

THE JOINT EXAMINATION BOARD

PAPER P4

AMENDMENT OF SPECIFICATIONS FOR UNITED KINGDOM PATENT APPLICATIONS IN PROSECUTION, REVOCATION PROCEEDINGS OR OTHERWISE.

12th November 1998

10.00 a.m. – 1.00 p.m.

Please read the following instructions carefully. This is a **THREE HOUR** paper.

1. Where a question permits of reasons being given for the conclusions reached, such reasons should be given.
2. Start each question (but not necessarily each part of each question) on a fresh sheet of paper. In the appropriate boxes at the top of each sheet please enter the designation of the paper, the question number, and your Examination number. Write on one side of the paper only using **BLACK** ink. You must **NOT** staple pages together. **NOT** state your name anywhere in the answers.
3. NO printed matter or other written material may be taken into the examination room.
4. Answers **MUST** be legible. If the examiners cannot read a candidate's answer no marks will be awarded.
5. NO writing whatsoever, including numbering of papers, is allowed prior to the commencement of the examination or after it has finished.

Document checklist:-

Instructions to Candidates – 1 page;

Letter from Client – 1 page;

UK patent Specification GB 2,222,222A – 4 pages description, 1 page claims and 1 sheet drawings ;

Official Letter – 1 page;

GB 999,999 – 2 pages description and 1 sheet drawings;

GB 1,777,777 – 1 page description and 1 sheet drawings;

and

GB 2,222,111 - 1 page description and 1 sheet drawings.

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

In this paper, you should assume that a United Kingdom patent application comprising the attached specification has been filed and that the UK Patent Office has issued the attached Official Letter. You have received instructions for response from your client (SokkaSkills Ltd) in the form of the attached letter.

Your task is to prepare the following:

1. A letter to the UK Patent Office in response to the Official Letter including amended claims if appropriate. Please note that for the purposes of this examination you are not required to propose any amendments to the description of the patent application.
2. A memorandum consisting of notes to provide the basis of advice and comment to your client. These notes should explain the action you have taken and the reasons for those actions, as well as any further actions you recommend. The memorandum should be restricted to patent matters; you are **not** required to consider any other matters such as copyright or design protection,

You should accept the facts given in the paper and base your answer on those facts. In particular, you should **not** make use of any special knowledge that you may have of the subject matter concerned and should assume that the prior art referred to is in fact exhaustive. Where only extracts of documents are presented, you should assume that those extracts contain all relevant material.

You should bear in mind when drafting your response that the claims should afford the maximum valid protection.

If your advice to your client includes a suggestion that one or more divisional applications should be filed, you should draft only the independent claim(s) for the or each divisional and your memorandum should indicate your grounds for believing the filing of such a divisional application to be advisable and the grounds for considering such claim(s) to be acceptable.

You should **not**, however, draft a description for a divisional application, nor any dependent claims.

LETTER FROM CLIENT

Further to our telephone conversation, I enclose copies of our patent application, the letter from the Patent Office which was sent to our previous agent and also the earlier patents which it refers to. You will see that the Patent Office has requested a response by early next week and so I would be grateful if you would take all the necessary action as soon as possible. Unfortunately I shall be away from the office for the next three weeks and so I shall not be available to discuss this matter further with you and leave it to your discretion as to how best to proceed.

SOCCEMASTER (which is the name we give to the product described in our patent application) is very important to us and is proving a huge commercial success. In fact, competing products have already appeared on the market.

The most damaging of these imitations are similar to our product except that the cord is fixed directly to the ball rather than there being a net bag. Also, there is a simple plastic handle which the user holds in his hand, rather than a wristband. The length adjustment mechanism is identical, however.

As I explained to you on the telephone, we originally filed our application through another agent. However, when I discussed the letter from the Patent Office with him he told me that our application would have to be narrowed right down and that we would not be able to stop sales of the knock-off.

