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(54) **GOLF PRACTICE TENT**

(57) A golf practice tent comprising a tent having a ceiling, a floor and an open face for accepting golf balls that have been launched into the tent; a rigid frame structure at least partially external to the tent that provides structural support for the tent; and a planar net coupled

to the ceiling of the tent and separated from a rear panel of the tent, such that the net hangs loosely from the ceiling and extends towards the floor, wherein the net is placed behind the open face such that golf balls that have been launched into the tent contact the net.

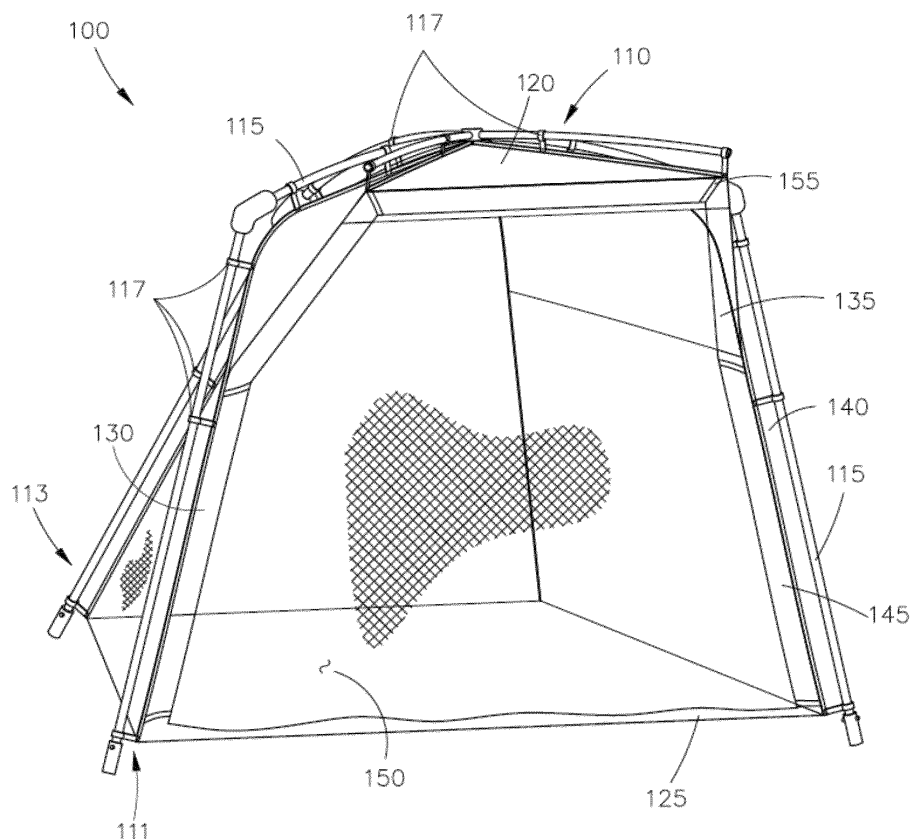


Fig. 1

Description

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0001] The present invention relates to the field of sports, and more specifically to training aids for the sport of golf.

BACKGROUND

[0002] The game of golf is well known and enjoyed by multitudes of people around the world. It is well known that many golf players practice the game of golf by hitting golf balls using various golf clubs at driving ranges. It is also well known that many golf players practice golf by hitting golf balls into a net surrounded by a rigid metal frame. Additionally, it is also well known in the golfing industry to practice golf by hitting a golf ball directly into a golf practice tent. Such tents use panels that are generally comprised of a taut mesh or net.

[0003] Regarding driving ranges, one problem associated with said ranges is that a golfer must have a large amount of space in order to practice hitting a golf ball. Additionally, driving ranges can be expensive and an individual may not be able to use the driving range in inclement weather. Regarding nets surrounded by rigid frames, one problem associated with said nets is that in many cases such rigid frames cannot be easily broken down and transported. Another problem associated with a net surrounded by a rigid frame is that a user may have to have a dedicated area in order to store such devices. Further, a common problem with nets surrounded by rigid frames is that golf balls hit at high speeds can puncture the net or other fabric.

[0004] Currently in the golf industry market, when using a golf practice tent, a golfer will hit the ball directly into the panel or tent. As a golf ball leaves the face of the club upon being struck, a golf ball has a high velocity which can be dangerous. One problem currently associated with golf training tents having rigid or taut mesh panels, is that as the golf ball strikes the taut panel, there is a danger or risk that the golf ball will burst through the panels of the tents. As a result, many golf practice tent manufacturers and distributors encourage players to use a soft or plastic ball instead of a hard golf ball, so that the risk of damaging the tent and risk of injury to a golfer is reduced. Many golf players become frustrated or dislike using these plastic or fake golf balls, however, because such balls do not accurately simulate the feel of playing golf.

[0005] As a result, there exists a need for improvements over the prior art and more particularly for a golf training aid that allows a user to use a real golf ball and which decreases safety risks to the user and the likelihood of damage to the golf training aid.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0006] A golf training tent is disclosed. This Summary is provided to introduce a selection of disclosed concepts in a simplified form that are further described below in the Detailed Description including the drawings provided. This Summary is not intended to identify key features or essential features of the claimed subject matter. Nor is this Summary intended to be used to limit the claimed subject matter's scope.

