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(54) **GOLF BALL RETRIEVER**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

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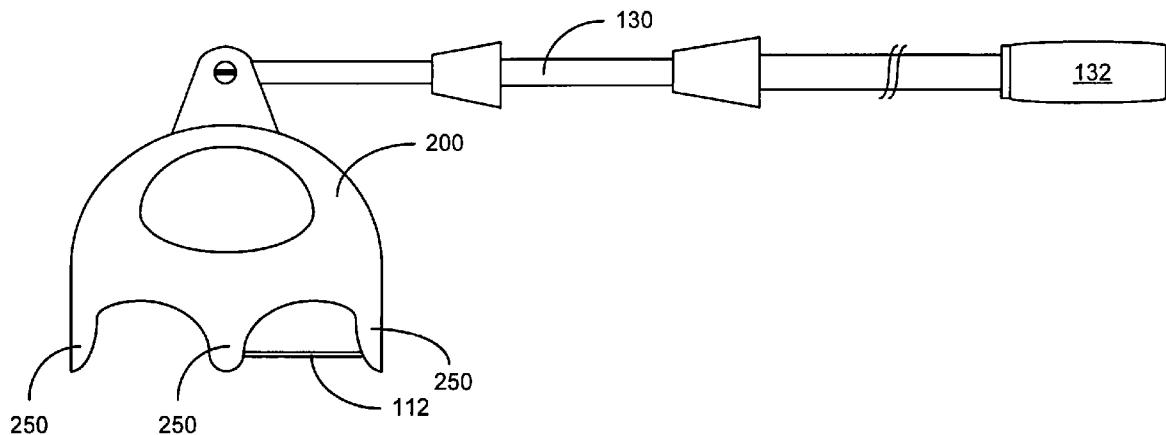
A golf ball retriever includes a dome shaped or cylindrical head having a sidewall defining an interior cavity. The head has a first open golf ball receiving end and a second occluded end. A deformable retaining member extends from a first to a second location on the sidewall as a chord adjacent the first end. The distance from the retaining member to the most distant sidewall portion along a diameter generally perpendicular to the retaining member is slightly less than the diameter of a golf ball so that a golf ball that has been urged into the cavity is captured therein. In one embodiment, the sidewall includes fingers extending toward said first end one or more openings may be provided in the sidewall to allow a user to insert a finger into the cavity to urge a golf ball out of the cavity. The head may be pivotally mounted to a telescoping shaft.