Since then the situation has got even worse. We have now heard of another product which has been sold outside Premier League grounds. This has a cord which is fixed directly to the ball at one end and is formed into a simple loop at the other end. Apparently you can either hold onto the loop or you can slip your hand through the loop and use it as a wristband. There is no way of adjusting the length of the cord.

There was nothing like any of these products around until we started marketing our product, and we feel that we should be able to put a stop to the competition. We didn't know about the second copy when I spoke to our previous agent but I suppose he would have said the same thing about that one too.

I was not happy about the advice we were given and when I made some enquiries I discovered that our previous agent was not a qualified patent agent at all. That is why we have come to you and I hope that you can deal with the matter more constructively.

Please do what you can. SOCCEMASTER is proving very successful so (within reason) we are prepared to spend whatever it takes to protect the idea as fully as possible. As requested, I enclose a cheque as payment on account for your services.

UK Patent Specification GB 2,222,222A

Application No 96 12345.6

Filed 21 May 1996 (with no claim to priority)

Association Football Training Apparatus

5

This invention relates generally to training devices for association football, and more particularly to a combined training device and carrier for footballs or the like.

10 Association football (or "soccer") is probably the most popular outdoor sport in the world today. Great emphasis is placed by coaches on the development of players', particularly youthful players', abilities in the basic skills of the game, such as ball control, kicking and heading. However, when practising with a normal ball, the player expends much energy in constantly retrieving the ball and correspondingly little time in actual practice. Certain skills, such as passing, can be practised by players working in pairs or groups, but it is difficult for a
15 player practising alone to develop these skills.

The present invention provides apparatus which facilitates the development of soccer skills without the need for the soccer ball constantly to be retrieved, and without the need for
20 players to work in pairs or groups.

20

According to the invention, a training device for association football comprises a tether connected at a first end thereof to a football and adapted at the other end thereof to be attached to or held by a user.

25 The training device according to the invention is advantageous primarily in that it enables the user to practice soccer skills, such as kicking, trapping, kneeing, throwing, dribbling, back heeling and heading, without constantly having to retrieve the ball. The assembly can be used indoors or outdoors and allows a novice to learn the basics of soccer or a more advanced player to sharpen his or her skills. The device allows the user to practice in a limited area and without assistance from others. After use, in preferred embodiments the device can be used
30 to transport and store the soccer ball.

The tether is preferably a braided or twisted nylon cord or rope or is formed of some other substantially inelastic material such as polypropylene. The use of a substantially inelastic

material to form the tether is advantageous because it is long-lasting and can handle the stress of repeated stretching forces incurred during use of the invention. The use of inelastic material for the tether provides an extra degree of safety because the recoil force of an inelastic material is much lower than that of an elastic material, thus reducing the likelihood that the recoil force might injure the user.

The means by which the tether is connected to the ball preferably comprises a net bag within which the ball is received. The net is preferably formed of inelastic or other suitable non-stretchable material. The net provides a convenient means for carrying and storing the football when the apparatus is not in use. In other embodiments, the ball may be fixed directly to the end of the tether or may be held in a cage formed from straps of fabric or the like. The use of a net is preferred, however, as it enables a standard football to be used and interferes very little with movement of the ball which therefore behaves in essentially the same manner as a free football.

Another advantage of an inelastic tether is that the effective length of the tether remains constant during use. It is desirable for many exercises that the length of the tether be fixed, rather than that it should vary as would be the case if the tether were of elastic material. Having said this, it is particularly preferred that the tether be adjustable in length so that the effective separation of the ball from the user may be optimised for the particular exercise being performed. Thus, the tether most preferably incorporates adjustment means by which the effective length of the tether may be fixed at any one of a range of effective values. For example, for heading exercises it may be desirable for the length of the tether to be relatively great, while for practising trapping of the ball it may be preferable for the tether to be relatively short. Also, the effective length of the tether may be adjusted to suit the user's size, the necessary length for an adult being obviously greater than that for a child. The adjustment means preferably comprises a length adjuster having a body part and a relatively movable locking slide part defining with said body part two paths at opposite sides of the slide part. The tether then extends through one of the paths to the net and then through the other path of the length adjuster such that a free end of the tether is supported between the slide part and the body part of the length adjuster. This arrangement facilitates simple adjustment of the length of the tether. To shorten the tether, the length adjuster is retained in the user's hand and the bottom part of the tether is pulled; to lengthen the tether, the length

UK Patent Specification GB 2,222,222A

adjuster is simply held while the user pulls back on the top part of the tether. The length adjuster also serves to lock the tether against movement when the ball is kicked.