[0007] In one embodiment, a golf practice tent is disclosed. The golf practice tent comprises a tent having a ceiling, a floor and an open face for accepting golf balls that have been launched into the tent; a rigid frame structure at least partially external to the tent that provides structural support for the tent; and a planar net coupled to the ceiling of the tent and separated from a rear panel of the tent, such that the net hangs loosely from the ceiling and extends towards the floor, wherein the net is placed behind the open face such that golf balls that have been launched into the tent contact the net.

[0008] Additional aspects of the disclosed embodiment will be set forth in part in the description which follows, and in part will be obvious from the description, or may be learned by practice of the disclosed embodiments. The aspects of the disclosed embodiments will be realized and attained by means of the elements and combinations particularly pointed out in the appended claims. It is to be understood that both the foregoing general description and the following detailed description are exemplary and explanatory only and are not restrictive of the disclosed embodiments, as claimed.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0009] The accompanying drawings, which are incorporated in and constitute part of this specification, illustrate embodiments of the invention and together with the description, serve to explain the principles of the disclosed embodiments. The embodiments illustrated herein are presently preferred, it being understood, however, that the invention is not limited to the precise arrangements and instrumentalities shown, wherein:

FIG. 1 is a front prospective view of a golf practice tent, according to an example embodiment;
FIG. 2 is another front prospective view of the golf practice tent, according to an example embodiment;
FIG. 3 is a side cross-sectional view of an extension member of the practice golf tent, according to an example embodiment;
FIG. 4 is a side perspective view of the golf practice tent, according to an example embodiment;
FIG. 5 is a front view of the golf practice tent, according to another example embodiment;
FIG. 6 is a side view of the golf practice tent, according to another example embodiment;
FIG. 7 is a top view of the golf practice tent, according

to another example embodiment.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0010] The following detailed description refers to the accompanying drawings. Whenever possible, the same reference numbers are used in the drawings and the following description to refer to the same or similar elements. While disclosed embodiments may be described, modifications, adaptations, and other implementations are possible. For example, substitutions, additions or modifications may be made to the elements illustrated in the drawings, and the methods described herein may be modified by substituting reordering, or adding additional stages or components to the disclosed methods and devices. Accordingly, the following detailed description does not limit the disclosed embodiments. Instead, the proper scope of the disclosed embodiments is defined by the appended claims.

[0011] The disclosed embodiments improve upon the problems with the prior art by providing a golf training tent having a net coupled to the tent. The disclosed embodiments improve over the prior art by providing a golf training tent that allows a user to use real golf balls while reducing the risk of physical injury and likelihood of damage to the practice training tent. Additionally, the invention improves over the prior art by providing a collapsible training aid which can be easily carried and stored both indoors and outdoors. Lastly, the disclosed embodiments improve over the prior art by providing a golf training tent that retains golf balls that have been hit into the tent at any speed, thereby facilitating the retrieval of the golf balls for the player.

[0012] Referring now to the Figures, FIG. 1 illustrates a front perspective view of a golf practice tent 100, according to an example embodiment. The golf practice tent comprises a tent 110. The tent comprises a fabric or material supported by a rigid frame structure comprising a plurality of rigid frame members 115. In one embodiment, the rigid frame structure is at least partially external to the tent. Each of the rigid frame members has an elongated bar shaped body that may be hingedly or movably connected to other frame members so that the frame structure can be collapsible, which is well known to those skilled in the art of tent making. The fabric of tent may be attached to the tent by a plurality of fasteners 117. In the present embodiment, such fasteners are straps. However, other fasteners may be used. The fabric or material may be formed from cotton, canvas, nylon, mesh, netting, material having water resistant properties, felt, polyester or any combination thereof. Such materials are not meant to be a limitation and other materials may be used. The frame structure elements may be formed from materials such as aluminum, fiberglass, metals, wood, plastic or any combination thereof. As with the type of fabric used, such materials are not meant to be a limitation and other materials may be used.

[0013] Note that in one embodiment, the fabric of tent

110 may be attached to the tent by a system of sleeves or a plurality of fasteners, which may comprise, for example, a hook, a toggle with straps, or hook and loop fabric tape. The disclosed embodiments support one or more of the various forms of attaching the fabric to the tent, as well as the various forms of fasteners.

[0014] In the present embodiment, the tent is a collapsible tent. In FIG. 1, the tent is in the fully built or assembled position. When not in use, the tent may be collapsed into a fully folded position so that the tent may be easily transported and stored. Collapsible tents are well known to those skilled in the art. In other embodiments, the tent may be a permanently erected tent. Also, in other embodiments (not shown), the panels of the tent may comprise separate sections that are joined together instead of one piece of continuous fabric. Note that in one embodiment, the collapsible tent is configured for deployment and collapsing very quickly, such as within less than 10 seconds, and wherein the collapsible tent is configured for placement on any substantially horizontal surface, such that a consumer may utilize said tent in any indoor or outdoor location that has enough room for said tent.