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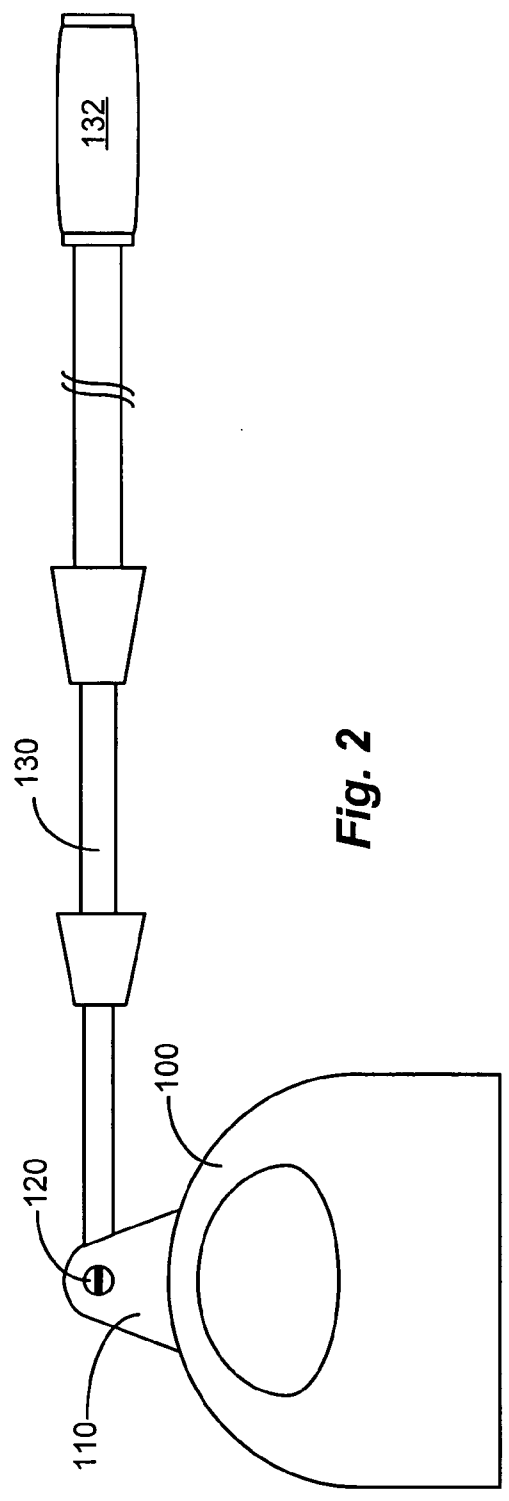
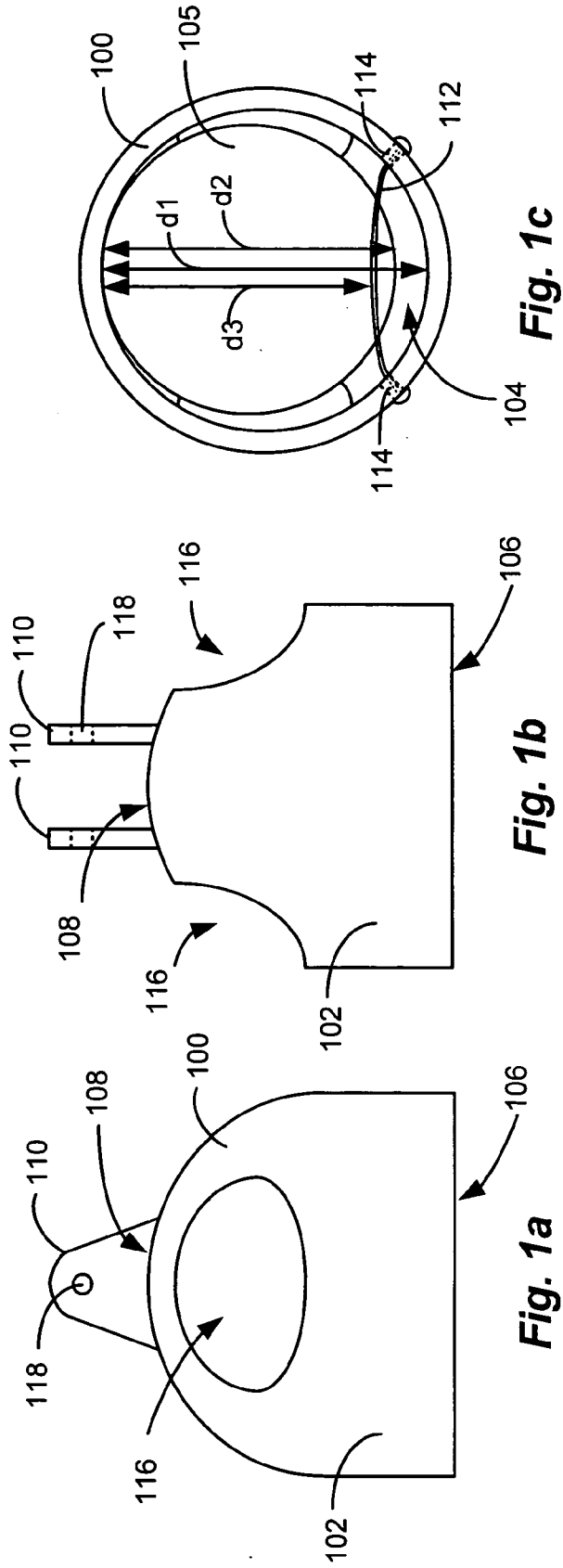