The tether may be held by the user simply by virtue of its free end being grasped in the user's hand. More preferably, however, the free end of the tether is attached to a handle to facilitate the user's grip on it, or is formed into a loop. The loop may be held in the user's hand or may fit around the user's wrist. Most preferably, the end of the tether is provided with loop means which, in use, surround or are fastened around the user's wrist. This has the advantage that it leaves both hands free, enabling the user to practice throw-ins. Also, the user may find it easier to maintain his or her balance if he or she does not have to concentrate on holding the tether.

The invention will now be described in greater detail, by way of illustration only, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which

Figure 1 is a perspective view of a combined game ball training device / carrier of the present invention; and

Figure 2 is a view of the preferred type of length adjuster for use with the present invention.

Referring first to Figure 1, the combined game ball training device / carrier of the present invention is generally designated 10. The assembly includes a net 12 for receiving and holding the game ball 14, a wristband 16 adapted to be fitted around a user's wrist, a length adjuster 18 and a tether cord or rope 20. The net is formed of inelastic material. The tether 20 is a braided nylon cord.

Referring now to Figure 2, the length adjuster preferably includes a body part 22 and a relatively movable locking slide part 24 defining with said body part two paths 26 and 28 at opposite sides of the slide part. The slide part has two toothed opposite side faces 30 and 32 each having a number of teeth. The slide part of the adjuster has a handle portion 34 forming a handle loop accessible at the outside of the body part. A user can insert a finger through this loop and pull the slide element to move the slide from a locking position to an adjustment position. The slide part 24 also preferably includes two laterally projecting feeler arms 25

which are engageable laterally outward against the inner sides of the tether extending through the paths 26 and 28.

The tether is secured between the wristband 16 and the net 12 and is adjustable in length to facilitate use of the invention by children as well as more experienced, older players. As seen in Figure 2, the tether extends through one of the paths (path 26) of the length adjuster, to and back from the net and then through the other path (path 28) of the length adjuster. The portion of the tether that returns from the net is brought alongside outer portions 33 of the body part and then extended back through the adjuster to enable the device to serve as an adjuster as well as a locking device. Outer portion 33 may include a tab or other structural element (not shown) for securing the tether against the body part. A free end 35 of the tether includes a knot 37 or other suitable retainer and is supported between the slide part and the body part of the length adjuster. This arrangement facilitates simple adjustment of the length of the tether. To shorten the tether, the length adjuster is retained in the user's hand and the bottom part 39 of the tether is pulled; to lengthen the tether, the length adjuster is simply held while the user pulls back on the wristband 16.

Once the tether is threaded through the length adjuster, as shown in Figure 2, the slide part 24 need not be locked or unlocked in adjusting the tether length or otherwise during use. Length adjustments are made by merely holding the body part 22. The slide part 24 moves along automatically and then locks. The length adjuster thus serves to lock the tether against movement when the ball is kicked, dribbled, thrown, or otherwise manipulated. The length adjuster facilitates different types of exercises. Kicking exercises require a longer tether while kneeling and other exercises are facilitated with a shorter tether.

The wristband 16 may be held in the user's hand. Usually, however, the wristband 16 is retained around the user's wrist. The wristband 16 comprises a woven fabric strap which can be formed into a loop and fastened by means of a hook-and-loop (touch-and-close or VELCRO (RTM) type) fastener. The wristband 16 is particularly advantageous for over the head throwing exercises because, during such exercises, the user must open his or her hands and fully release the ball. The use of the wristband 16 ensures that the user retains complete control of the assembly during such throwing exercises.

