurality of golf tees in a golf tee container/dispenser as described above, closing the container/dispenser, allowing at least one tee to pass through an aperture of the container/dispenser thereby exposing the golf tee to the exterior of the container/dispenser, grasping the exteriorly exposed tee and pulling it out of the container/dispenser for use.

What is claimed is:

1. A golf tee storage container and dispenser comprising: a body defining an interior for containing golf tees, wherein said body is made of an elastomeric material having a plurality of apertures disposed therein, each aperture

- having a diameter larger than the shank of a golf tee and smaller than the ball-holding end of the golf tee; an opening in the body for inserting golf tees; and a means for closing the opening.
- 2. The golf tee storage container and dispenser of claim 1, wherein the elastomeric material is a mesh fabric.
- 3. The golf tee storage container and dispenser of claim 1, wherein the elastomeric material comprises at least one of latex, spandex, rubber, neoprene, isoprene, viton, silicon, or nylon.
- 4. The golf tee storage container and dispenser of claim 1, wherein the body has a substantially rectangular shape.
- 5. The golf tee storage container and dispenser of claim 1, wherein each of the plurality of apertures has a diameter of about 2 to about 12 mm.
- 6. The golf tee storage container and dispenser of claim 1, wherein the plurality of apertures are regularly spaced throughout the body.
- 7. The golf tee storage container and dispenser of claim 1, wherein the interior can hold at least about 20 golf tees.
- 8. The golf tee storage container and dispenser of claim 1, wherein the opening is at least about 2 inches wide.
- 9. The golf tee storage container and dispenser of claim 1, wherein the means for closing the opening is selected from the group consisting of zippers, snaps, buttons, hook and loop closures, ties, drawstrings, and ziplocks.
- 10. The golf tee storage container and dispenser of claim 1, further comprising a fastening means.
- 11. The golf tee storage container and dispenser of claim 10, wherein said fastening means is selected from the group consisting of hooks, snaps, clips, key-type rings, ties, magnets, and hook-loop fasteners.

- 12. The golf tee storage container and dispenser of claim 1, further comprising at least one label, tag, pouch or pocket.
- 13. A ready-pack of dispensable golf tees comprising: a golf tee storage container and dispenser; and a plurality of golf tees, wherein said golf tee storage container and dispenser comprises a body defining an interior for containing golf tees, wherein said body is made of an elastomeric material having a plurality of apertures disposed there-through, each aperture having a diameter larger than the shank of a golf tee and smaller than the ball-holding end of the golf tee.
- 14. The ready-pack of dispensable golf tees of claim 13, further comprising: an opening in the body for inserting golf tees; and a means for closing the opening.
- 15. A method for containing and dispensing a golf tee comprising: inserting at least one golf tee in a golf tee container and dispenser according to claim 1 through the opening; closing the golf tee container and dispenser through the means for closing the opening, thereby containing the golf tee; allowing the golf tee to pass through an aperture of the golf tee container and dispenser, thereby exposing the golf tee to the exterior of the golf tee container and dispenser; grasping the exteriorly exposed golf tee; and pulling the grasped golf tee out of the golf tee container and dispenser, thereby dispensing the golf tee.

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