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SYSTEM FOR PRACTICING GOLF AND PLAYING WITH A PET

Abstract

A portable golf training system and method enable a golfer to practice golf shots and retrieve the practice ball with assistance from a pet trained to fetch. The system includes a hitting mat configured to receive a removable tee, a target mat spaced at a predetermined distance from the hitting mat, and a vertical pin and flag on the target mat that serve as a visible marker. A resilient dog-safe practice ball rests on the tee, and after each shot, the pet locates and returns the ball to the hitting mat. Both the hitting and target mats can be rolled up for convenient transport or storage, and the ball may include various diameters, materials, and surface patterns. The target mat includes features including multiple scoring zones for skill practice. This invention provides an entertaining and portable solution for improving golf shot accuracy while engaging a pet's natural fetching behavior.

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Background/Summary

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS [0001] This application claims priority to U.S. Provisional Application Ser. No. 63/552,486 filed Feb. 12, 2024, hereby incorporated in its entirety at least by reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

[0002] The present invention generally relates to a device or system that can be used by a person to practice golf and play with a pet, but more particularly to a toy “Fetch” designed to facilitate golf practice and play fetch with a dog simultaneously.

2. Description of Related Art

[0003] Devices for playing fetch with a dog are plentiful and well-known. There are even such devices that incorporate aspects of golf. U.S. Pat. No. 7,520,818 B2 teaches a golf club that releases a ball for a dog to chase from the club face when it is swung. There is a soft “golf ball” designed to be hit with a golf club and chased by a dog, by Indestructible Dog, and a golf club designed to hit a tennis ball or other type of ball for a dog to chase, by Birdie Ball. Missing from the prior art, however, is a device for a user to realistically practice a golf shot with their own, normal golf club, with a target to aim at, while also enabling a dog to play fetch in the process without destroying the equipment. The invention described herein has been designed to fill this void.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0004] The following presents a simplified summary of some embodiments of the invention in order to provide a basic understanding of the invention. This summary is not an extensive overview of the invention. It is not intended to identify key/critical elements of the invention or to delineate the scope of the invention. Its sole purpose is to present some embodiments of the invention in a simplified form as a prelude to the more detailed description that is presented later.

[0005] In aspect of the invention, a system for practicing golf and playing with a pet is provided, comprising a hitting mat having an upper surface and configured to receive a removable tee; a tee removably attachable to the hitting mat; a ball configured to be placed on the tee, the ball having a diameter between 2 inches and 3 inches for retrieval by the pet; a target mat spaced apart from the hitting mat, the target mat having an upper surface and configured to receive a removable pin; a pin removably attachable to the target mat and configured to extend substantially vertically therefrom; and a flag coupled to an upper region of the pin, wherein the flag and pin together provide a visible marker for the target mat when placed at a distance from the hitting mat, and the ball's size facilitates easy retrieval by a pet's mouth.

[0006] In one embodiment, the hitting mat and the target mat each comprise artificial turf material on an upper surface and a rubber or rubber-like material on a lower surface to reduce slipping during use. In one embodiment, the hitting mat comprises at least one cutout on its upper surface for selectively positioning the tee. In another embodiment, the target mat comprises a plurality of visually distinct scoring areas, including a center bullseye region; and at least one grommet disposed at or near a perimeter portion of the target mat for securing the target mat to a ground surface. In yet another embodiment, the target mat is constructed from a tarp material. In one embodiment, the ball is formed from a pet-safe resilient material selected from the group consisting of rubber, expanded thermoplastic polyurethane, thermoplastic elastomer, and combinations thereof. In one embodiment, the tee is configured with an enlarged cup to stably support a ball diameter ranging between 2 inches and 3 inches.

[0007] In another aspect of the invention, a portable golf practice system is provided, comprising a rollable hitting mat formed of artificial turf, the hitting mat having at least one aperture configured to receive a removable tee; a rollable target mat formed of tarp or artificial turf material, the target mat including a plurality of scoring regions differentiated by color or markings; and, a resilient, pet-safe practice ball sized to be held in a pet's mouth.

