US005494279A

United States Patent [19]

Ahner

[11] Patent Number: 5,494,279

[45] Date of Patent: Feb. 27, 1996

[54] **GOLF BALL TEE SETTING DEVICE**

[76] Inventor: **Roger W. Ahner**, 1502 Kauffman Rd., Pottstown, Pa. 19464

[21] Appl. No.: **241,558**

[22] Filed: **May 12, 1994**

[51] **Int. Cl.**[6] **A63B 57/00**

[52] **U.S. Cl.** **273/32.5**

[58] **Field of Search** 273/32.5

[56] **References Cited**

U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

1,863,140	6/1932	Mulvaney	273/32.5
4,142,719	3/1979	Blood	273/33
4,714,250	12/1987	Henthorn	273/32.5
4,819,938	5/1989	Hill	273/32.5
4,949,961	8/1990	Milano	273/32.5
4,951,947	8/1990	Kopfle	273/32.5
4,969,646	11/1990	Tobias	273/32.5
4,989,868	2/1991	Manko	273/33
5,165,744	11/1992	Vogrin	294/19.2
5,171,010	12/1992	Lanoue	273/32.5

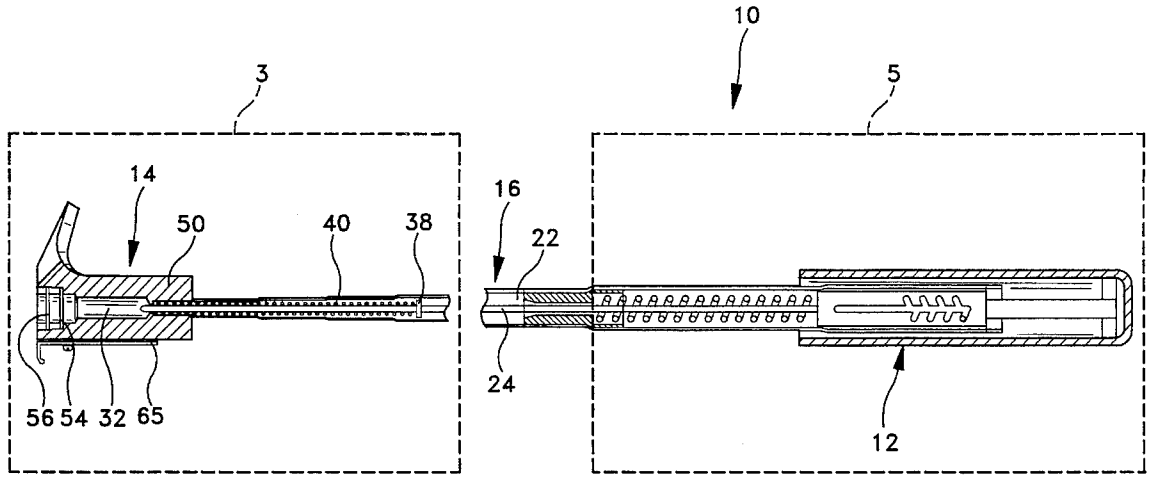
Primary Examiner—George J. Marlo

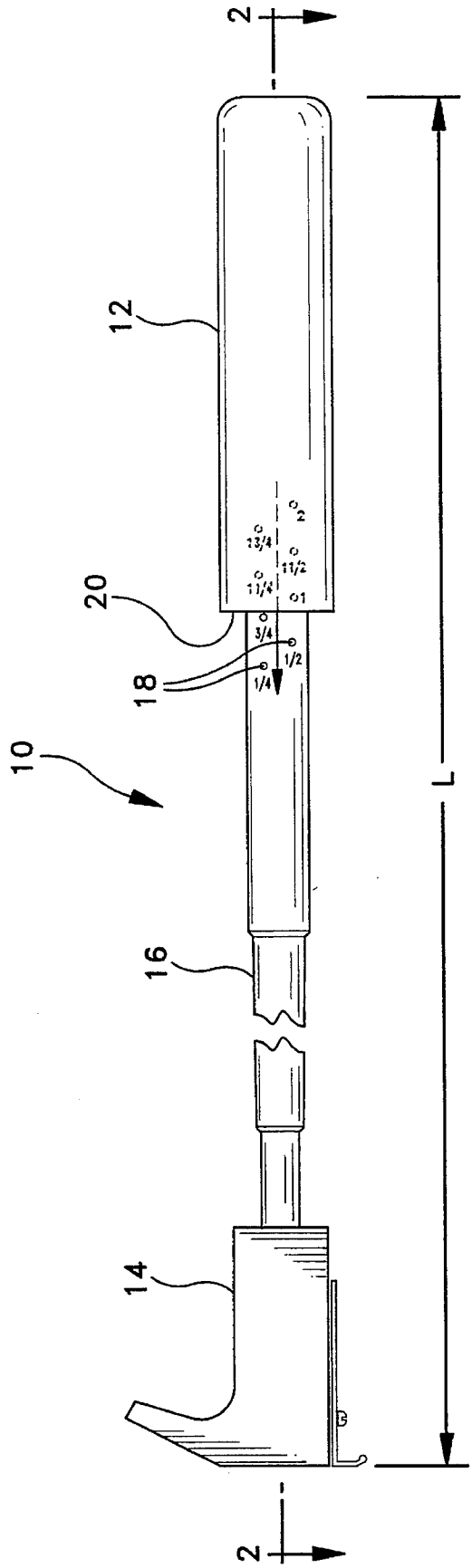
Attorney, Agent, or Firm—Eric A. LaMorte