[0015] The tent has a front end 111 which opposes a rear end 113. As shown in FIG. 1, when supported by the rigid frame structure, the fabric forms a ceiling 120, a floor 125 opposing the ceiling, and a rear panel 130, which spans from the floor to the ceiling at the rear end of the tent. The tent may also include side panels 135 that span from the rear end to the front end of the tent. In one embodiment, the side panels may span from the ceiling to the floor. However, in other embodiments, the side panels may only partially span from the ceiling to the floor (as shown in FIG. 1).

[0016] At the front end, the tent may include fabric that forms a front panel 140 that has an open face or front opening 145 that provides access to inside the tent. The open face is adapted to accept golf balls that will be launched at the tent. In one embodiment, the top segment of the front panel 140 acts to stop golf balls that have been hit into the net 150 and continue rolling upwards along the net and then back towards the golfer. In this embodiment, the top segment of the front panel acts as a barrier to stop golf balls that are rolling out of the tent and back towards the golfer. In another embodiment, the side segments of the front panel 140 act to stop golf balls that have been hit into the net 150 and roll along the sides of the tent and back towards the golfer. In yet another embodiment (see FIG. 4), the disclosed embodiments include triangular shaped panels (such as panel 410) located in the corners where the side segments of the front panel contact the floor. In this embodiment, the triangular shaped panels act as barriers to stop golf balls that are rolling out of the tent via the corners of the tent. Note that although this embodiment describes triangular shaped panels, the disclosed embodiments support other shapes for the panels, such as rectangular, circular, or irregular. Also, said triangular shaped panels may be col-

lapsible.

[0017] In yet another embodiment (see FIG. 4), the disclosed embodiments include rectangular shaped panels 420 that extend laterally outwards from the tent and contact the floor. Each rectangular shaped panel 420 (one on the right side and/or one on the left side of the tent) would be attached to the tent and extend laterally outwards from the tent, thereby producing a planar face that faces the golfer. In this embodiment, the rectangular shaped panels 420 act as barriers to stop golf balls that have been hit towards the tent but that miss the tent altogether. These panels facilitate stopping retrieving balls that have been mis-hit or misdirected when hit towards the tent. Note that although this embodiment describes rectangular shaped panels, the disclosed embodiments support other shapes for the panels, such as triangular, circular, or irregular. Also, said rectangular shaped panels may be collapsible.

[0018] A planar net 150 is coupled to the ceiling of the tent 120. Optionally, the net 150 may be alternatively or additionally attached to the sides of the tent (135, 130, 140, etc.) as well. The net may comprise material such as nylon, knotted twine, rope, or any other material used for making nets, which is well known to those skilled in the art. The openings in the net should be adapted such as to prevent golf balls from passing through the net. The net should be attached such that it is separated from the rear panel 130 and such that it hangs loosely from the ceiling and extends towards the floor 125 of the tent. A plurality of fasteners or straps 155 spaced along the net portions of the net attach the net to portions of the tent. In the present embodiment, the net is positioned behind the front opening or open face and attached to the front panel and ceiling by straps. Additionally, straps may also be used to attach a portion of the net to the back panel as long as the net hangs loosely from the ceiling to the floor. The net must be somewhat loose when it is hung so that when a golf ball is launched into the net, the net can absorb the velocity of the golf ball and thereby preventing or reducing damage to the tent and injury to individuals.

[0019] In one embodiment, the net may also include a pocket or pouch 160 (see FIG. 2). The pocket or pouch comprises a circular opening on the net that is sized for receiving golf balls and fabric or material that forms a sac of the pocket that is adapted for retaining any golf ball that enters into the opening. Additionally, the size of the opening of the pocket or pouch may be changed to adjust for the level of difficulty. For example, to make it more difficult for a player or individual to hit a ball into the opening of the pouch or pocket, the dimensions of the opening may be decreased. Alternatively, to make it easier for a player or individual to hit a ball into the opening of the pouch or pocket, the dimensions of the opening may be increased.

[0020] In operation, a player or individual may use the pouch on the net for practice or games. A player may have a goal to strike a golf ball such that the golf ball

goes through the opening of the pouch into the sac. A player may use this goal to practice various chip shots and other golf shots that require accuracy.

[0021] Note that in one embodiment, the floor 125 may be coupled (via stitching or via the use of a zipper) solely to the rear panel 130 of the tent. This allows for the floor 125 to be rolled up into a cylindrical form 502 (see FIG. 5), which allows for users to have access to the ground, which may be desirable in certain situations, such as at a park or at the beach.

[0022] FIG. 2 illustrates another front perspective view of the golf practice tent, according to another embodiment. FIG. 2 further illustrates straps 155 attaching portions of net to various portions of the tent 100. FIG. 2 illustrates that straps attach the net to the rear panel 130 as well as to various positions on the front panel 140 of the tent.

[0023] In one embodiment, the frame members 115 at the rear end 113 of the tent can comprise an extension member 205 for increasing the length of the rear frame members. FIG. 2 illustrates the rear frame members of the tent in an extended position. In such extended position, the length of the frame members at the rear end 113 of the tent are longer than the frame members at the front end 111 of the tent and as a result, the floor or bottom section 125 of the tent is tilted towards the front end of the tent. When the floor is tilted towards the front end of the tent, angle β between the floor and the ground causes any golf ball that enters into the tent, and not substantially held by the net, to roll towards the front end of the tent. Additionally, the net may also comprise a drawstring for removing slack from the net. Such drawstrings are well known to those skilled in the art and can be used to tighten the net so that when golf balls are hit into the net, and when the floor of the tent is tilted towards the front end of the tent forming angle β , golf balls hit into the net may be more easily retrieved.