[0008] In yet another aspect of the invention, a method of practicing golf shots with a pet retrieving a practice ball is provided, the method comprising positioning a hitting mat and a target mat at a predetermined distance from one another; placing a ball on a tee disposed on the hitting mat; striking the ball from the tee on the hitting mat toward the target mat; enabling the pet to locate and retrieve the ball after the ball comes to rest on or near the target mat; and receiving the ball returned by the pet at or near the hitting mat for a subsequent shot.

[0009] In one embodiment, the method further comprises rolling up the hitting mat and the target mat into a compact form for transport or storage after practice. In one embodiment, the target mat comprises a plurality of differently colored scoring regions, and the method further comprises determining a scoring result based on which scoring region the ball first contacts. In one embodiment, the method further comprises selecting a desired one of a plurality of apertures in the hitting mat for placing the tee. In one embodiment, the ball is formed of an expanded thermoplastic polyurethane material sized between 2 inches and 3 inches in diameter to facilitate retrieval by the pet.

[0010] The foregoing has outlined rather broadly the more pertinent and important features of the present disclosure so that the detailed description of the invention that follows may be better understood and so that the present contribution to the art can be more fully appreciated. Additional features of the invention, which will be described hereinafter, form the subject of the claims of the invention. It should be appreciated by those skilled in the art that the conception and the disclosed specific methods and structures may be readily utilized as a basis for modifying or designing other structures for carrying out the same purposes of the present disclosure. It should be realized by those skilled in the art that such equivalent structures do not depart from the spirit and scope of the invention as set forth in the appended claims.

Description

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWINGS

[0011] Other features and advantages of the present invention will become apparent when the following detailed description is read in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in which:

[0012] FIG. 1 depicts an overhead view of an embodiment of the present invention.

[0013] FIG. 2 depicts a perspective view of an embodiment of the present invention.

[0014] FIG. 3 depicts a side view of an embodiment of the present invention.

[0015] FIG. 4 depicts a side view of an embodiment of the present invention at an angle from behind the tee and in-line with the target flag.

[0016] FIG. 5 is a top view of a target mat according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[0017] FIG. 6 is a top view of a hitting mat according to an embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EMBODIMENTS OF THE INVENTION

[0018] The following description is provided to enable any person skilled in the art to make and use the invention and sets forth the best modes contemplated by the inventor of carrying out his invention. Various modifications, however, will remain readily apparent to those skilled in the art, since the general principles of the present invention have been defined herein to specifically provide a toy for practicing a golf shot and playing fetch with a pet simultaneously.

[0019] As used herein, the singular forms "a," "an," and "the" include plural references unless the context clearly dictates otherwise. Any reference to "or" herein is intended to encompass "and/or"

unless otherwise stated As used herein, the term “about” or “approximately” refers to an amount that is near the stated amount by about 0%, 5%, or 10%, including increments therein.

Alternatively, the term “about” or “approximately” refers to a range of values within plus or minus 10% of the specified number. As used in this application, the term “substantially” means that the actual value is within about 10% of the actual desired value, particularly within about 5% of the actual desired value and especially within about 1% of the actual desired value of any variable, element or limit set forth herein. As used herein, the term “attached to” refers to direct attachment or attachment via one or more additional elements.

[0020] Referring to FIG. 1, in one embodiment, the hitting mat (10) with a ball (11) in its center is shown along with the target mat (12) at some distance from the hitting mat (10) and the target mat (12) having a pin (13) removably attached to and extending vertically from the top surface of the target mat (12). The target mat (12) distance from the hitting mat (10) may vary depending on the game played, skill level of the golfer, topography of the environment, etc, which will be described in further details below.

[0021] Referring to FIG. 2, the additional components of the embodiment are shown including a hitting tee (20) removably attached to and extending vertically from the top surface of the hitting mat (10) and upon which the ball (11) is resting, as well as a flag (21) attached to the pin (13) and hanging to its side and near its top.