Fig. 1c

Fig. 1b

Fig. 1a

Fig. 2

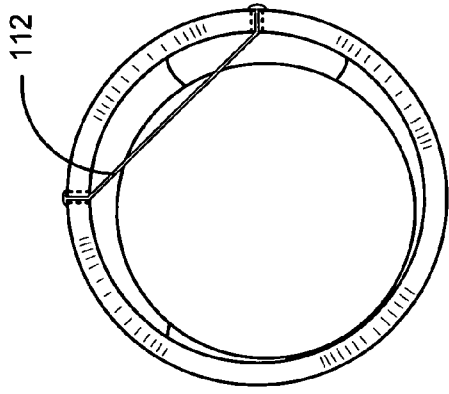


Fig. 3c

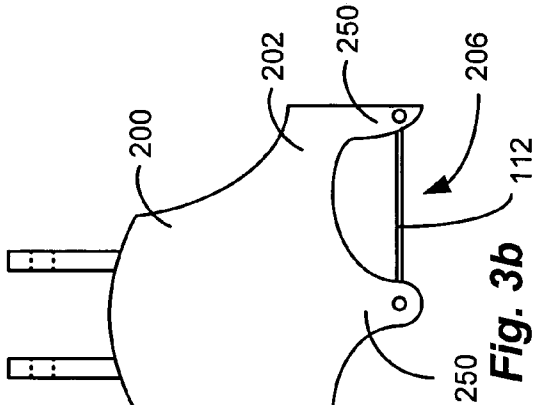


Fig. 3b

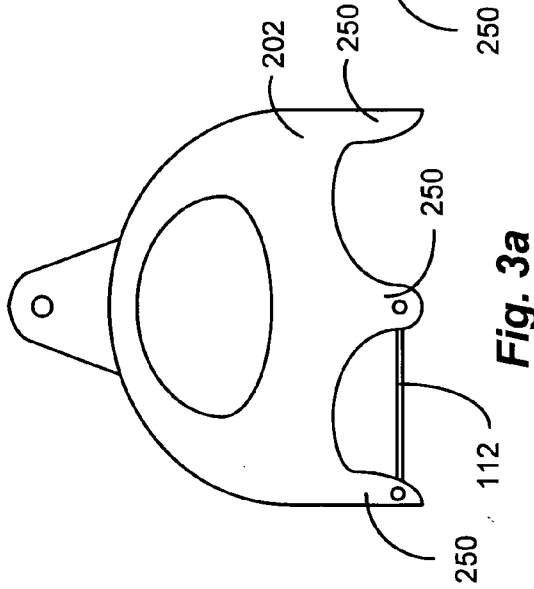


Fig. 3a

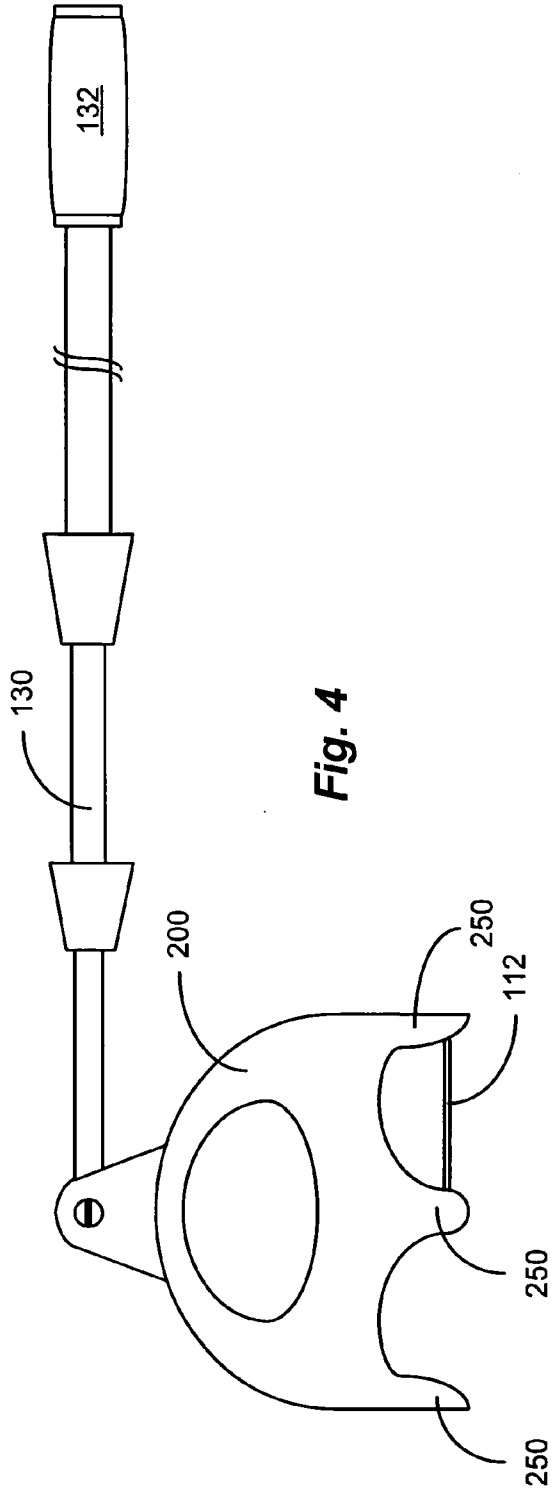


Fig. 4

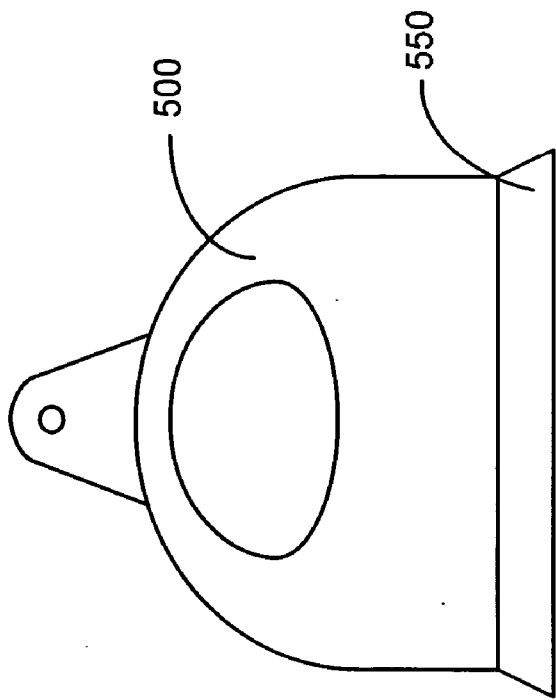


Fig. 5

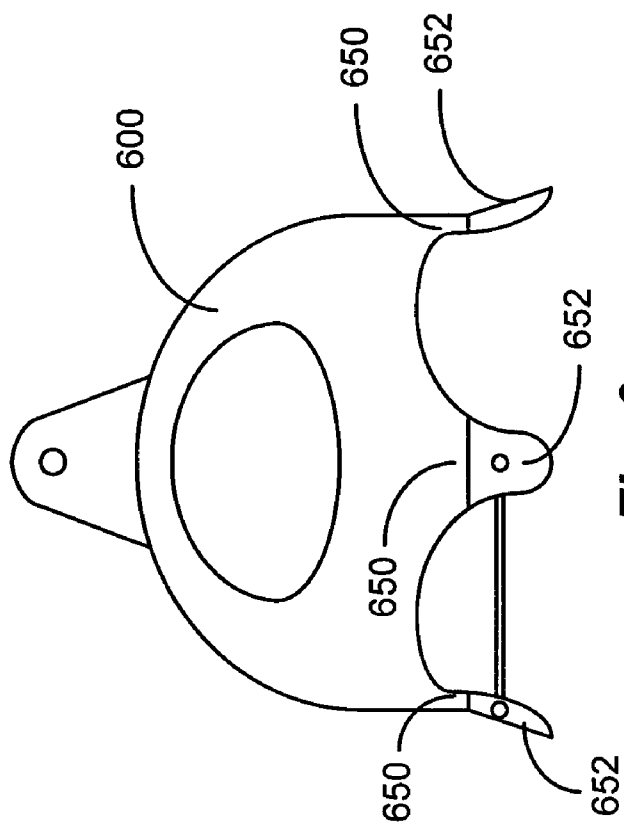


Fig. 6

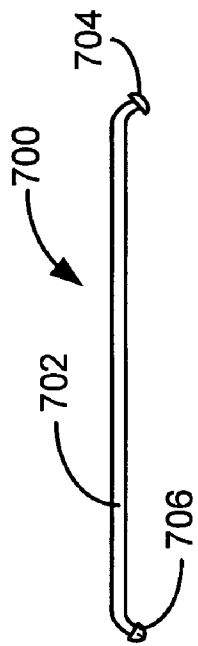


Fig. 7

GOLF BALL RETRIEVER

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] Not Applicable

STATEMENT REGARDING FEDERALLY SPONSORED RESEARCH OR DEVELOPMENT

[0002] Not Applicable

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] The present invention relates to golf ball retrievers.