[0024] In one embodiment, the inclined floor 125 may be supported by side reinforcement rods 602 (see FIG. 6), which may be composed of fiberglass poles or other rigid materials. The side reinforcement rods 602 may be located on both bottom sides of the tent 100 to prevent the floor 125 from slacking or producing a U-shaped depression, therefore maintaining tension on said floor. The tightened and tilted floor 125 comprises a retrieval system for golf balls hit into the tent 100.

[0025] FIG. 3 further illustrates one embodiment of a means for extending the length of a frame member. FIG. 3 is a cross-sectional view of the extension member 205 of the rear frame members taken along line A in FIG. 2. The extension member can be a tubular shaped body that is adapted to receive the lower end of a frame member 115. Along the tubular shaped body are a pair of opposing holes or openings 310. Each of the opposing holes are adapted to receive a movable button 315 on the lower end of the frame member 115. Each of the buttons can be adapted to move inward when inward forces are applied to it and are adapted to return to their

original position when such forces are removed. In operation, the forces applied to the button can move the buttons inward so that the button can clear the body of the extension member allowing the rigid frame member to move between the sets of holes on the body of the extension member 205. After the frame member is at the preferred position, and the buttons align with a set of holes, the inward forces can be removed from the button allowing the buttons to return to their original position and locking the frame member into position inside the extension member. The extension member allow a user to adjust the length of the rigid frame members depending on the preference of the user. However other embodiments, are within the scope and spirit of the invention.

[0026] In one embodiment, the extension members may be composed of a flexible material, such as plastic, polymers, metal, alloys, ceramic, carbon fibers, or of other materials with characteristics that allow for flexibility of the extension member.

[0027] Although the subject matter has been described in language specific to structural features and/or methodological acts, it is to be understood that the subject matter defined in the appended claims is not necessarily limited to the specific features or acts described above. Rather, the specific features and acts described above are disclosed as example forms of implementing the claims.

Claims

1. A golf practice tent comprising:

a tent having a ceiling, a floor and an open face for accepting golf balls that have been launched into the tent;
a rigid frame structure at least partially external to the tent that provides structural support for the tent; and
a planar net coupled to the ceiling of the tent and separated from a rear panel of the tent, such that the net hangs loosely from the ceiling and extends towards the floor, wherein the net is placed behind the open face such that golf balls that have been launched into the tent contact the net.

2. The golf practice tent of claim 1, wherein a plurality of fasteners are spaced along net, and wherein each fastener is adapted for attaching a portion of the net to a portion of the tent.

3. The golf practice tent of claim 1, wherein the tent is changeable between a collapsed position and a built position.

4. The golf practice tent of claim 1, wherein each of the fasteners is a strap.

5. The golf practice tent of claim 2, wherein the net further comprises at least one pouch adapted for receiving a golf ball.

6. The golf practice tent of claim 1, wherein the rigid frame structure comprises a set of front frame members and a set of rear frame members, wherein each of the rear frame members are extendable such when the rear members are extended the floor of the tent is tilted towards the open face of the tent.

7. The golf practice tent of claim 3, wherein the net further comprises a drawstring for removing slack from the net.

8. A golf practice tent comprising a planar net for coupling to a ceiling of the tent and separated from a rear panel of the tent, such that the net hangs loosely from the ceiling, wherein the net is proximate to a front opening of the tent such that golf balls that have been launched into the tent contact the net, wherein a rigid frame structure provide structural support to the tent, and wherein a floor of the tent is angled to allow for golf balls on the floor to roll out of the tent.

9. The golf practice tent from claim 8, wherein a plurality of fasteners are spaced along the net and wherein each fastener is adapted for attaching a portion of the net to a portion of the tent.

10. The golf practice tent from claim 9, wherein at least two of the plurality of fasteners attach the net proximate to the front opening of the tent.

11. The golf practice tent from claim 8, wherein the net further comprises at least one pouch adapted for receiving a golf ball.

12. The golf practice tent from claim 10, wherein the rigid frame structure of the tent comprises a set of front frame members and a set of rear frame members, wherein each of the rear frame members are extendable such when the rear members are extended a floor of the tent is tilted towards the front opening of the tent.

13. The golf practice tent from claim 14, wherein the net further comprises a drawstring for removing slack from the net.

14. A golf practice tent comprising:

a collapsible tent having a ceiling, a floor and a front opening for accepting golf balls that have been launched into the tent, and wherein the tent is changeable between a collapsed position and a built position;
a frame structure at least partially external to the

tent that provides structural support for the tent;
 a planar net coupled to the ceiling of the tent and
 separated from a rear panel of the tent, such
 that the net hangs loosely from the ceiling and
 extends towards the floor, wherein the net is 5
 placed proximate to the front opening such that
 golf balls that have been launched into the tent
 contact the net; and,
 wherein a plurality of straps are spaced along
 the net, and wherein each strap is adapted for 10
 attaching a portion of the net to a portion of the
 tent.