[0022] To use the toy, the user places the hitting mat (10) and the target mat (12) at a distance (D) from each other equal to the distance of golf shot the user would like to practice. The user places the ball (11) on top of the tee (20) extending vertically from the hitting mat (10), and hits the ball with a golf club towards the target mat (12). The target mat (12) is able to be seen at a distance due to the pin (13) extending vertically from it and the flag (21) attached to the pin (13) near its top. A pet, standing near the user and near the hitting mat (10) chases the ball (11) when it is hit, collects the ball (11) in its mouth where it comes to rest on or near the target mat (12), and returns the ball (11) to the user near the hitting mat (10) for the next practice shot. It should be understood that the pet configured to be used with the invention is not illustrated. The present invention is intended for a pet, such as a dog, that is skilled in the game of fetch.

[0023] In another embodiment, the hitting mat (10) and target mat (12) are made of an artificial turf material, are rectangular in shape, and are thin and flexible enough to be rolled up once the tee (20) and pin (13) are removed, for easy transport and storage. In yet other embodiments, the hitting mat (10) may be a variety of shapes, including but not limited to, circular, square, diamond, rhombus, quadrilateral, parallelogram, oval, polygon, or similar shape.

[0024] In another embodiment, the ball (11) is solid, 2.5 inches in diameter and made of an Expanded Thermoplastic Polyurethane (E-TPU) material. The material of the ball (11) is squishy enough to be easily held in a dog's mouth, yet resilient enough to resist tearing from the sharp teeth of a dog. In other embodiments, the ball is made from rubber. In some embodiments, the rubber or TPU material may be covered with a felt material or another soft cover material. In yet another embodiment, the ball is hollow.

[0025] In another embodiment, the ball (11) is 2 inches in diameter for smaller dogs or 3 inches in diameter for larger dogs. Other embodiments range between about 2 inches and about 3 inches, depending on the dog's size and jaw strength.

[0026] In another embodiment, the ball (11) is dimpled like a golf ball and has a logo printed on it.

[0027] In another embodiment, the tee (20) is made of rubber and enlarged to hold and support the 2-3 inch diameter ball (11) within. In other embodiments, the tee (20) is made from any durable flexible material, such as a plastic, elastomer, or thermoplastic elastomer. In other embodiments, the tee (20) is constructed from wood, plastic, or other suitable materials. Regardless of the material selected, the critical aspect of the tee (20) is that it is configured to support the larger diameter ball (11) within. In some embodiment, the tee (20) may be constructed of a sharp point as well known in the art, with a larger head to accommodate the larger diameter ball (11) compared to

a standard tee.

[0028] In another embodiment, the pin (13) is a long, thin, hollow cylinder made of fiberglass, plastic, or similar material and the flag (21) is made of a brightly colored cloth material. The pin (13) and flag (21) are of sufficient size and brightness that they can be seen easily from at least 100 yards away and are sturdy enough to remain vertical in some wind.

[0029] Referring now to FIG. 5, one embodiment of the target mat (12) is illustrated. In this embodiment, the target mat (12) includes a number of grommets (22) positioned within a number of gussets (24). In this embodiment, the target mat (12) is of a square shape, a grommet (22) is positioned in each corner. In one embodiment, the target mat (12) is made of a tarp material, and includes an outer area (26), inner ring area (28), and center area or bullseye (30). The areas, ring, and/or center may be various colors such that the golfer can identify the areas at distance, wherein each area may correspond to different points in various games, as well known in the art. Further, the target mat (12) may be included with graphics, text, etc. It should be understood that this is merely one example of a target mat (12).

[0030] Referring now to FIG. 6, one embodiment of the hitting mat (10) is illustrated. In one embodiment, the hitting mat (10) is circular, however other shapes may be provided as previously discussed. In some embodiments, the hitting mat (10) includes a carpet like material on the top surface to resemble golf course grass, and the bottom surface made of a rubber like material to avoid slipping or movement during use. In one embodiment, the hitting mat (10) includes a plurality of circular cutouts (32) enabling a plurality of areas the golfer may place the golf tee (20; FIG. 2). The hitting mat (10) may include text, graphics, or other branding materials.