Claims

1. A training device for association football comprises a tether connected at a first end thereof to a football and adapted at the other end thereof to be attached to or held by a user.

5

2. A device as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the tether is of a substantially inelastic material.

3. A device as claimed in Claim 2, wherein the tether is a braided or twisted nylon cord
10 or rope.

4. A device as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the means by which the tether is connected to the ball comprises a net bag within which the ball is received.

15 5. A device as claimed in Claim 4, wherein the net is formed of inelastic or other suitable non-stretchable material.

6. A device as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the tether incorporates a length adjuster having a body part and a relatively movable locking slide part defining with said
20 body part two paths at opposite sides of the slide part, such that the tether extends through one of the paths to the net and then through the other path of the length adjuster such that a free end of the tether is supported between the slide part and the body part of the length adjuster.

25 7. A training device for association football substantially as hereinbefore described and as illustrated in the accompanying drawings.

FIG. 1

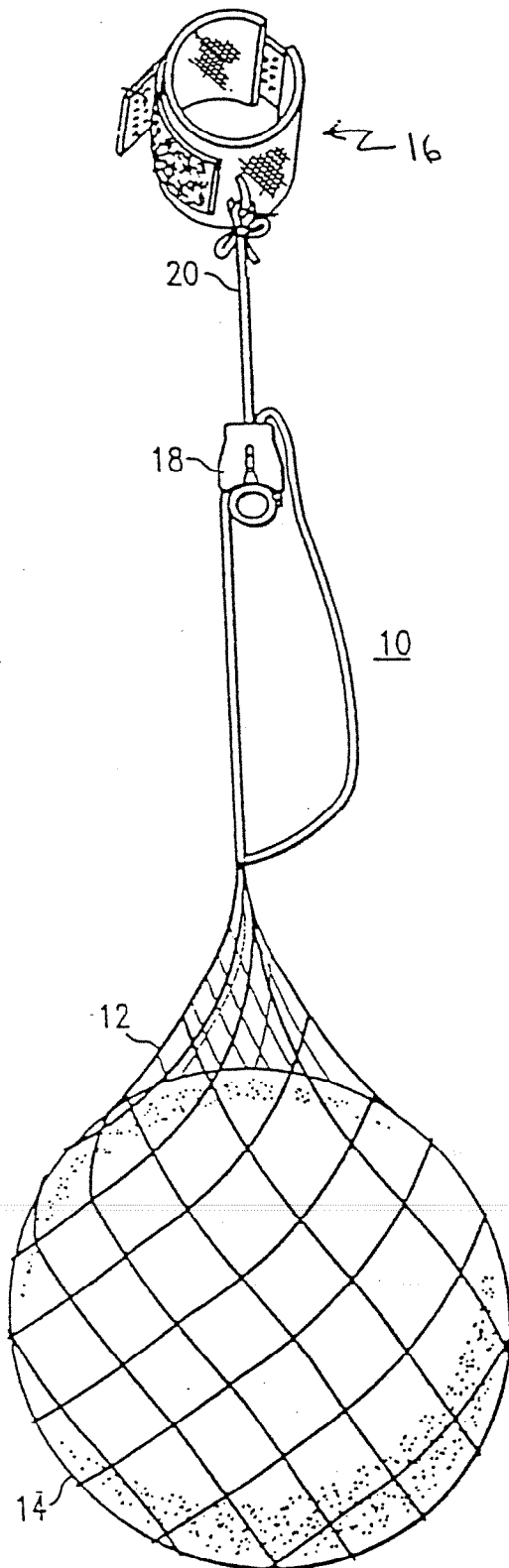
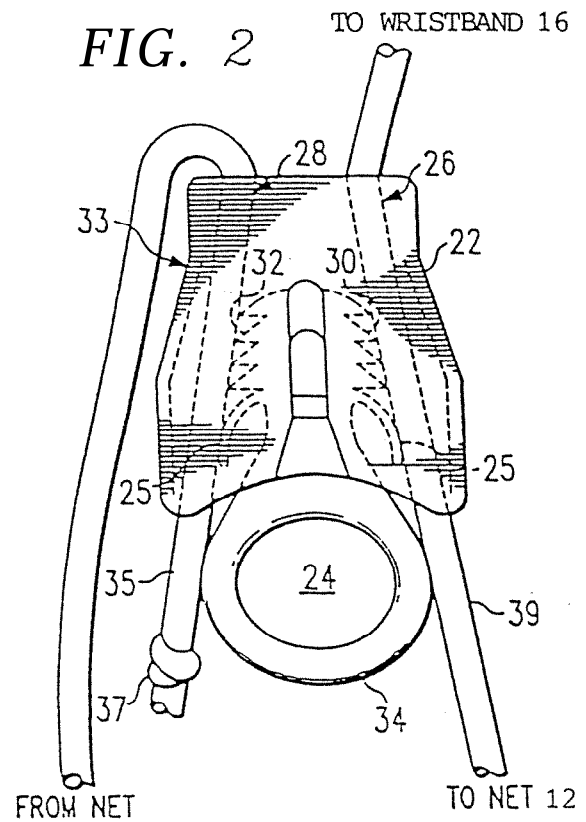


