

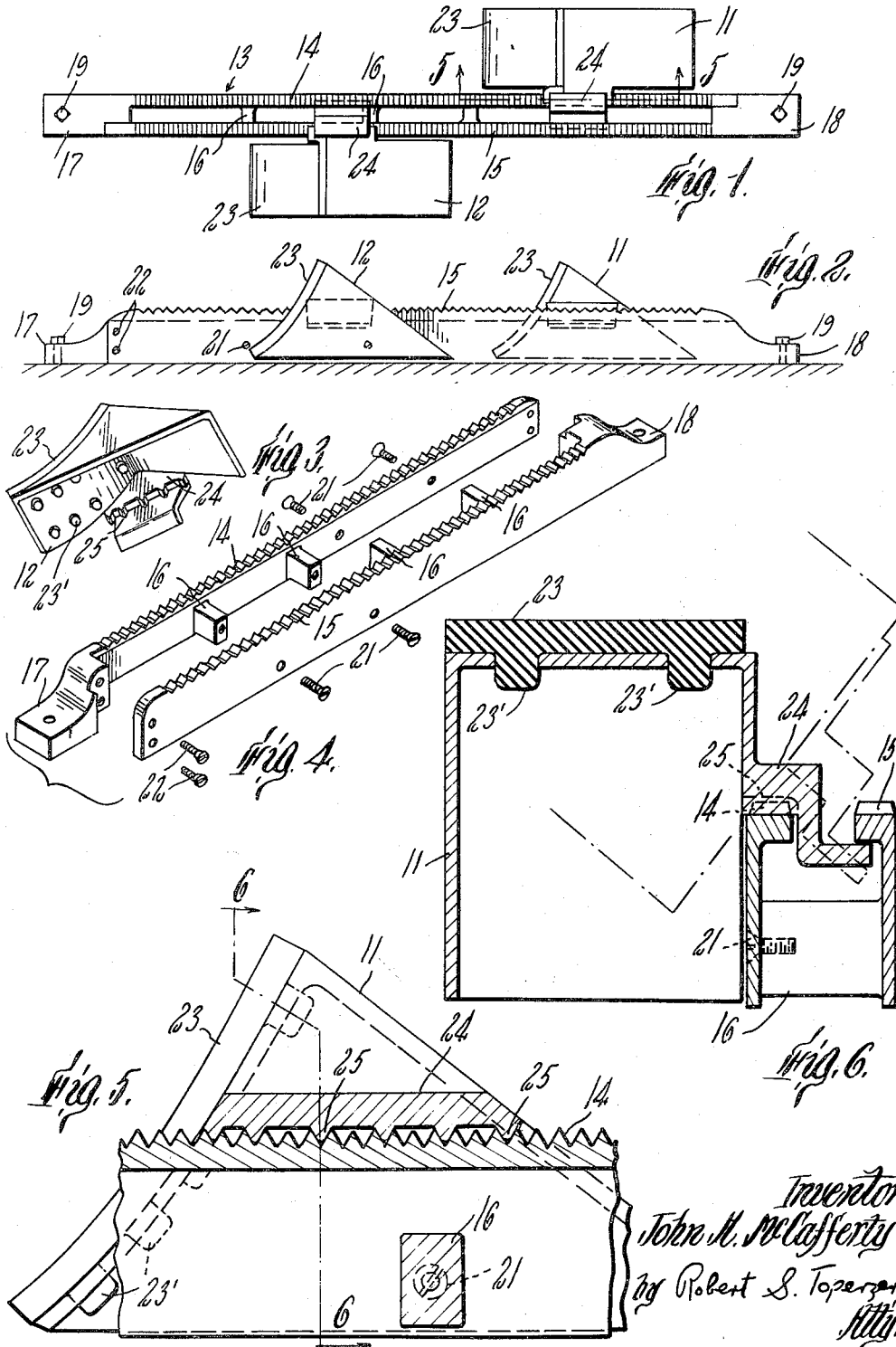
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STARTING AID FOR FOOT RACES

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STARTING AID FOR FOOT RACES

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1 Claim. (Cl. 272—59)

This invention relates to athletic equipment and more particularly it concerns starting blocks for track events such as, for example, sprint races.

The advantages of using starting blocks instead of the age-old device of digging a toe-hold in a track in order to get off to a fast running start are now widely recognized. Not only do they aid in faster starts but also they eliminate the need for frequent grading of the starting area. As in the case of batters in baseball, runners generally prefer to make fresh holes to suit their individual stances which is why frequent grading is needed when starting blocks are unavailable.