[0031] It should be understood that the materials selected herein are for their properties and characteristics, such as durability and resiliency, however the invention should not be limited to these specific materials. Similar materials not mentioned that have similar characteristics are available for use with the present invention.

[0032] Although the invention has been described in considerable detail in language specific to structural features, it is to be understood that the invention defined in the appended claims is not necessarily limited to the specific features described. Rather, the specific features are disclosed as exemplary preferred forms of implementing the claimed invention. Stated otherwise, it is to be understood that the phraseology and terminology employed herein, as well as the abstract, are for the purpose of description and should not be regarded as limiting. Therefore, while exemplary illustrative embodiments of the invention have been described, numerous variations and alternative embodiments will occur to those skilled in the art. Such variations and alternative embodiments are contemplated, and can be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. For example, although ideally used in an outdoor setting, smaller versions of the mats (10, 12) may be employed indoors where space permits, enabling year-round practice. Further, in some embodiment, the target mat (12) may be constructed from a material that floats, enabling the target mat (12) to be placed on a body of water, such as a pool or lake. In this embodiment, the ball (11) may be configured to float as well.

Claims

1. A system for practicing golf and playing with a pet comprising: a hitting mat having an upper surface and configured to receive a removable tee; a tee removably attachable to the hitting mat; a ball configured to be placed on the tee, the ball having a diameter between 2 inches and 3 inches for retrieval by the pet; a target mat spaced apart from the hitting mat, the target mat having an upper surface and configured to receive a removable pin; a pin removably attachable to the target mat and configured to extend substantially vertically therefrom; and a flag coupled to an upper region of the pin, wherein the flag and pin together provide a visible marker for the target mat when placed at a distance from the hitting mat, and the ball's size facilitates easy retrieval by a pet's

mouth.

2. The system of claim 1, wherein the hitting mat and the target mat each comprise artificial turf material on an upper surface and a rubber or rubber-like material on a lower surface to reduce slipping during use.
 3. The system of claim 1, wherein the hitting mat comprises at least one cutout on its upper surface for selectively positioning the tee.
 4. The system of claim 1, wherein the target mat comprises: a plurality of visually distinct scoring areas, including a center bullseye region; and at least one grommet disposed at or near a perimeter portion of the target mat for securing the target mat to a ground surface.
 5. The system of claim 4, wherein the target mat is constructed from a tarp material.
 6. The system of claim 1, wherein the ball is formed from a pet-safe resilient material selected from the group consisting of rubber, expanded thermoplastic polyurethane, thermoplastic elastomer, and combinations thereof.
 7. The system of claim 1, wherein the tee is configured with an enlarged cup to stably support a ball diameter ranging between 2 inches and 3 inches.
 8. A portable golf practice system, comprising: a rollable hitting mat formed of artificial turf, the hitting mat having at least one aperture configured to receive a removable tee; a rollable target mat formed of tarp or artificial turf material, the target mat including a plurality of scoring regions differentiated by color or markings; and, a resilient, pet-safe practice ball sized to be held in a pet's mouth.
 9. A method of practicing golf shots with a pet retrieving a practice ball, the method comprising: positioning a hitting mat and a target mat at a predetermined distance from one another; placing a ball on a tee disposed on the hitting mat; striking the ball from the tee on the hitting mat toward the target mat; enabling the pet to locate and retrieve the ball after the ball comes to rest on or near the target mat; and receiving the ball returned by the pet at or near the hitting mat for a subsequent shot.
 10. The method of claim 9, further comprising rolling up the hitting mat and the target mat into a compact form for transport or storage after practice.
 11. The method of claim 9, wherein the target mat comprises a plurality of differently colored scoring regions, and the method further comprises determining a scoring result based on which scoring region the ball first contacts.
 12. The method of claim 9, further comprising selecting a desired one of a plurality of apertures in the hitting mat for placing the tee.
 13. The method of claim 9, wherein the ball is formed of an expanded thermoplastic polyurethane material sized between 2 inches and 3 inches in diameter to facilitate retrieval by the pet.
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