FIG. 2



OFFICIAL LETTER

Application No: GB 96 12345.6
Applicant : SokkaSkills Ltd
Date of report : 15 May 1998

Examiner :K Wolstenholme

17 November 1998

Latest date for reply :

Patents Act 1977
Examination Report under Section 18(3)

Basis of the examination

My examination is based on the specification as filed.

Novelty

It appears, as a result of a search under Section 17, that your application does not comply with the requirements of Section 1(1)(a) in that the invention, so far as claimed in Claim 1 at least, is not new having regard to the matter contained in the patent specifications or other documents cited below:-

GB 999,999 (CHARLES)

GB 1,777,777 (TOSHACK)

GB 2,222,111 (GIGGS)

-

British Patent GB 999,999

(Charles)

Published 1 May 1964

5 (Extract)

This invention relates to improvements in soccer training.

The invention provides a soccer training device, comprising:

- 10 a. a soccer ball;
- b. a belt adapted to be worn around the waist of a player and an elongate tube extending along and attached to part of the belt, the openings of the tube facing toward the front of the player when the belt is worn by the player; and
- 15 c. a cord passing through said tube and fastened at one end thereof to the ball and at the other end thereof to a handle.

A preferred embodiment of the invention will now be described, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which

20

Figure 1 shows a player wearing a device in accordance with the present invention;

Figure 2 is a perspective view of the device; and

- 25 Figure 3 is a detailed sectional view of the point of attachment of a cord forming part of the device to a football also forming part of the device.

Referring to the drawings, a soccer training device in accordance with the present invention comprises a soccer ball 1, attachment means 2, a cord 3, a tube 4 which is attached to a belt 5, and a handle 6. The cord 3 passes through the tube 4, one end of the cord 3 being attached to the ball 1 by the attachment means 2 and the other end being attached to the handle 6. The cord 3 slides freely within the tube 4.

British Patent GB 999,999

In use, a player fits the belt 5 around his waist and grasps the handle 6 in one hand. After the ball 1 has been kicked away, it can be recovered by the player tugging sharply on the handle 6. The ball 1 thereby springs back to the player, ready to be kicked again.

The attachment means 2 is shown in detail in Figure 3. A pin 7 has a neck portion 9 which passes through the skin of the ball 1 such that the ball 1 is captivated between an enlarged end portion 8 of the pin 7 and a flange 10 external to the ball 1. The flange 10 serves as a guide for a swivel 11 having a safety latch 12. The end of the cord 3 is formed into a loop 13 around the swivel 11 and knotted by knot 13. The swivel 11 allows the ball to twirl freely with the result that the string 3 will not tangle during use.