15. The golf practice tent of claim 14, wherein the net
 further comprises at least one pouch adapted for re- 15
 ceiving a golf ball.
16. The golf practice tent of claim 14, wherein the rigid
 frame structure comprises a set of front frame mem- 20
 bers and a set of rear frame members, wherein each
 of the rear frame members are extendable such that
 when the rear frame members are extended the floor
 of the tent is tilted towards the front opening of the
 tent. 25
17. The golf practice tent of claim 14, wherein the net
 further comprises a drawstring for removing slack
 from the net.
18. The golf practice tent of claim 14, wherein the tent 30
 further comprises at least one triangular panel locat-
 ed at a corner of the front opening of the tent.
19. The golf practice tent of claim 14, wherein the tent 35
 further comprises at least one rectangular panel lo-
 cated at a side of the tent and extending laterally
 outwards from the tent
20. The golf practice tent of claim 14, wherein the col- 40
 lapsible tent is configured for deployment and col-
 lapsing within less than 10 seconds, and wherein the
 collapsible tent is configured for placement on any
 substantially horizontal surface.

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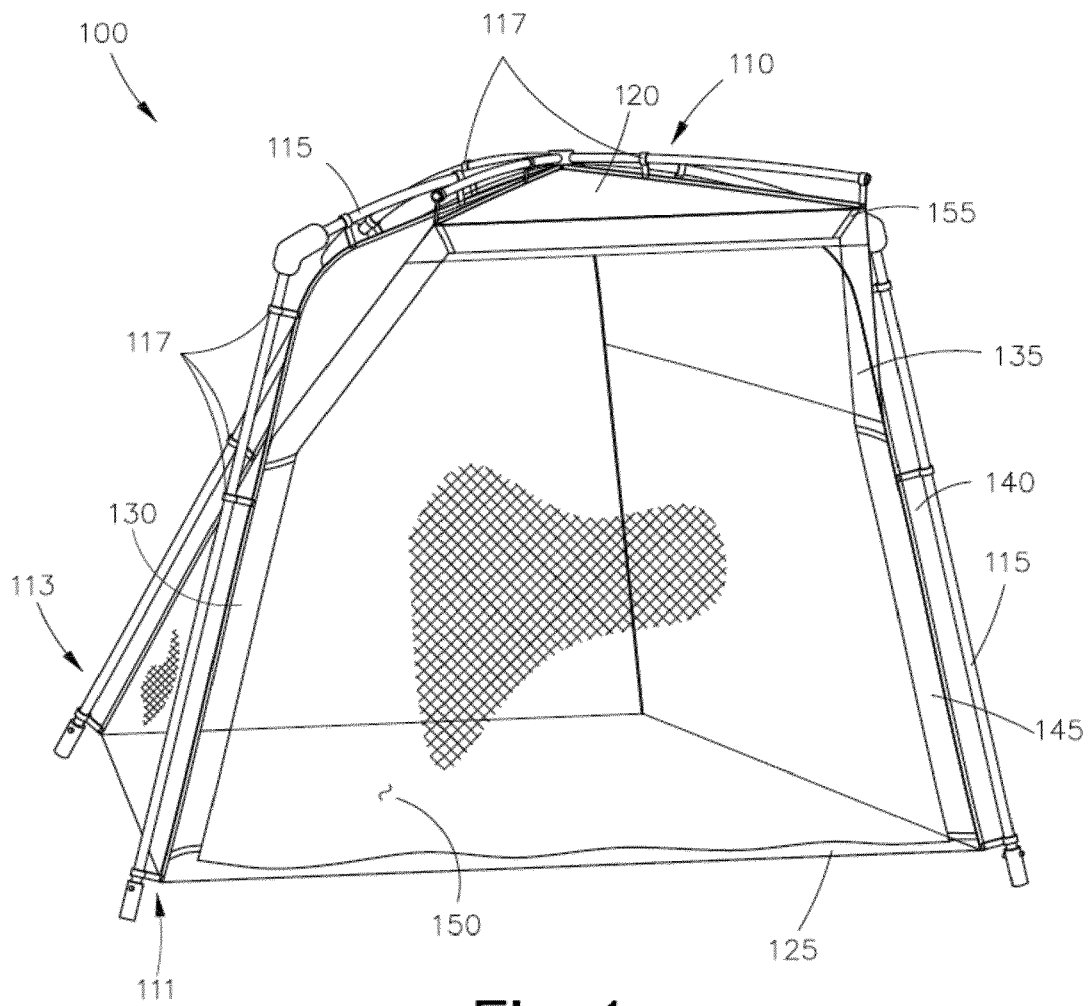
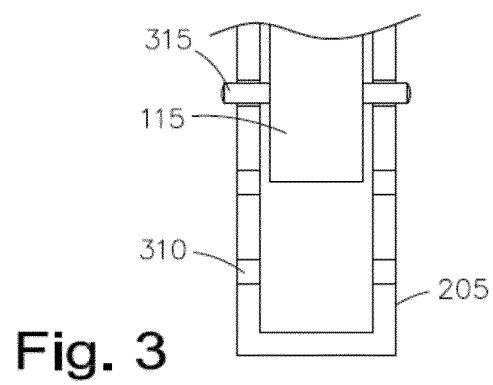
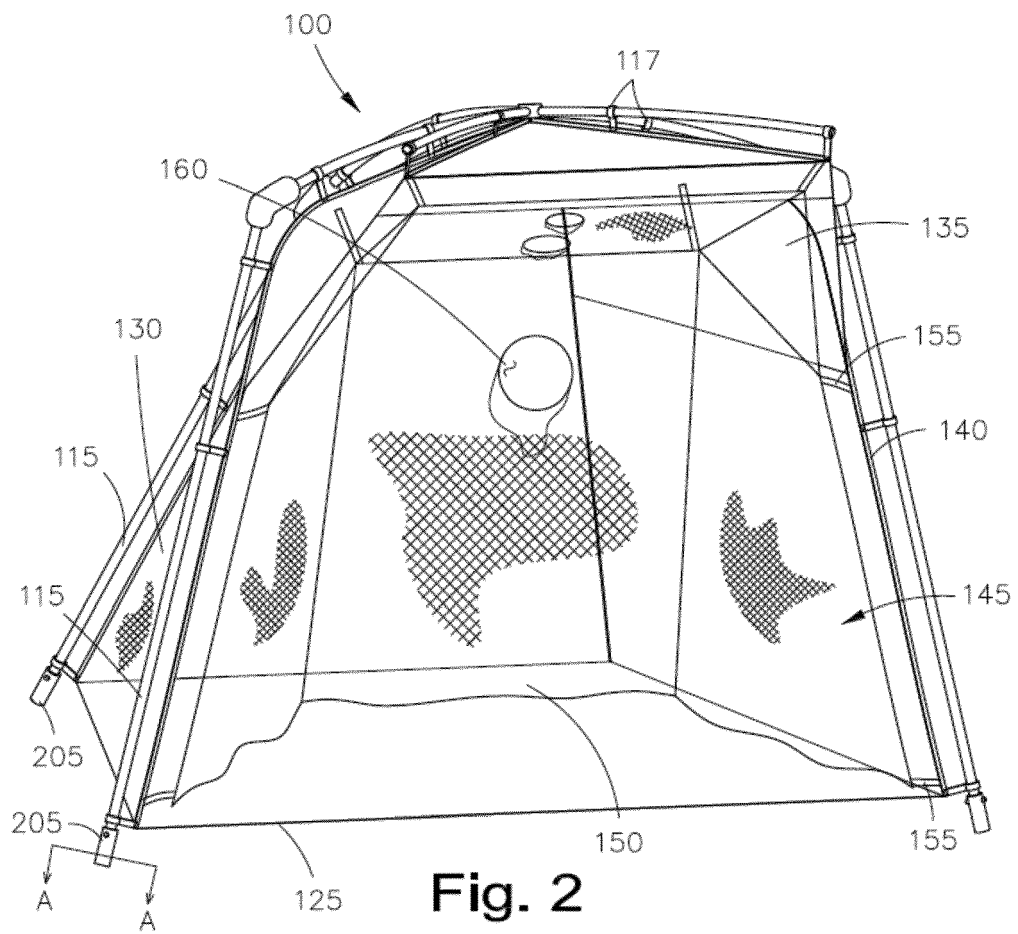