[57] **ABSTRACT**

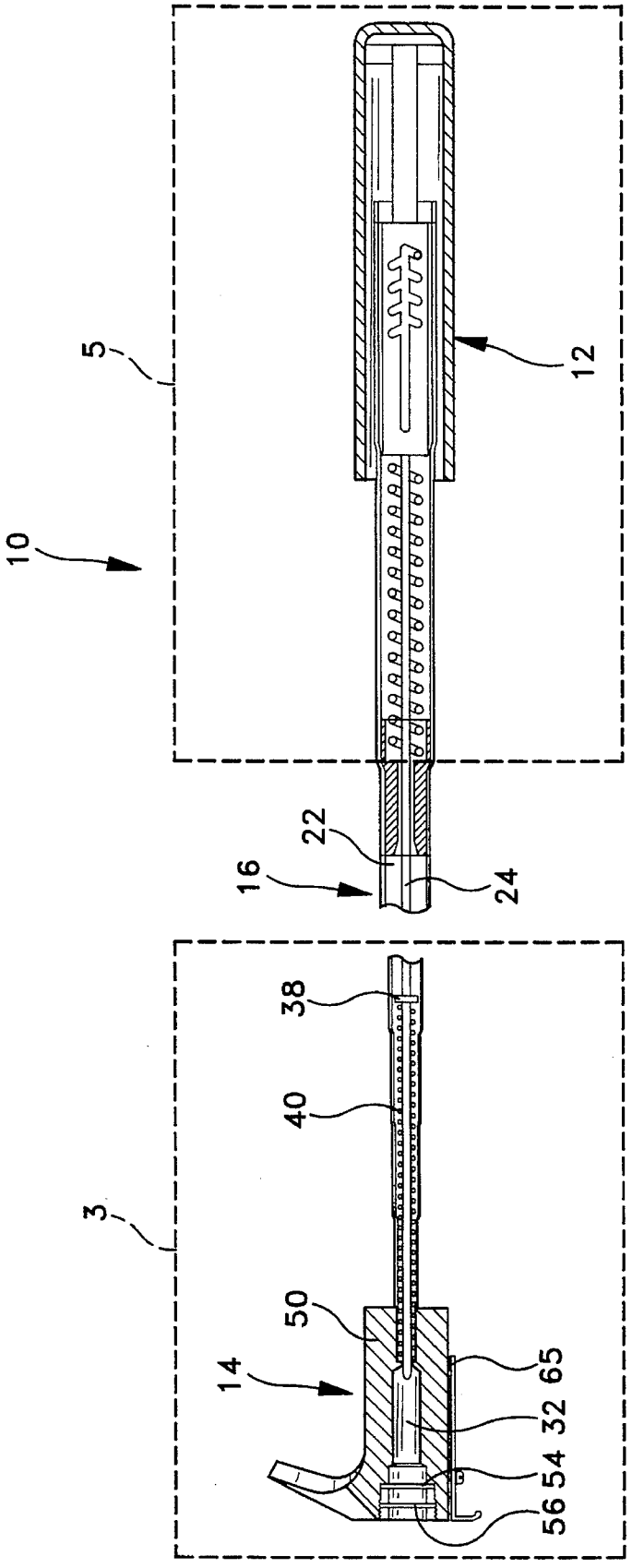
A tee setting device and the associated method for setting a golf tee into the ground. The device includes a tubular shaft having a head assembly at one end and a handle assembly at the opposite end. The head assembly includes a mechanism for retaining a golf tee and orienting the golf tee at a perpendicular to the ground. A pushrod is disposed within the shaft between the handle assembly and the head assembly. A selectively adjustable engagement device is present within the handle assembly. The engagement device enables a handle to engage the pushrod at different points. The handle is movable through a predetermined range relative the shaft. Accordingly, by selectively coupling the handle to the pushrod at different points, the handle can be used to move the pushrod a given distance within the shaft. The end of the pushrod, opposite the handle, is disposed above the golf tee that is retained in the head assembly. As the handle drives the tee within the shaft, the pushrod abuts against the golf tee and drives the tee into the ground. The point at which the handle engages the pushrod determines at what height the tee is left above the ground.