FIG. 1

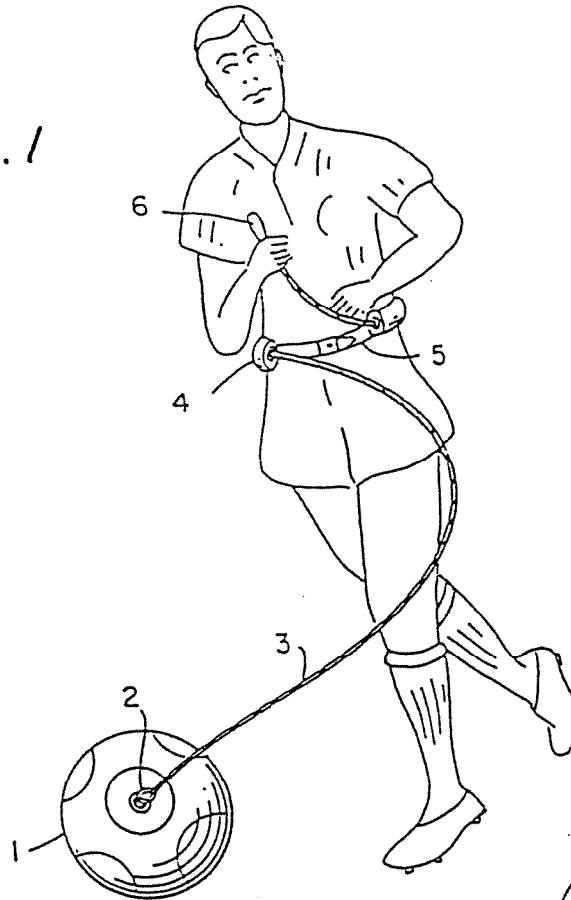


FIG. 2

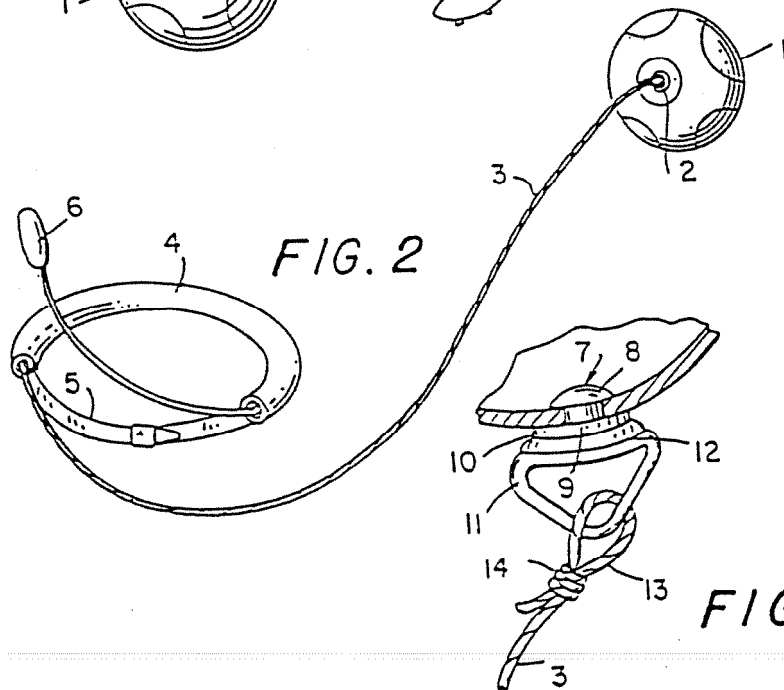


FIG. 3

British Patent GB 1,777,777

(J Toshack)

Published 11 November 1976

5 (Extract)

The preferred embodiment of the invention is shown in the drawing.

10 A tent stake 1 is made of steel and is 4" long so that it can be anchored in the ground. An "S"-shaped metal hook 2 connects the stake 1 to a swivel 3, which in turn connects the hook 2 to an elongate cord 4. The swivel 3 prevents the cord 4 twisting during use.

The cord 4 is elastic and approximately five feet in length. It stretches two to three feet in use. Loops 4a and 4b are formed at both ends and held in place by two metal closing clamps.