Fig. 1



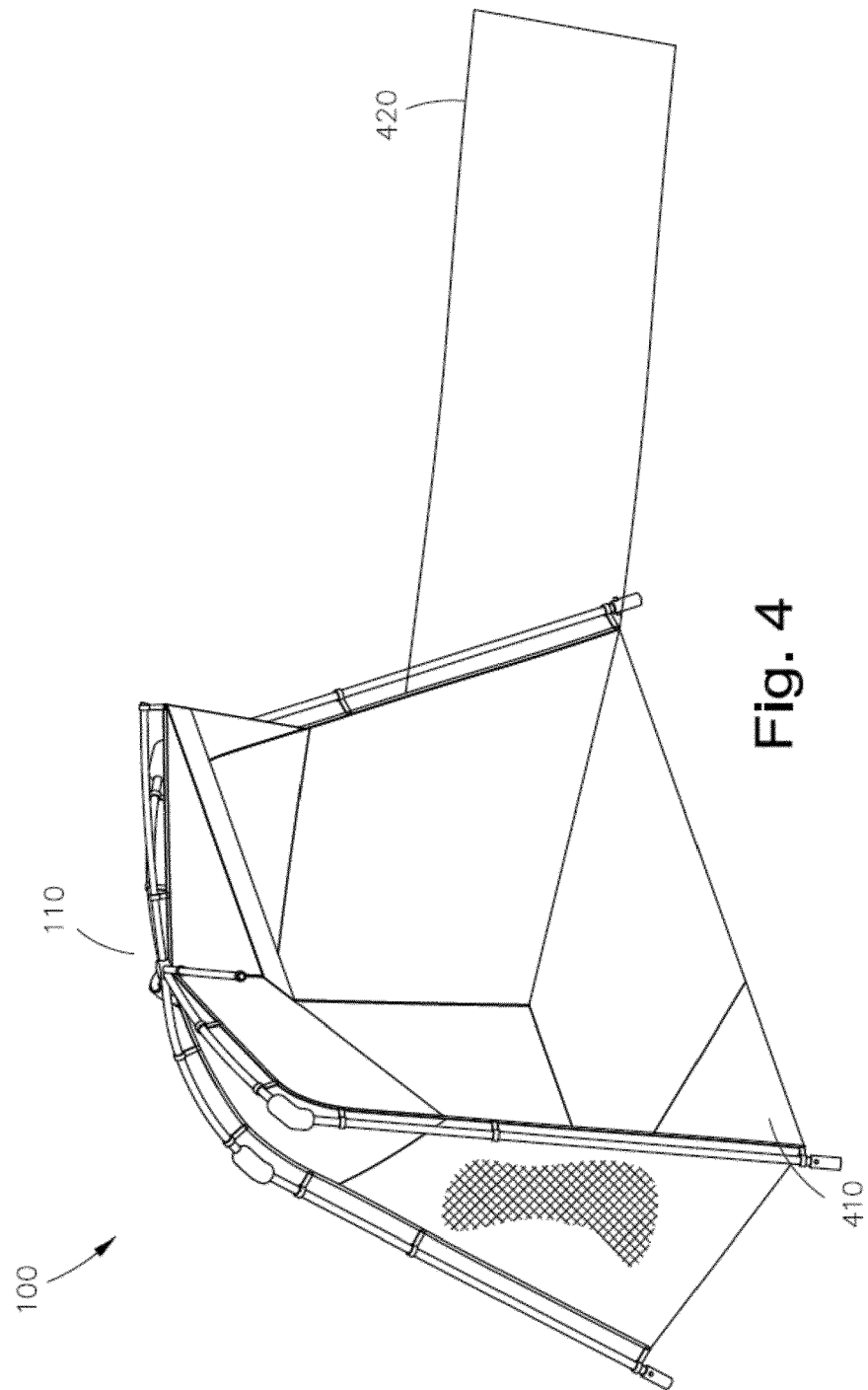


Fig. 4