Accordingly, a primary requisite of starting blocks is that they be adjustable to satisfy the preferences of individual runners. In the past this result has been accomplished by the provision of blocks having stakes attached thereto that may be driven into the ground at chosen points. The difficulty with this arrangement is that when the track is muddy, it may be a problem to get the stakes to hold. Conversely, in very cold weather the ground may be so hard that it is a project to drive the stakes in securely. At the very least, relocating the stakes is a time-consuming nuisance, often requiring the aid of some device to pull them out of the ground, and usually a heavy object such as a stone to drive them in again.

The present invention has as its object the provision of an improved starting device embodying starting blocks.

A more specific object of the invention is to provide a more readily adjustable device of this character wherein the need for re-staking or otherwise fastening the blocks to the ground is avoided.

A still further object is to arrange the starting blocks so that they can be removed and their positions reversed, for a left-handed person for example.

The novel features of the invention together with further objects and advantages thereof will become apparent from the following detailed description and the drawing to which it refers.

In the drawing:

Fig. 1 is a plan view of the starting device according to the invention;

Fig. 2 is a side view thereof;

Fig. 3 is a perspective view of one of the starting blocks incorporated in the device;

Fig. 4 is an exploded view in perspective of the rails which likewise form a part of the device;

Fig. 5 is a sectional view taken on line 5—5 of Fig. 1 and enlarged, and

Fig. 6 is a sectional view taken on line 6—6 of Fig. 5.

With reference now to the drawing and more particularly to Figs. 1, 2, and 4, it will be observed that the device according to the invention comprises a pair of starting blocks 11 and 12, and an indexing assembly for the blocks designated generally by the numeral 13. The indexing assembly 13 includes a pair of cog rails 14 and

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15 joined in parallel relation to one another by cross-ties 16. At the ends of the assembly of the rails there are foot portions 17, 18 with holes for stakes 19 whereby the assembly is anchored to the ground.

As best seen in Fig. 6, the rails have vertical stems and flanges that project inwardly toward one another, the cogs being formed in the flanges. The assembly can be and preferably is formed with two identical castings of aluminum or the like, each casting comprising an integral combination of a rail, one of the feet and two of the cross-ties as shown in Fig. 4. Machine screws 21 are passed through the rails and threaded into the ties in order to fasten the castings, and in addition there are provided screws 22 for fastening in the vicinity of the feet.

The general construction of the blocks 11 and 12 is best illustrated in Figs. 5 and 6. Thus, from Fig. 5 it will be observed that the blocks are triangular, as viewed from the side, except that their foot-retaining walls are slightly concave to afford a better foot-hold. These walls are provided with rubber treads 23 secured to the walls by means of integral buttons 23' that are forced through suitable apertures in the blocks.

Adapting the blocks to cooperate with the indexing assembly of the rails are offset flanges 24 that project from the sides of the blocks. When the blocks are in their normal positions, as shown by the full lines in Fig. 6, these flanges underlie the flanges of the respective rails 14 and 15. Also there are teeth 25 formed in the under-surface of each flange stem, that is the portion where it joins with the body of the block. By virtue of the engagement of the teeth 25 with the cogs in the rails, the blocks are maintained in a fixed longitudinal position, so long as they are weighted.

That is to say, in operation the teeth can be freed from the cogs by unweighting the blocks and tipping them upwardly into a position such as that shown by the dotted lines in Fig. 6. Then they are free to be slid along to new positions. If it is desired to reverse the positions of the blocks, that is to move the right block ahead of the left, they can be completely removed from the tracks and replaced. Once they have been replaced with their flanges in normal position as shown in Fig. 6, each block rests on one of the rails with its base wall slightly above ground level. The under-surface of the opposite rails prevent the blocks from pivoting about their flanges. Accordingly, when a runner's weight is applied to the blocks there is a substantial downward component of force on the teeth, causing them to grip the cogs tightly and prevent the blocks from moving rearwardly in reaction to a runner's start.

Although the invention has been described herein in connection with a single preferred embodiment, it will be appreciated that various modifications of this embodiment are possible that lie within the spirit and scope of the invention. Therefore, the invention should not be deemed to be limited to the details of what has been described herein by way of example but rather it should be deemed to be limited only by the scope of the appended claim.

What is claimed is:

An adjustable starting device for track events and the like comprising a pair of upstanding rails rigidly joined in spaced parallel relationship, said rails being provided with inwardly projecting flanges adjacent their upper surface and a row of upstanding teeth extending lengthwise thereof, a pair of starting blocks each having an inclined wall for a runner's foot to bear against, an offset flange projecting laterally from each of said blocks, and each of

said flanges having teeth in its under-surface engaging the teeth on one of said rails, a stem extending downwardly from each of said block flanges below the rail flanges, and an offset flange projecting laterally from each stem, the upper surface of said offset flanges engaging the under-surface of the flange in the opposite one of said rails to prevent the blocks from moving angularly under the weight of a person's foot.

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