15

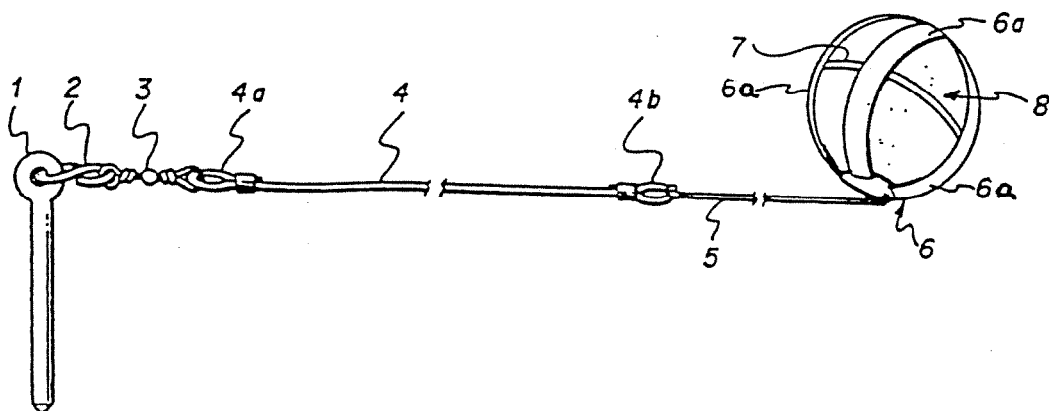
A braided nylon cord 5 has one end which goes through loop 4b and is tied and taped. The other end is secured to a ball holder 6 as described below.

20 The ball holder 6 is made from two pieces of 1" red cotton webbing, sewn together at the centre to form a cross. Each limb 6a of the cross is turned under and sewn with heavy duty thread to form a loop at the free end of the limb 6a. The braided nylon cord 5 is then strung through each loop to form a ring, and then tied to the main cord 4 and taped.

25 Halfway up the side of each of the four limbs 6a an elastic band 7 is sewn to each limb 6a to go around a ball 8 and make the ball holder 6 adjustable to any standard ball. The elastic band 7 passes around the ball 8, and braided nylon cord 5 passes through the loops in the ends of each of the four limbs 6a.

30 In use, the stake 1 is driven into the ground roughly in the centre of the area on which the user is playing. The ball 8 can then be kicked, the elasticity of the elongate cord 4 causing the ball 8 to return to the vicinity of the stake 1.

It is also possible for the stake to be held in the user's hand, which may allow further control over the motion and position of the ball 8.



British Patent Specification GB 2,222,111

(R Giggs)

Filed 10 May 1996 (with no claim to priority)

Published 13 November 1997

StudentBounty.com

5 (Extract)

The invention will now be described in greater detail, by way of illustration only, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which

Figure 1 shows a player kicking a ball held in a net on the end of a cord attached to a device
10 in accordance with the invention; and

Figure 2 shows a detailed view of the mechanism of the device.

In the preferred embodiment of the invention, shown in Figure 1, a ball 1 is held in a net 2 on the end of a cord 3, the other end of which is stored in a rewind device 4 with a handle 5 by
15 which it is held by the player.

When the ball 1 is kicked, it withdraws the cord 3 from the device 4. By pressing on an operating button 10 the user can rewind the cord 3 into the mechanism 4. When the button
20 10 is released the ball is again available for a second "shot".

Figure 2 shows the rewind device 4 in detail. When the ball 1 is kicked the cord 3 is unwound from a reel 6 which rotates freely. If the user wishes to retrieve the ball 1, he presses the button 10, compressing a spring 9 and making electrical contact at the point 11 and connecting a battery 12 to a motor 7 which therefore begins to turn. At the same time, a
2.5 clutch plate 8 engages the reel 6, causing it to rotate and thereby to rewind the cord 3. The user maintains the pressure on the button 10 until the ball 1 has returned to the desired position.

