United States Patent [19]

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[54] GOLF PRACTICE DEVICE

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[52] **U.S. Cl.**.....**273/182 R,** 248/439, 248/165
[51] **Int. Cl.**.....**A63b 69/36**
[58] **Field of Search**.....273/176, 181, 182, 105

[56] **References Cited**

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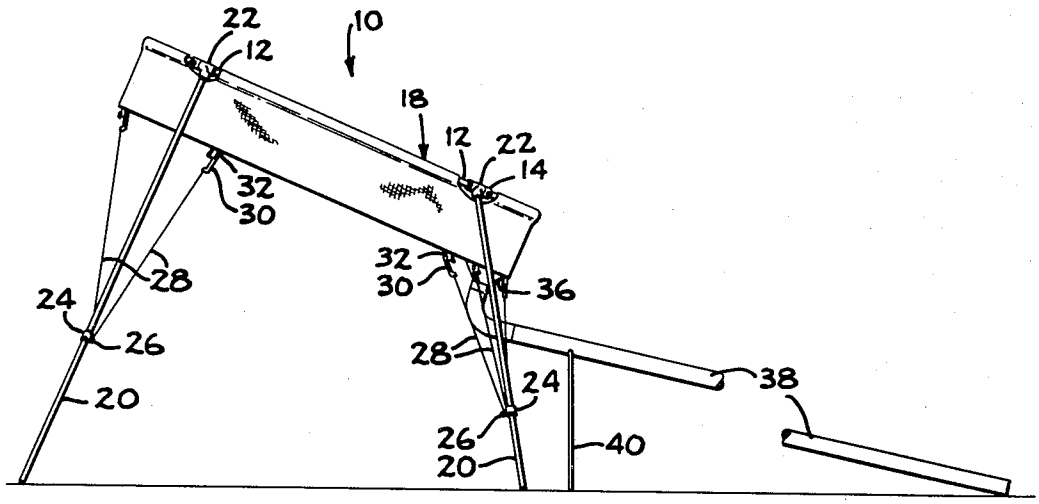
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Attorney—Paul B. Fihe

[57] **ABSTRACT**

A golf practice device arranged to receive chip or pitch shots in a flexible receptacle suspended from a segmented ring carried by detachable legs so as to permit ready disassembly and storage, the legs being pivotally adjustable to vary the ring and receptacle disposition, and also arranged to return the received balls to the player through a funnel in the receptacle and a ball-return conduit. Resilient tie-down straps are connected between spaced apart locations on the lower edge of the receptacle and collars which may be shifted to different positions on the legs.