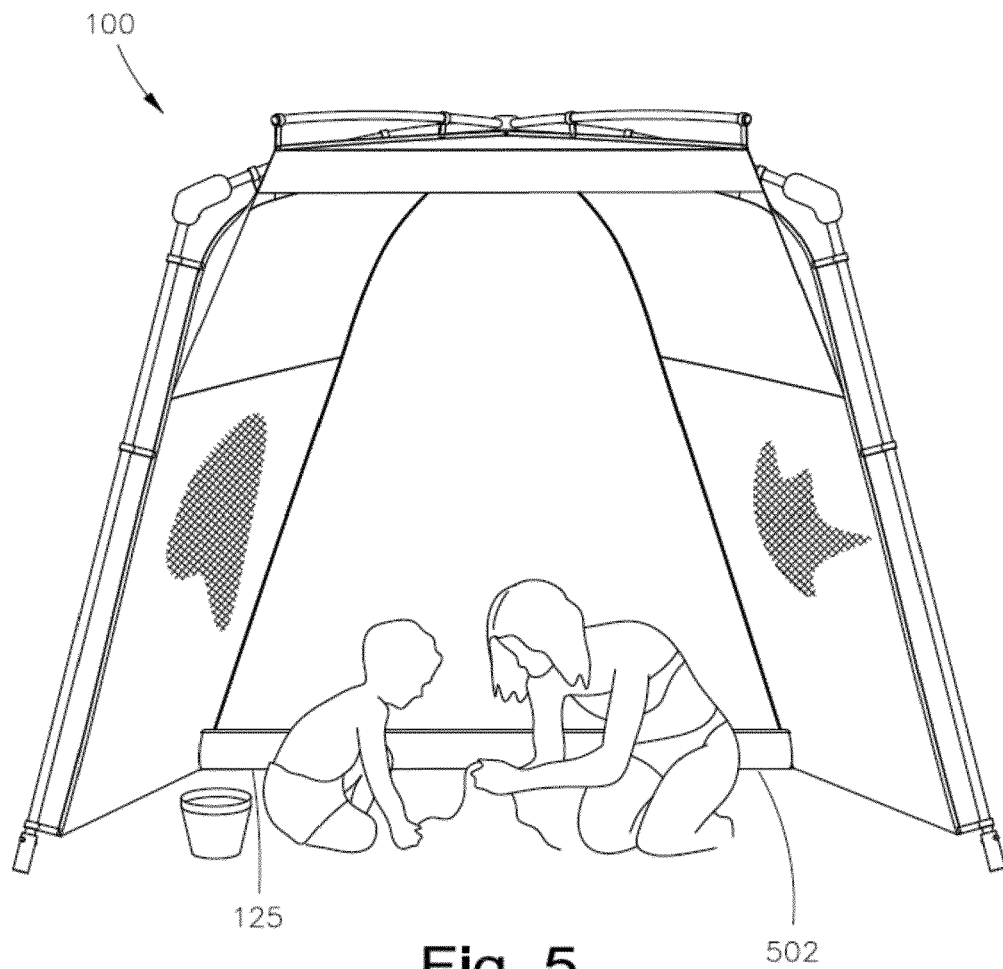
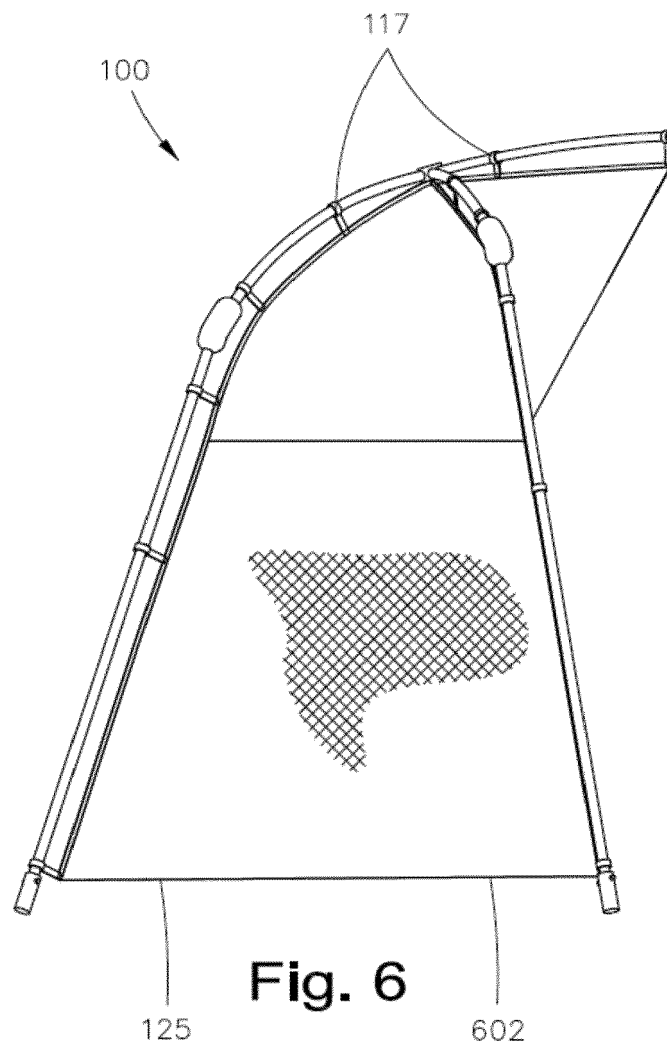