Fig. 1

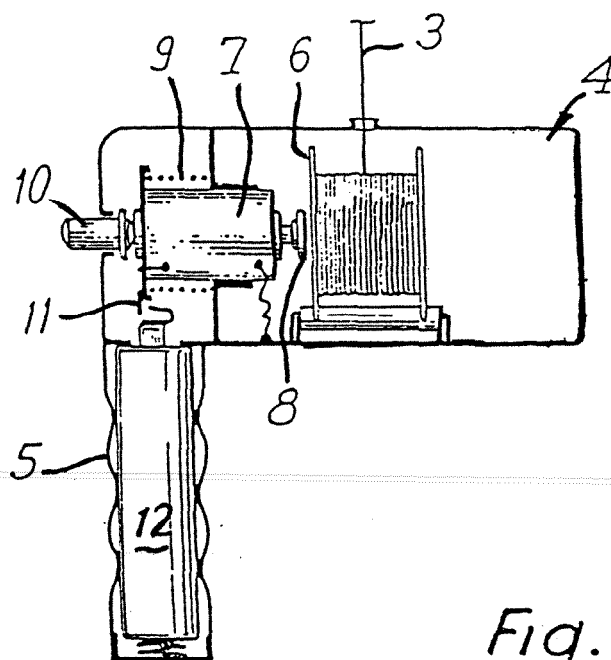
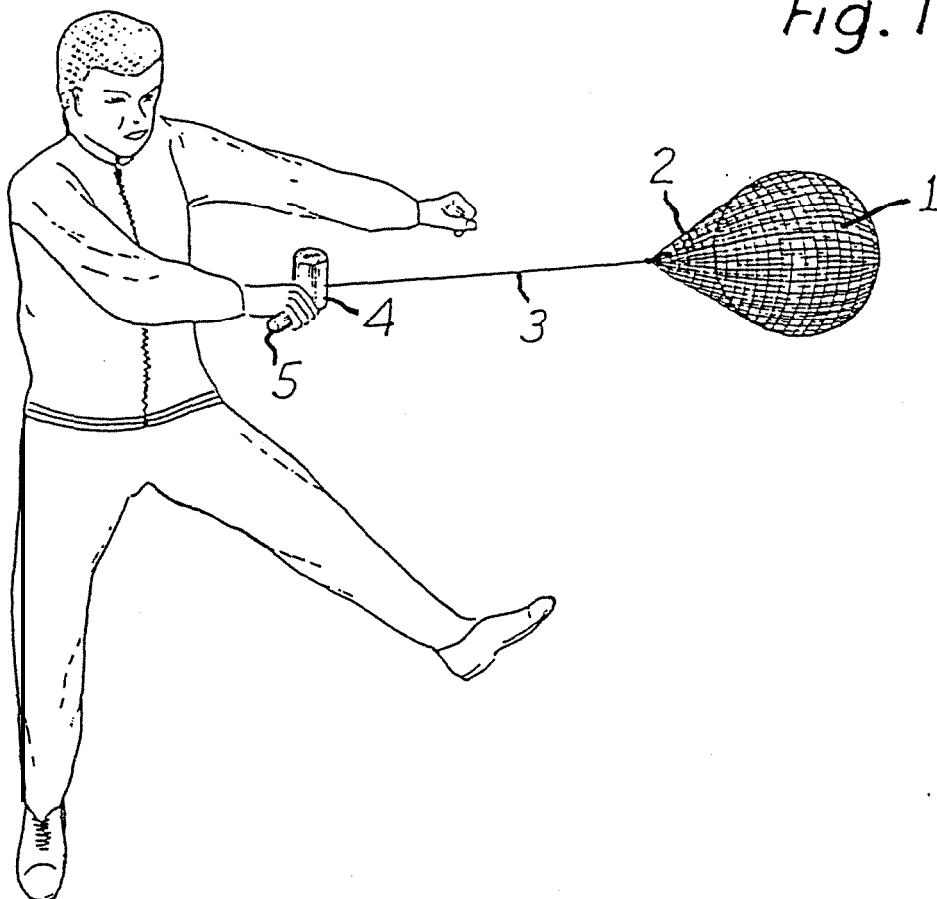


Fig. 2