19 Claims, 10 Drawing Sheets





FIG—1



FIG—2

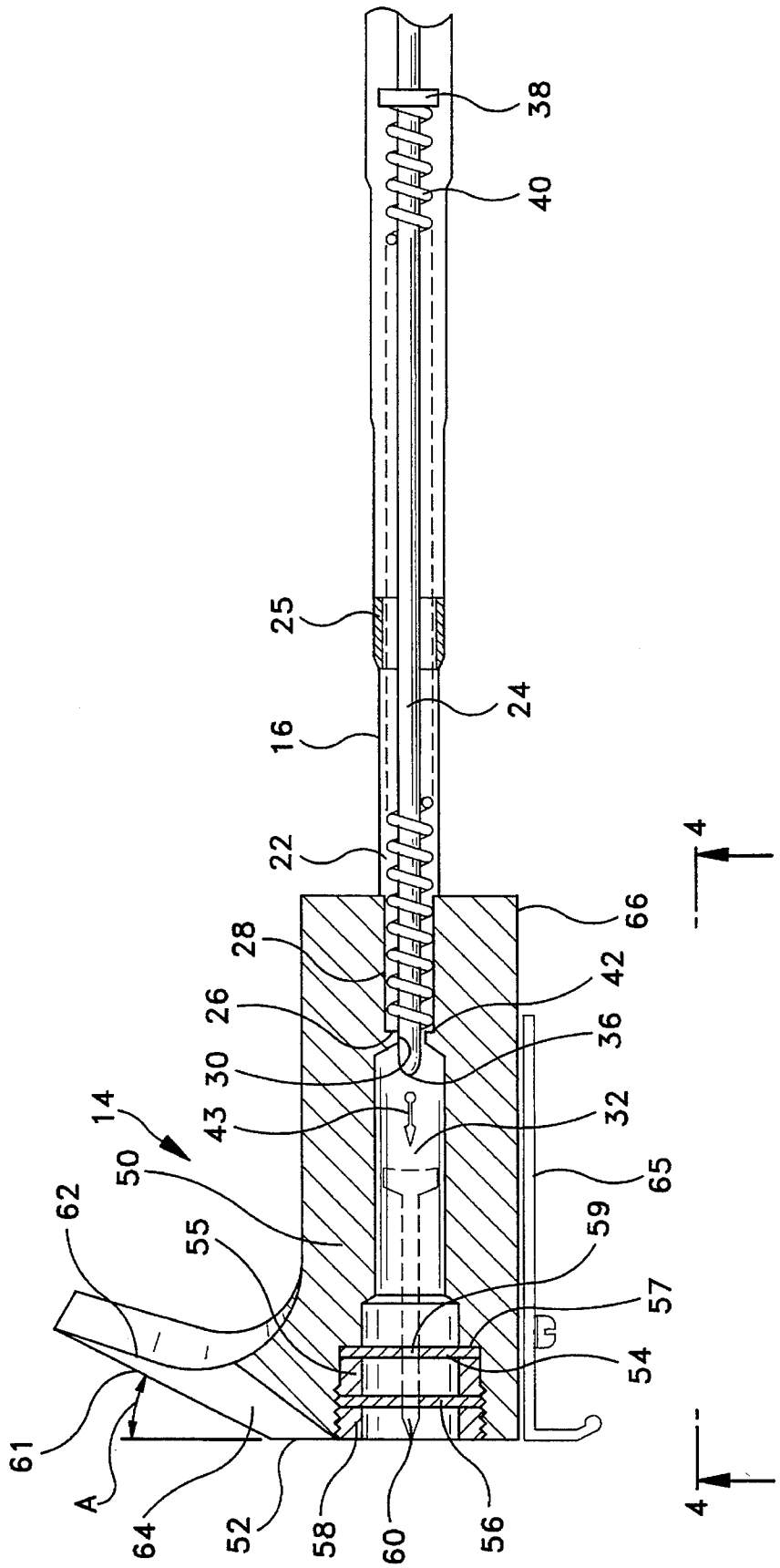
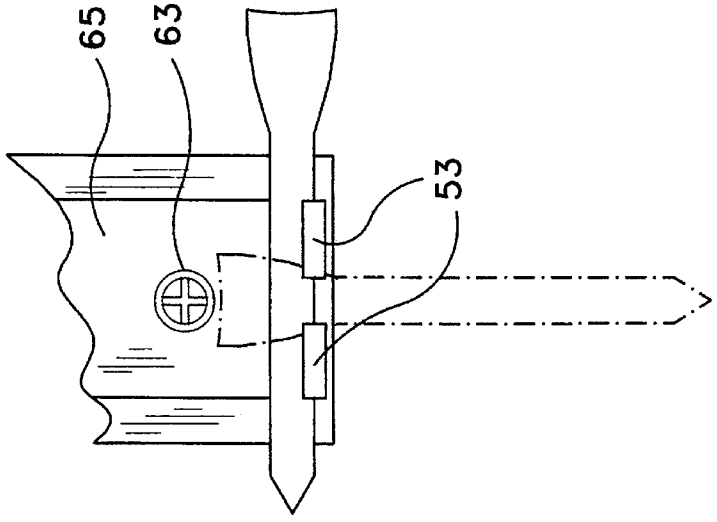
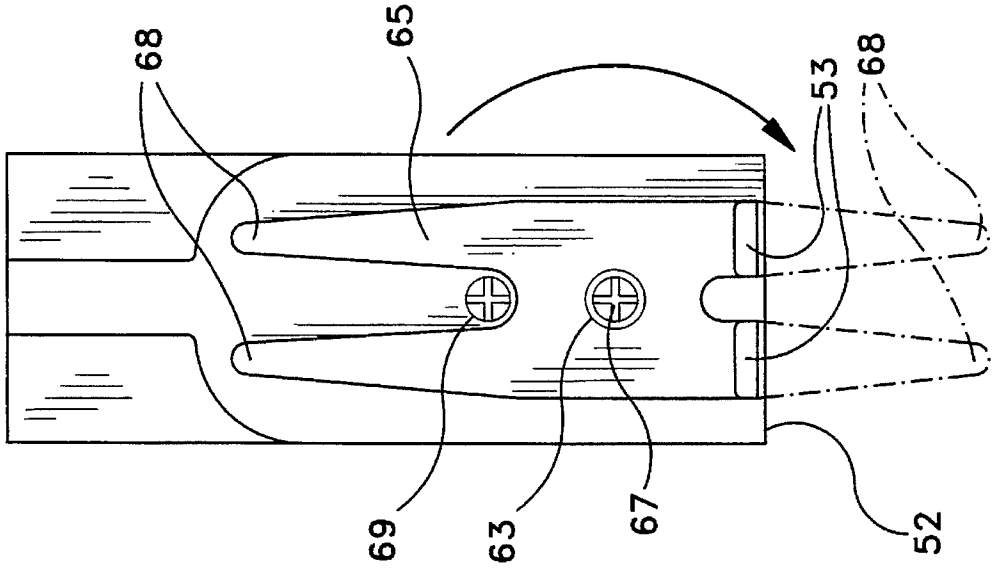