[0004] When playing golf it is not uncommon for a golf ball to be hit into a pond, lake, stream, brush or some other location that makes it difficult to retrieve the ball. To avoid the loss of the ball, it is desirable to be able to retrieve the golf ball from such a location. To this end, many types of golf ball retrievers have been developed. Few, however, are effective and reliable. Some golf ball retrievers that are known in the art or relatively simple but are prone to breakage. Other types of retrievers are relatively ineffective at capturing golf balls that come to rest in nooks or crannies next to rocks, branches or other obstructions. Still other golf ball retrievers known in the art have relatively complex mechanisms that need to be manually reset after each attempt to retrieve a golf ball. Following an unsuccessful attempt to retrieve a golf ball, if the golf ball retriever mechanism is triggered, the golf ball retriever must be removed from the water and the mechanism must be manually reset before again attempting to capture the golf ball.

[0005] For the above reasons, it would be desirable to have a golf ball retriever that is durable, simple to use and effective at capturing golf balls.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0006] In accordance with the present invention, an improved golf ball retriever is disclosed. The retriever includes a head that is mounted to a telescoping shaft. The head of the retriever defines a cavity that is sized to receive a golf ball. In one embodiment, the cavity is generally dome shaped or cylindrical and has an open end that is sized to receive a golf ball. The head may include a plurality of fingers that extend downward toward the open end of the head.

[0007] The head has a first open end that is slightly larger in diameter than a golf ball to permit a golf ball to be urged into the cavity. The head is closed or obstructed at the opposing or second end. A flexible retaining member may be integrally formed with the head adjacent the first end so as to extend across cavity near the first end. Alternatively, the flexible retaining member may comprise a separate member that is mounted to the head. When the first end of the head is urged over a golf ball, the golf ball enters the cavity and deforms the retaining member. Once the equator of the golf ball passes the retaining member, the ball becomes trapped within the cavity. Due to the flexible nature of the retaining member, a relatively small force is needed to urge the ball into the cavity.

[0008] The head includes at least one opening in the sidewall of the head adjacent the second end of the head to

allow a ball that has been trapped within the head to be pushed out of the cavity after it has been captured.

[0009] At least one mounting flange extends upward from the second end of the head to permit pivotal mounting of the head to a telescoping shaft. Preferably, two spaced upstanding mounting flanges are provided and the telescoping shaft is disposed between the upstanding mounting flanges. A fastener extends through the flanges and the end of the telescoping shaft to pivotally mount the head to the telescoping shaft. Thus, the angle of the head with respect to the telescoping shaft may be manually adjusted to obtain a desirable angle prior to attempting to retrieve a golf ball.

[0010] An outwardly extending flange may optionally be provided at the first end of the head to permit a golf ball to be more easily scooped out of a silty or muddy bed in situations in which the application of downward pressure could drive the golf ball into soft mud and render the ball irretrievable.

[0011] Other features, aspects and advantages of the presently disclosed ball retriever will be apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art from the Detailed Description of the Invention that follows.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWINGS

[0012] The invention will be more fully understood by reference to the following Detailed Description of the Invention in conjunction with the Drawing of which:

[0013] FIG. 1a is a side view of a golf ball retriever head in accordance with the present invention;

[0014] FIG. 1b is a front view of the golf ball retriever head of FIG. 1a;

[0015] FIG. 1c is a bottom view of the golf ball retriever head of FIG. 1a;

[0016] FIG. 2 is a side view of the golf ball retriever head of FIGS. 1a-1c pivotally mounted to a telescoping shaft;

[0017] FIG. 3a is a side view of an alternative embodiment of the golf ball retriever head of FIG. 1 having a plurality of fingers;

[0018] FIG. 3b is a front view of the golf ball retriever head of FIG. 3a;

[0019] FIG. 3c is a bottom view of the golf ball retriever head of FIG. 3a;

[0020] FIG. 4 is a side view of the golf ball retriever head of FIG. 3a pivotally mounted to a telescoping shaft;

[0021] FIG. 5 is an alternative embodiment of the head of FIGS. 1a-1c having a flared edge at the first end of the head;

[0022] FIG. 6 is an alternative embodiment of the head of FIGS. 3a-3c in which the fingers have flared ends; and

[0023] FIG. 7 is an exemplary retaining member for use with the presently disclosed golf ball retriever head.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0024] In accordance with the present invention an improved head for a golf ball retriever and an improved golf ball retriever is disclosed.