9 Claims, 4 Drawing Figures



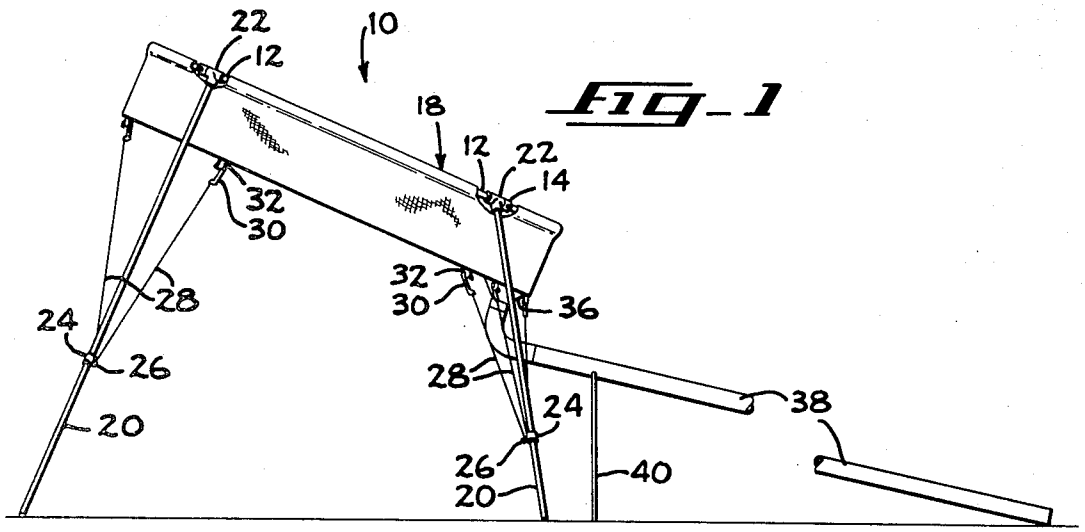


Fig_1

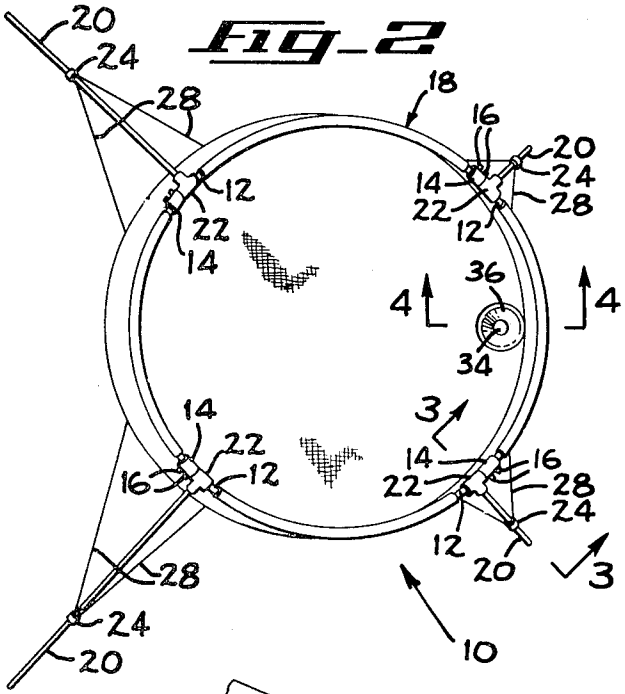


Fig_2

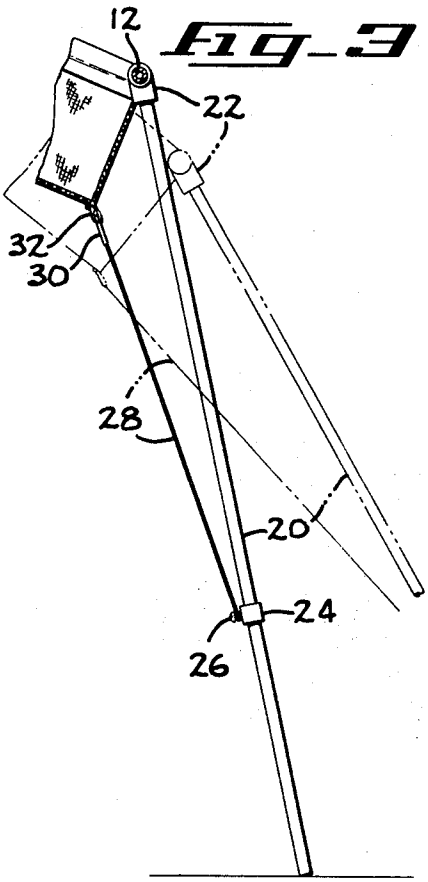


Fig_3

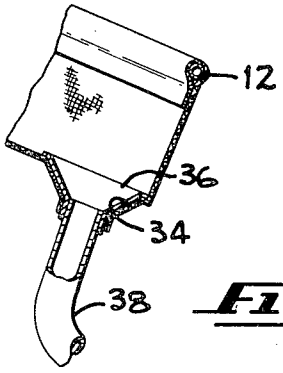


Fig_4

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GOLF PRACTICE DEVICE

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates generally to golf practice devices and more particularly, to a golf practice device in the form of a target receptacle arranged to receive golf balls pitched or chipped thereinto.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

A number of golf practice devices having the general form of a target receptacle for the reception of pitched or chipped golf shots have been proposed but have had very limited utility because of certain seemingly inherent practical problems. In the first place, the target has to be sufficiently large to be capable of practical use at any distance and as a consequence, becomes a bulky apparatus which is rather difficult to handle and move so as to be limited to substantially a permanent type installation. Secondly, in order to render the target receptacle most useful, certain adjustments in its disposition are necessary and any of the prior art structures have utilized relatively complex mechanisms to provide such adjustment adding considerable structural complexity and resultant increased cost.