Fig. 5



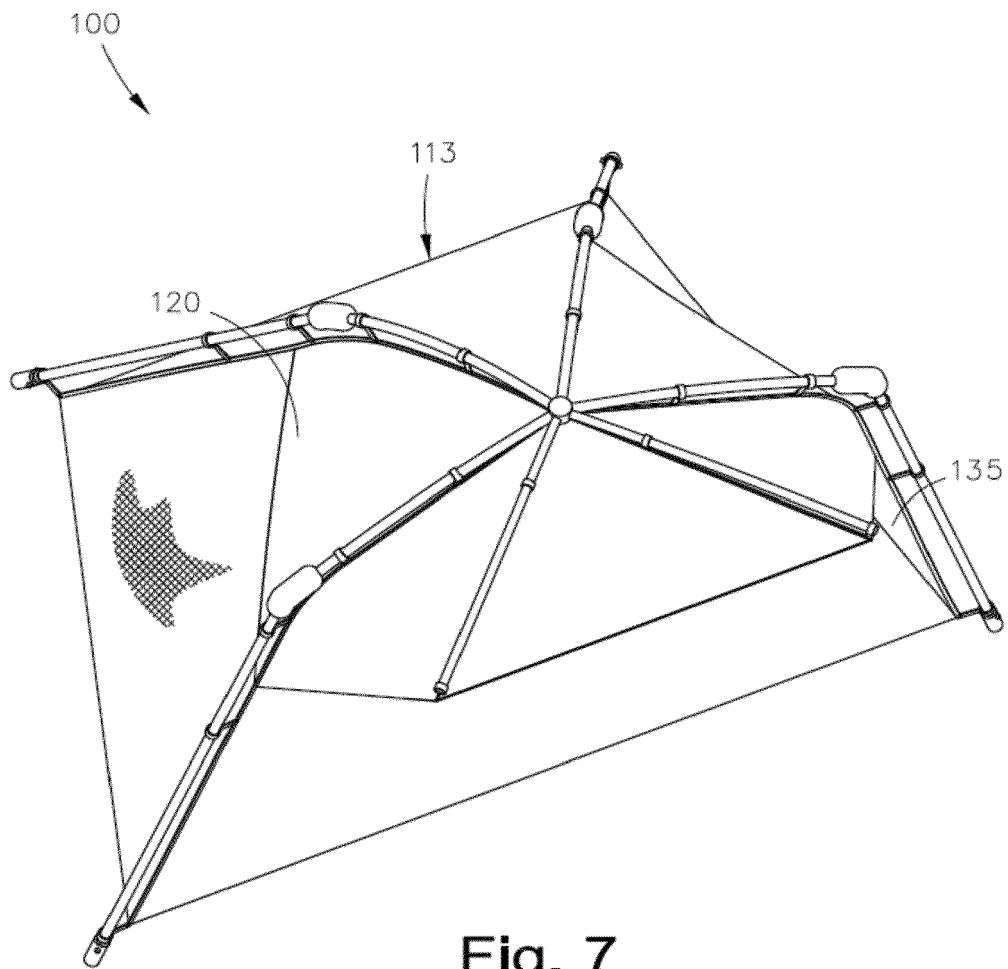


Fig. 7