[0025] Referring to FIGS. 1a-3c, a generally dome shaped head 100 has a sidewall 102 defining the cavity 104. The head 100 has a first open end 106 and an opposing or second end 108 that is blocked or occluded. In the illustrated in FIGS. 1a-1c, the second end 108 is blocked by the upper portion of dome shaped head 100. The inside diameter (d1) of the cavity 104 (FIG. 1c) is slightly greater than the diameter (d2) of a golf ball 105. At least one mounting flange 110 and preferably two generally parallel mounting flanges 110 extend upward from the second end 108 of the head 100. A flexible retaining member 112 is either integrally formed with the head 100 or, alternatively, mounted to the sidewall 102 adjacent the first end 106 of the head 100. More specifically, the retaining member 112 extends from a first location on the sidewall 102 to a second location on the sidewall 102 generally as a chord noting that some curvature of the retaining member between the first and second locations at the sidewall may be present. The retaining member 112 is disposed in a retaining member plane that is parallel to a plane formed by the lower edge of the head 100 at the first end 106. This diameter, within the retaining member plane, for purposes of reference below, is perpendicular to the retaining member and generally bisects the retaining member 112. This specified diameter includes a short portion between the retaining member 112 and the adjacent sidewall 102 and a long portion between the retaining member 112 and the distal sidewall 102. The long portion has a length d3 that is slightly less than the diameter of a golf ball. Thus, once the equator of the golf ball 105 is urged into the cavity 104 and past the retaining member 112, the golf ball 105 is captured within the cavity 104.

[0026] In one embodiment, openings 114 are provided in the sidewall 102 of the head 100 near the first end 106 and a flexible retaining member 112 is captively secured through the openings 114. In another embodiment, a flexible retaining member 112 is provided as a cable tie (not shown) which may be passed through the openings 114 and secured in a conventional manner. Openings 116 are provided in the sidewalls 102 near the second end 108 to allow a golf ball 105 that has been captured within the cavity 104 to be pushed out of the cavity 104.

[0027] The mounting flanges 110 have openings 118 sized to receive a fastener 120 (FIG. 2). Referring to FIG. 2, a telescoping shaft 130 has a handle 132 at one end and an opening (not shown) in the shaft 130 at the opposing end. The end of the shaft 130 is positioned between the mounting flanges 110 with the opening in the end of the shaft 130 coaxially aligned with the openings 118 in the mounting flanges 110. The fastener 120, such as a bolt and screw or a rivet, is passed through the openings 118 in the mounting flanges 110 and the opening in the end of the telescoping shaft 130 and the head 100 is pivotally secured to the shaft 130 via the fastener 120. A lock washer or any other means of known in the art for maintaining tension between the mounting flanges 110 and the end of the shaft 130 may be employed to firmly maintain the position of the head 100 with respect to the shaft 130 while allowing the head 100 to be pivoted to a desirable angle when retrieving a golf ball.

[0028] Preferably, the head 100 is molded as a unitary structure out of a plastic, hard rubber material or any other suitable material.

[0029] Another embodiment of a golf ball retriever head 200 in accordance with the present invention is depicted in

FIGS. 3a-3c. The elements of the golf ball retriever head 200 are the same as described above with respect to the golf ball retriever head 100 depicted in FIGS. 1a-1c noting that the sidewalls 202 include fingers 250 at the first end 206 of the head 200. By providing fingers 250 at the first end 206 of the head 200, the head 200 is better suited for retrieving golf balls that may have come to rest in an irregular nook or cranny. As illustrated in FIGS. 3a-3c the retaining member 112 extends between adjacent fingers 250. The retaining member 112 may be fabricated or otherwise provided as discussed above with respect to FIGS. 1a-1c.

[0030] In the embodiment of the head 500 illustrated in FIG. 5, the head 100 of FIG. 1 is provided with a flared portion 550 which allows the head 500 to be used to more easily scoop a golf ball out of a silty or soft bed. Similarly, as illustrated in FIG. 6, the head 600 includes fingers 650 generally as illustrated in FIGS. 3a-3c however the fingers 650 include a flared portion 652 to allow the head 600 to scoop up golf balls without capturing the golf ball within the cavity of the head 600.