SUMMARY OF THE PRESENT INVENTION

It is the general objective of the present invention to circumvent the mentioned difficulties of the prior art structures by providing a golf practice device in the form of a target receptacle which is of simple lightweight construction formed by the rapid assembly of but few parts whose dimensions are relatively small, yet enabling, when set up, ease of adjustment for various operational needs. Briefly, this objective is achieved by providing a golf practice device including a rather shallow generally cup-shaped receptacle formed by flexible material and suspended at its upper lip from a support ring preferably of generally circular configuration and formed by a number of arcuate segments which can be readily joined at their extremities and yet can be readily disconnected when the unit is to be disassembled and stored. The receptacle support ring is, in turn, carried by a number of legs which are pivotally joined to the support ring at their upper ends for adjustment about an axis which is substantially tangential to the support ring wherefore the legs can be angularly adjusted to vary the general disposition of the support ring and the receptacle suspended therefrom. Resilient straps join the legs to the lower edge of the receptacle to resiliently maintain the legs in their ring supporting dispositions and also to maintain the flexible receptacle in its desired configuration. Limited angular adjustment of the legs is permitted because of the resilience of the straps but if greater adjustment is required, the point of attachment of the resilient straps to the legs can be readily adjusted.

Preferably, an opening is provided in the bottom of the receptacle adjacent one edge thereof to receive a funnel that is connected at its lower end to a ball return conduit that slopes downwardly towards the area of the player so that balls successfully chipped into the receptacle are returned for a repeated shot. This conduit is also formed by a number of relatively short tubular segments that are telescopically joined at their extremities.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

The stated objective of the invention and the manner in which it is achieved as summarized hereinabove will be more readily understood by reference to the following description of the exemplary embodiment of the invention illustrated in the accompanying drawing wherein:

FIG. **1** is a side elevational view of a golf practice device embodying the invention,

FIG. **2** is a top plan view thereof,

FIG. **3** is a fragmentary sectional view taken along line **3—3** of FIG. **2** to illustrate the leg supporting arrangement of the structure, and

FIG. **4** is another enlarged fragmentary sectional view taken along line **4—4** of FIG. **2** to illustrate a ball return conduit structure in greater detail.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE EXEMPLARY EMBODIMENT OF THE INVENTION

With initial reference to FIGS. **1** and **2**, the golf practice device embodying the invention includes a shallow generally cup-shaped receptacle **10** preferably formed of canvas or other flexible material including a generally cylindrical side wall joined at its lower edge to a circular bottom. The upper lip of the cup-shaped canvas receptacle **10** is cut-away at four positions, spaced at arcuate intervals of 90° and the intermediate sections of the lip are folded over to form a conduit within which a plurality of arcuate tubular segments **12** are received, these segments being joined in the cut-away portions of the lip by tubular couplers **14** that are, in turn, releasably joined to the ends of the arcuate segments by set screws **16**, thus to form a support ring of generally circular configuration and generally indicated at **18**.

The receptacle support ring **18** is, in turn, carried by four legs **20** whose lower ends are adapted to rest on the ground and whose upper ends are each received in the downwardly projecting socket portion of a T-shaped coupler **22**, the head portion of the T being loosely and therefore pivotally arranged around the support ring **18** at a position adjacent the couplers **14**, it being obvious that the T-shaped coupler is mounted loosely on the support ring segments **12** prior to final assembly of the segments into the completed ring **18**.

At an intermediate position on each of the legs **20**, a small collar **24** is adjustably positioned by means of a set screw **26** and a resilient strap **28** passes at a position intermediate its length over such set screw **26** and is connected by hooks **30** at its ends to small eyelets **32** at the bottom edge of the canvas receptacle at positions on opposite sides of the respective leg. The tensile force exert by these straps **28** serves several purposes. First, it maintains a downward force on the canvas receptacle **10** itself so as to maintain its cup-shaped disposition. Secondly, it exerts an upward force on the legs **20** to maintain their upper ends in the sockets of the ring supporting T-shaped couplers **22** and finally, when the legs **20** are disposed in their erected outwardly-inclined dispositions as best shown in FIG. **3**, the resilient straps **28** exert in inward tensile force on the legs to hold them against the ground in adjusted supporting relationship for the support and the receptacle suspended therefrom.

However, since these straps **28** are resilient, and the head of the T-shaped coupler **22** loosely surrounds the ring **18** so as to permit pivotal motion of the legs **20** about an axis which is essentially tangential to the ring, each individual leg can be pivotally adjusted for example, from the full line disposition shown in FIG. **3** to the phantom line disposition thus to lower the level of this particular supported position of the support ring **18**. Accordingly, without any actual variation in the length of the legs **20**, a changed disposition of the support ring **18** and the receptacle **10** carried thereby can be readily achieved. If a more radical change in the receptacle disposition is desired, the collar **24** can be adjusted longitudinally of the leg **20** by temporarily releasing the set screw **26** on the collar and adjusting such collar either upwardly or downwardly as required to enable greater angular adjustment of a particular leg **20** and a consequent variation in the level of support of the associated section of the support ring **18**.