38
40
25
24
16
22
66
28
42
26
36
30
43
14
32
50
65
62
55
59
57
54
61
A
64
52
58
60
56
4
4

FIG-3

FIG—4A



FIG—4



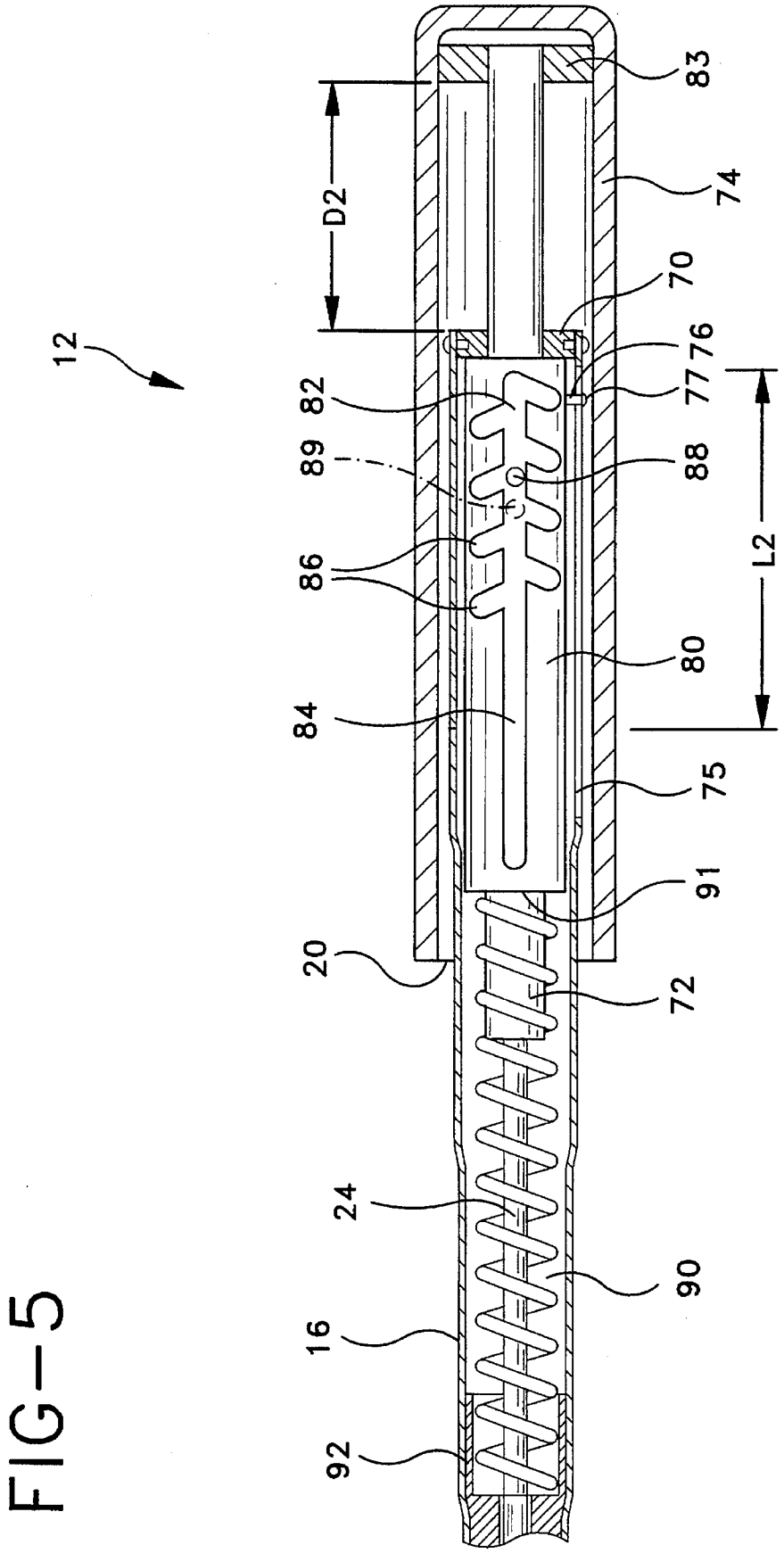
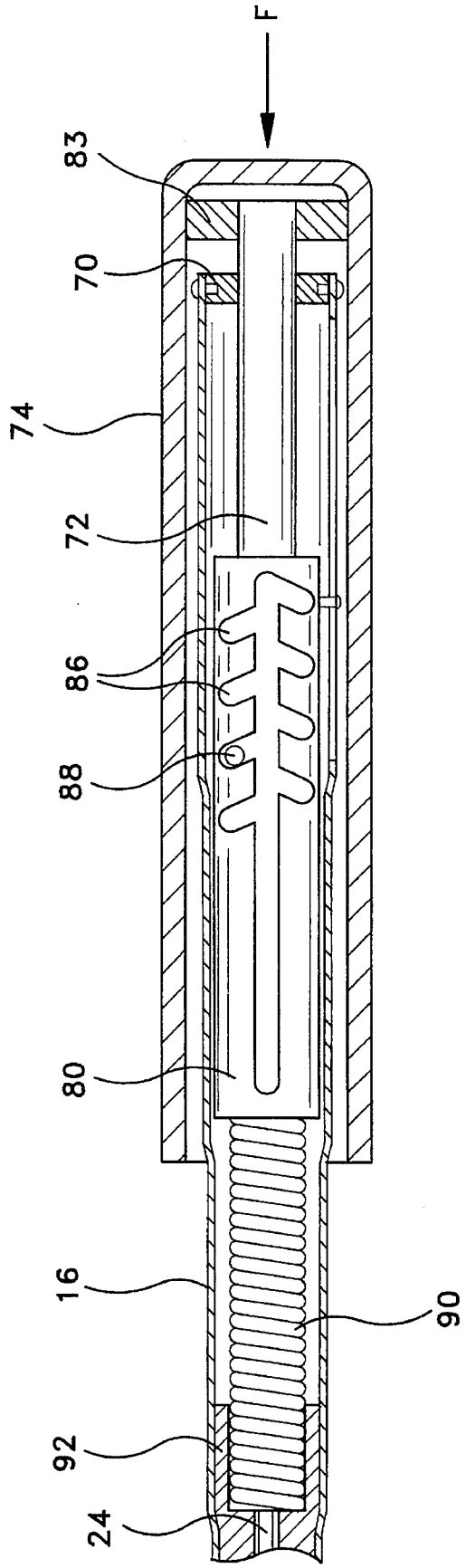