[0031] One embodiment of a retaining member 700 for use with the presently disclosed head is depicted in FIG. 7. The retaining member 700 is fabricated as a molded plastic or rubber component or is molded of any other suitable material. The member 700 includes a shaft portion 702, a first head portion 704 and a second head portion 706. The second head portion 706 is sized and configured so as to permit the second head to be urged through the openings 114 (FIG. 1c) or the openings in the fingers 250 (FIG. 3a), as applicable. Once the second head portion 706 is passed through the second opening, the retaining member is securely mounted to the head. Since the diameters of the retaining member head portions 704, 706 are greater than the diameter of the openings in the sidewall 102 or fingers 250, as applicable, the retaining member cannot readily be dislodged. To facilitate the insertion of the second head portion 706 through the openings in the sidewall 102 or fingers 250, a recess may optionally be provided in the second head portion 706 so that the second head portion 706 may be more easily deformed when urging of the second head through the respective opening. The second head portion 706 may also have a diameter only slightly larger than the respective opening through which it is inserted so that a combination of the deformation of the head 706 and the deformation of the side surfaces defining the respective openings permit the second head portion 706 to be urged therethrough.

[0032] While the illustrated embodiment depicts a single chord-like retaining member which is integrally formed with the head or provided as a separate member attachable to the head, two chord-like retaining members may be employed. For example, retaining members may be provided in parallel relation on opposite sides of the head with the location of the chords within the head specified such that the distance between the opposed retaining members is slightly less than the diameter of a golf ball.

[0033] Additionally, to allow the golf ball to be more easily seen while using the presently disclosed retriever, the head may be fabricated of a clear plastic material.

[0034] Furthermore, while the mounting flange(s) are depicted as extending from the second end of the head, in an alternative embodiment, the mounting flange(s) may extend outward from the head sidewall.

[0035] It will be appreciated by those of ordinary skill in the art that modifications to and variations of the above described golf ball retriever head and golf ball retriever may be made without departing from the inventive concepts disclosed herein. Accordingly the invention should not be viewed as limited except by the scope and spirit of the appended claims.

- 1. A golf ball retriever comprising:
 - a head having a sidewall defining a cavity having a cavity dimension between opposing portions of the sidewall, said cavity sized to receive a golf ball having a first diameter, said head having a first open golf ball receiving end and a second occluded end; and
 - a deformable retaining member adjacent said golf ball receiving end, said retaining member extending generally as a chord from a first location on said sidewall to a second location on said sidewall, said retaining member being located in a plane generally parallel to said first end of said head, said retaining member being bisected by a line coincident with said cavity dimension that is located in said plane and perpendicular to said retaining member, said cavity dimension having a short portion between said retaining member and an adjacent sidewall portion and a long portion between said retaining member and the opposing sidewall portion, said long portion having a length slightly less than said first diameter, said deformable retaining member being oriented and configured so as to deform in response to pressure applied to the retaining member upon contact with a golf ball to permit the golf ball to enter the cavity, said retaining member generally returning to its undeformed position after the golf ball has entered the cavity to captively retain the golf ball within the cavity.
- 2. The golf ball retriever of claim 1 wherein said retaining member is integrally formed as a unitary structure with said sidewalls.
- 3. The golf ball retriever of claim 1 wherein said sidewall has first and second openings and said retaining member extends through said first and second openings.

- 4. The golf ball retriever of claim 3 wherein said retaining member comprises a cable tie.
- 5. The golf ball retriever of claim 3 wherein said retaining member has a head end and an opposing end, wherein said retaining member is disposed through said first and second openings with said head end and said opposing end securing said retaining member to said sidewall.
- 6. The golf ball retriever of claim 1 wherein said sidewall includes a plurality of fingers extending toward said first end.
- 7. The golf ball retriever of claim 6 wherein said fingers have an outwardly flared portion at said first end of said head.
- 8. The golf ball retriever of claim 1 further including at least one mounting flange extending from said head.
- 9. The golf ball retriever of claim 8 further including a telescoping shaft having a handle end and a head mounting end, said head mounting end being mounted to said at least one mounting flange.
- 10. The golf ball retriever of claim 9 wherein said head mounting end of said shaft is pivotally mounting to said at least one mounting flange.
- 11. The golf ball retriever of claim 10 wherein said head includes two spaced and generally parallel mounting flanges and said head mounting end is disposed between said spaced parallel mounting flanges so as to permit pivotal movement of said head with respect to said head mounting end.
- 12. The golf ball retriever of claim 1 wherein said head includes an outwardly flared sidewall at said first end.
- 13. The golf ball retriever of claim 1 further including at least one opening in said sidewall adjacent said second end sized to permit a finger to be inserted therethrough to urge a golf ball out of said cavity.
- 14. The golf ball retriever of claim 1 wherein said head is generally dome shaped.
- 15. The golf ball retriever of claim 1 wherein said head comprises a clear plastic material.

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