Preferably, the legs **20** at the front of the receptacle **10**, that portion which is closest to the golfer, are slightly shorter than those to the rear of the receptacle so that the normal configuration of the receptacle will be slightly tilted in the direction of the player to provide a target for his shooting and this illustrated angular disposition can be varied by adjustment of the legs so as to present a target which will accommodate the trajectory of balls pitched with various golf clubs. Thus, the disposition shown in FIG. **1** might be utilized when a pitching wedge is being used by the golfer but a greater angular inclination would be made when chipping with a seven iron.

Preferably, an opening **34** is formed in the bottom of the receptacle **10** adjacent its front edge, that is, that edge closest to the golfer, and therefore normally at the lowest disposition of the sloped receptacle wherefore any balls chipped or pitched into the receptacle will gravitate downwardly along the bottom thereof into this opening. A funnel **36** having a flange at its upper perimeter is releasably supported in this opening and its lower end is bent angularly to telescopically join the end of one of a series of releasably-joined tubes forming a sloping ball return conduit **38** which extends in the direction of the player so that balls chipped or pitched into the receptacle successfully will be returned to the player for a repeated shot. To maintain the desired inclination of a ball return conduit of any substantial length, small wire supports **40** can be pushed into the ground to engage the conduit at various positions along its length.

For pitching or chipping from relatively short distances that is, **20** or **30** yards or less, the receptacle **10** need be no more than three feet in diameter and positioned at a general elevation no greater than four feet and since the receptacle itself is rather shallow, substantial slope to the ball return conduit **38** can be readily achieved to facilitate gravity flow or rolling of the ball back to the hitting area. If greater distances are to be utilized between player and the receptacle, it will be commensurately larger and may be elevated somewhat more to assure a sufficient drop to facilitate rolling return of the ball through the lengthier ball return conduit.

When the unit is to be disassembled for storage or for transportation, it is merely necessary to remove the resilient straps **28** from their connections over the set screws **26** on the legs **20** at which time the legs can be pulled from their sockets. In turn, the set screws **16** on the ring segment couplers **14** can be slightly loosened to allow ready withdrawal of the ring segments **12** for subsequent storage in a minimum space. The ball return conduit tubing can be disjointed and the funnel **36**, in turn, removed from the opening **34** in the receptacle **10** which receptacle in turn, can be folded into a small space. When so disassembled, the entire unit can, for example, be transported very readily in the trunk of an average passenger car and when once again to be used, it can be quickly assembled and ready for use in a matter of minutes.

The elements which form the described practice device are very simple and inexpensive; the ring segments **12** and the legs **20** can be formed from conventional thin-wall electrical conduit tubing, the receptacle **10** from inexpensive canvas and the ball return conduit **38** from relatively inexpensive plastic tubing of appropriate dimensions to loosely accommodate the golf balls. These particularly described elements are also of relatively light weight so as to be easily handled by any player.

What is claimed is:

1. A golf practice device which comprises,
- a support ring,
- a plurality of legs, each joined to said ring at its upper end for pivotal motion about an axis tangential to said ring whereby the disposition of said ring can be varied,
- a flexible receptacle suspended by said ring, and
- resilient tie-down straps connected between spaced apart locations on the lower edge of said receptacle and said legs.

2. A golf practice device according to claim **1** wherein,
- said ring is formed by a plurality of arcuate segments releasably joined at their extremities.

3. A golf practice device according to claim **2** wherein,
- a T-shaped coupler loosely surrounds said support ring and releasably receives the upper end of each of said legs.

4. A golf practice device according to claim **3** wherein,
- said flexible receptacle is of shallow cup-shaped configuration with an intermittent lip portion suspended from said ring segments intermediate their points of juncture.

5. A golf practice device according to claim **4** which comprises,
- means for adjusting the position of connection of each tie-down strap along a respective leg.

6. A golf practice device according to claim **3** wherein,
- said ring segments and said legs are all formed by single segments of hollow tubing.

7. A golf practice device according to claim **1** which comprises,
- a discharge funnel secured in an opening in the bottom of said receptacle adjacent the edge thereof.

8. A golf practice device according to claim **7** which comprises,

a ball-return conduit connected to the lower end of said funnel and extending away from said receptacle at a slightly downward inclination whereby balls can roll therethrough.

9. A golf practice device according to claim 8 wherein,

said ball-return conduit is composed of a plurality of releasably joined relatively-short tubular segments.

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