FIG-5



FIG—6

FIG-7A

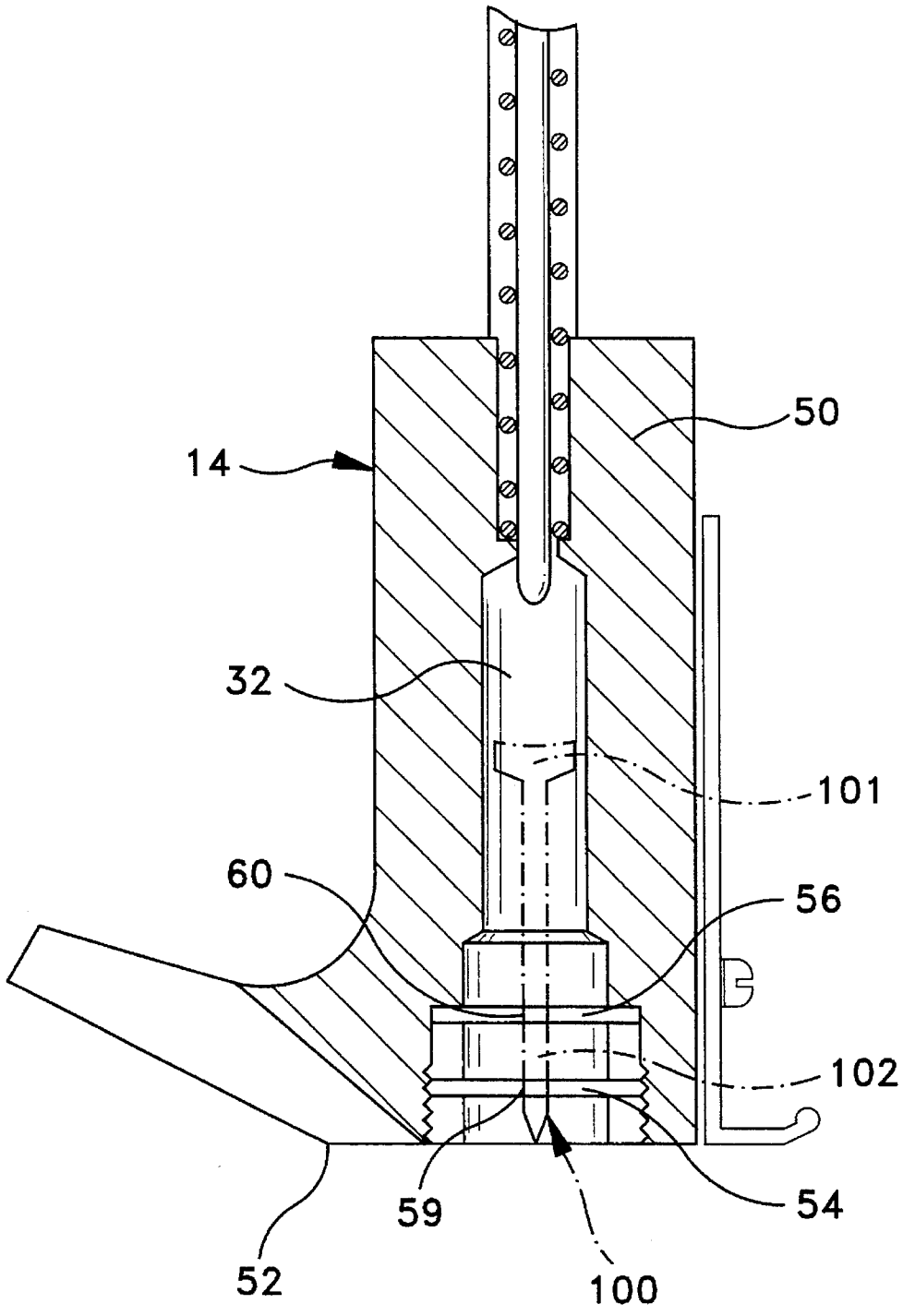


FIG-7B

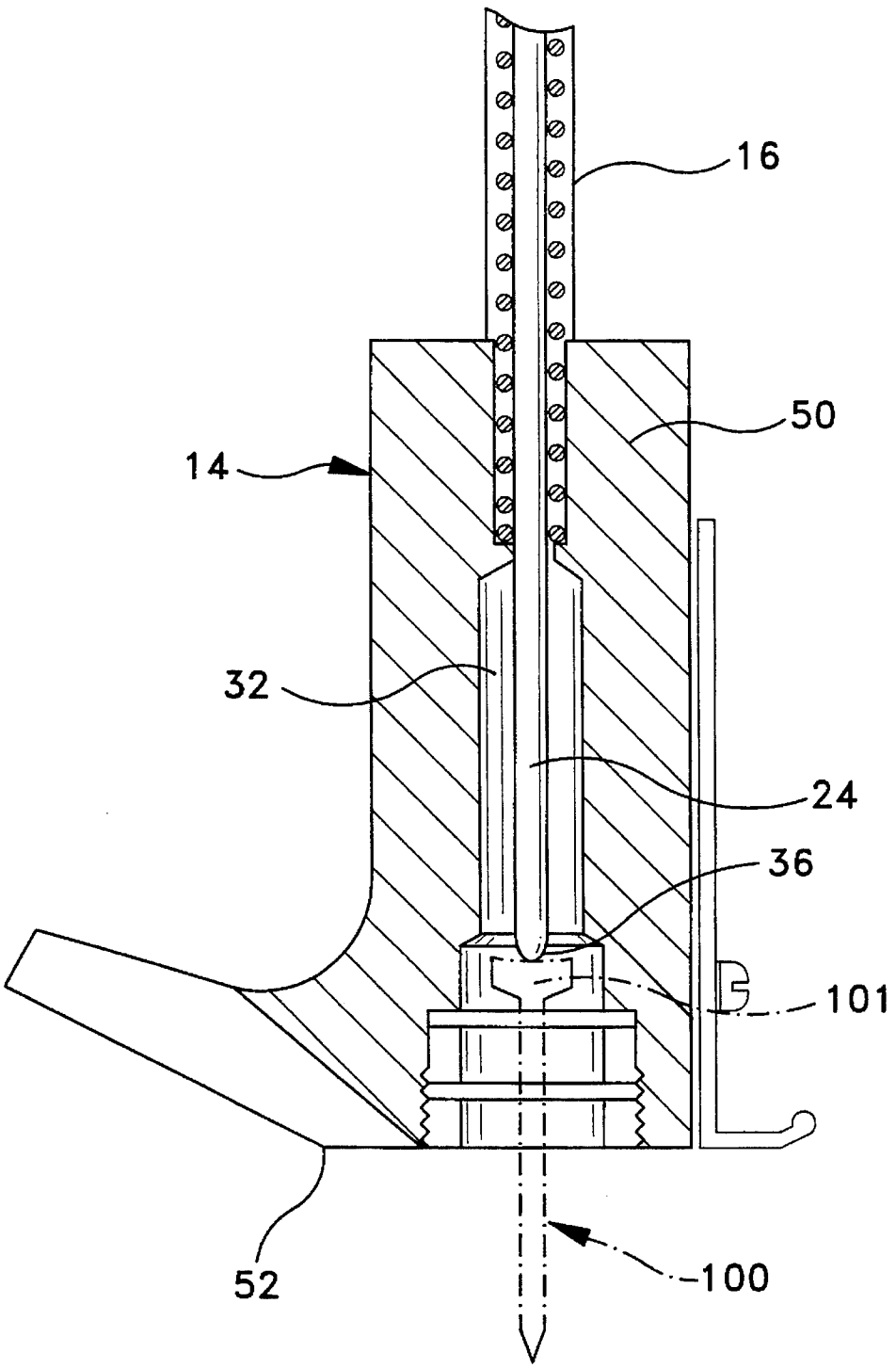


FIG-7C

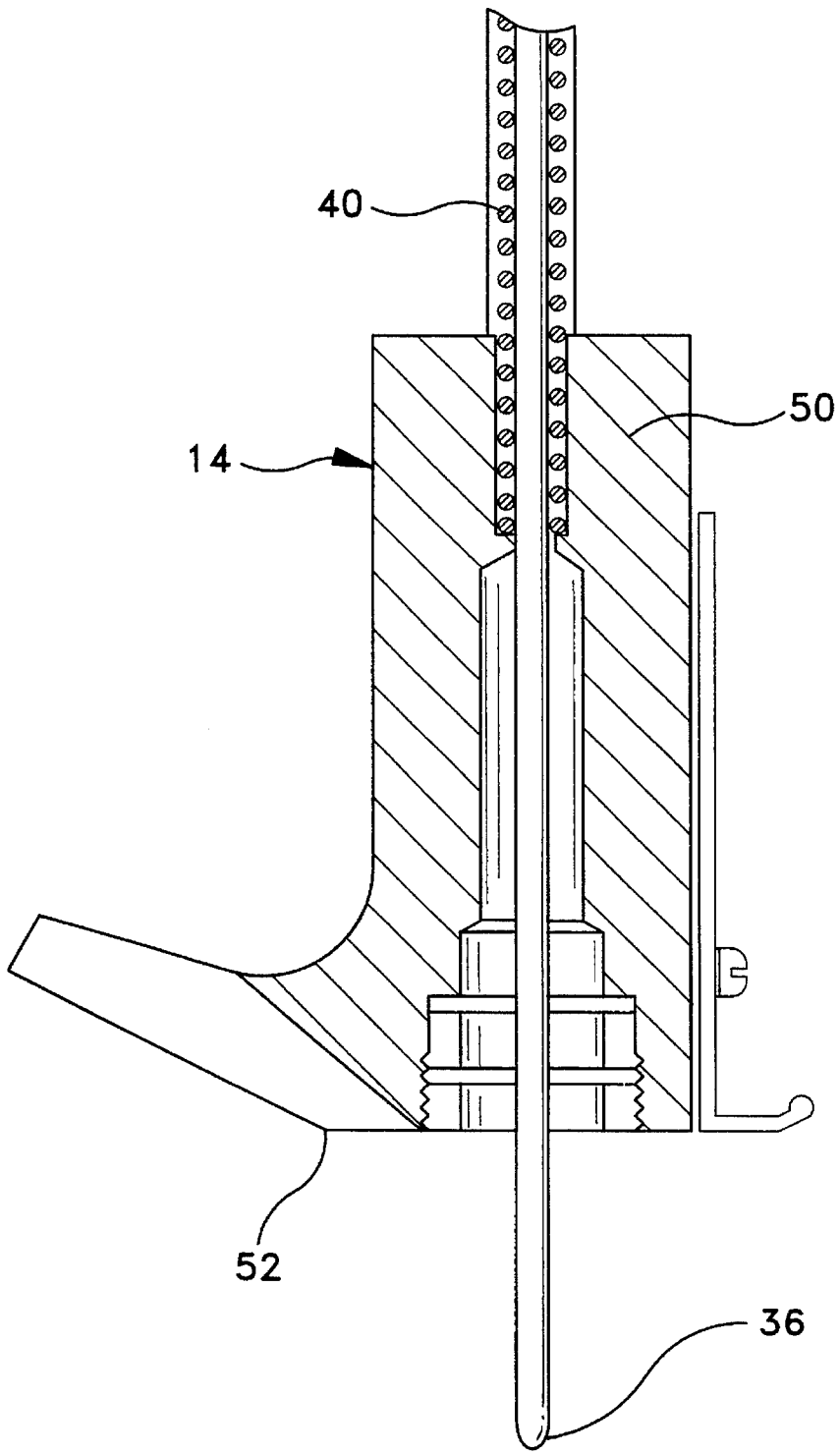
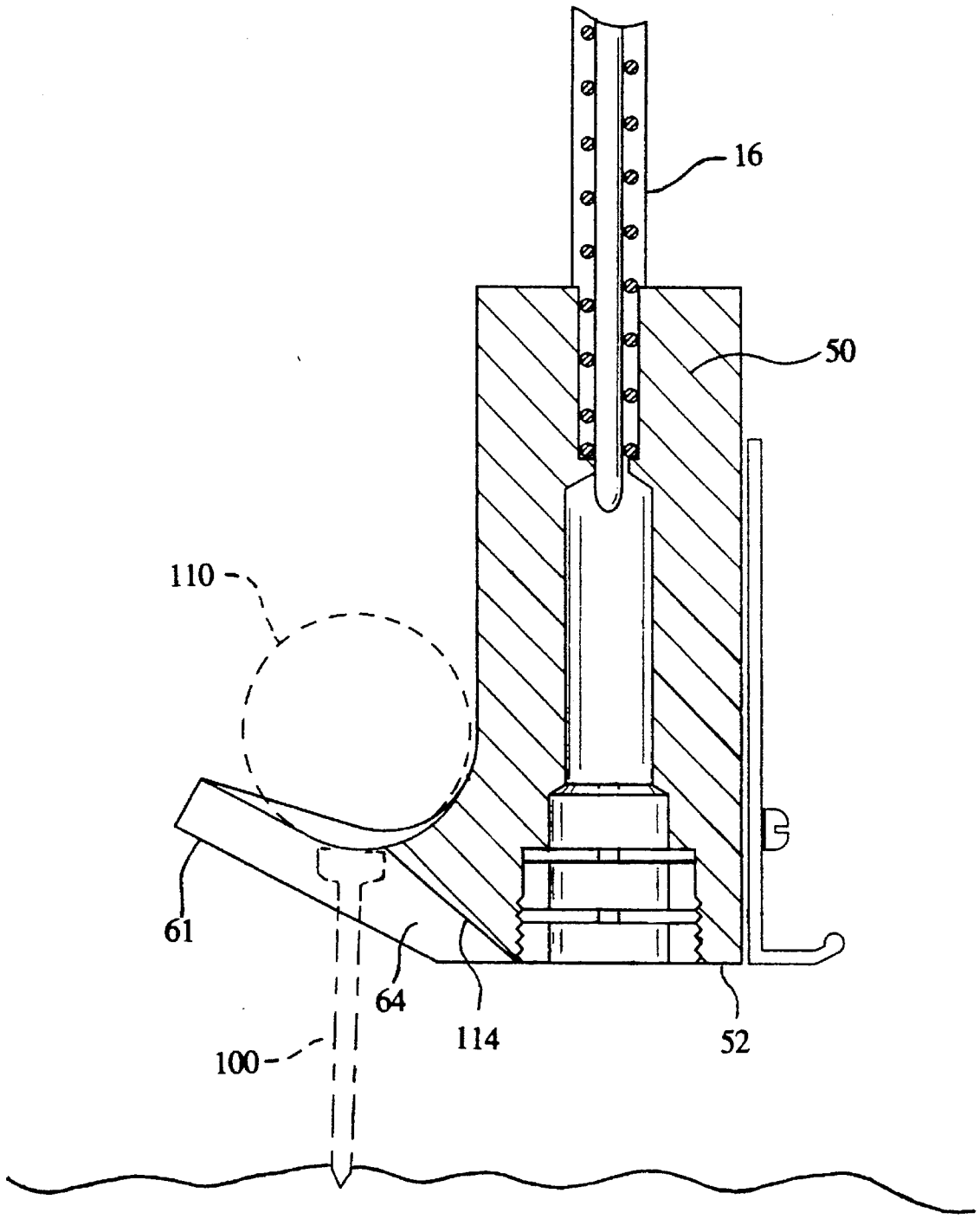


FIG-8



GOLF BALL TEE SETTING DEVICE

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to devices that enable a golfer to set a golf ball tee into the ground without having to bend over to ground level. More particularly, the present invention relates to a golf tee setting device that automatically sets the tee to a desired height, wherein the desired height can be selectively adjusted to match the requirements of the golfer.

2. Prior Art Statement

As is well known in the game of golf, on the first shot of each hole the golfer is allowed to set the golf ball upon a tee. Tees are manufactured in a large variety of shapes, sizes and materials. However, the most common tee is the simple wooden tee that has an enlarged head to support a golf ball and a tapered body that can be driven into the earth. The typical golfer drives a tee into the ground by holding a golf ball over the tee in one hand. The golfer then bends over to ground level and drives the tee into the ground by applying a downward force to the golf ball. Such a typical method of setting a tee works well for many golfers but does embody certain disadvantages. First, golf is a game of both precision and consistency. Golfers practice for years in an attempt to perfect their golf swing. However, if the golf ball is not set consistently at the same tee height, that practiced swing must constantly be altered to properly meet the ball. This need for readjustment creates inconsistencies in the tee shots of golfers that detract from their overall performance.

Another disadvantage of manually setting a tee into the ground is that the ground conditions vary widely from week to week. Some days the ground is wet and soft. As a result, the tee must often be set deeply into the ground in order to support the golf ball. On other days, the ground is dry and very hard. During such conditions, it is very difficult to manually drive the tee into the ground. As a result, the tee is often broken as it is driven into the ground or the tee is left at a high position because the tee can only be partially driven into the ground.

Yet another disadvantage of manually setting a tee is that many people are just physically incapable of comfortably moving their bodies into the position needed to set a tee. Golf is a very popular sport with senior citizens. Many senior citizens cannot comfortably bend over to ground level. Accordingly, it is difficult for these individuals to properly set a tee.

The prior art is replete with devices that help a golfer set a tee. However, few eliminate all of the disadvantages previously mentioned. For instance, U.S. Pat. No. 5,171,010 to Lanome, entitled GOLF BALL TEEING APPARATUS describes a device for setting a tee into the ground. This device makes it easier to set the tee into hard ground and eliminates the need to bend to ground level. However, there is no mechanism that ensures that the tee is set at a desired height each time the tee setter is used. As such, the tee setter inconsistently sets the depth of the tee resulting in inconsistent tee shots, as was previously explained.

U.S. Pat. No. 4,142,719 to Blood, entitled GOLF TEE INSERTION DEVICE shows a tee setting device that does set a tee at the same height each time it is used. However, to adjust the height at which the tee is set, the bottom of the tee setter must be rotated relative the shaft. This requires the golfer to engage the often wet and/or dirty ground end of the tee setter and provide a twisting motion. Many golfers who are incapable of manually setting their tees into the ground have arthritis. This ailment also prevents these golfers from providing the strong twisting motion needed to adjust a tee setting device as disclosed in the Blood patent. Additionally, the Blood tee setting device only sets the tee. The golfer must then bend over to ground level to place the ball on the tee, which is just as burdensome a task as setting the tee to many golfers.

The prior art also fails to show a tee setting device that is capable of boring a hole into the ground prior to the setting of a tee. By providing a device capable of boring a hole, tees could be much more easily set into hard and/or dry ground.

In view of the disadvantages embodied by prior art tee setting devices, it is an object of the present invention to provide a tee setting device that is easy to adjust, sets the tee at a desired height, and sets the ball upon the tee.

It is a further object of the present invention to provide such a tee setter that is easy to use, light weight and inexpensive.

It is still another object of the present invention to provide a tee setter that is capable of boring a hole into the ground prior to the setting of the tee.

SUMMARY

The present invention is a device and the associated method for setting a golf tee into the ground. The device includes a tubular shaft having a head assembly at one end and a handle assembly at the opposite end. The head assembly includes a mechanism for retaining a golf tee and orienting the golf tee at a perpendicular to the ground. A pushrod is disposed within the shaft between the handle assembly and the head assembly. A selectively adjustable engagement device is present within the handle assembly. The engagement device enables a handle to engage the pushrod at different points. The handle is movable through a predetermined range relative the shaft. Accordingly, by selectively coupling the handle to the pushrod at different points, the handle can be used to move the pushrod a given distance within the shaft.

The end of the pushrod, opposite the handle, is disposed above the golf tee that is retained in the head assembly. As the handle drives the tee within the shaft, the pushrod abuts against the golf tee and drives the tee into the ground. The point at which the handle engages the pushrod determines at what height the tee is left above the ground. The handle can also selectively engage the pushrod in such a manner that the handle can drive the pushrod through the head assembly and into the ground below the head assembly. The pushrod therefore creates a pilot hole in the ground that enables the tee to be more easily set without concern of the tee breaking.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

For a better understanding of the present invention, reference is made to the following description of an exemplary embodiment thereof, considered in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in which:

FIG. **1** is a side view of one preferred embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. **2** is a selectively cross-sectioned view of the embodiment shown in FIG. **1** viewed along section line **2—2**;

FIG. **3** is an enlarged view of the portion of FIG. **2** contained within region **3**;

FIG. **4** is a rear view of the head region of the present invention shown in FIG. **3**, viewed along perspective line 4—4;

FIG. **4***a* is a fragmented view of the head region shown in FIG. **4**, shown in conjunction with a tee to facilitate consideration and discussion;

FIG. **5** is an enlarged view of the portion of FIG. **2** contained within region **5**;

FIG. **6** shows the portion of the present invention previously shown in FIG. **5** as the invention is in use to facilitate further consideration and discussion;

FIG. **7***a* shows a cross-section of the head region of the present invention, prior to use;

FIG. **7***b* shows a cross-section of the head region of the present invention as it sets a tee into the ground;

FIG. **7***c* is a cross-section of the head region of the present invention shown making a pilot hole in the ground; and

FIG. **8** shows the head region of the present invention in conjunction with a golf ball and tee to illustrate how the present invention is used to set a golf ball upon a tee.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Referring to FIG. **1**, there is shown one preferred embodiment of the present invention golf tee setting device **10**. The device **10** has a length L that is between 28 inches and 38 inches long so that the tee setting device **10** has the same general length L as a typical golf club. The tee setting device **10** has a handle assembly **12**, a head assembly **14** and a tapered shaft **16** that joins the head assembly **14** to the handle assembly **12**. As a result, the tee setting device **10** has the same overall appearance as a golf club and can be carried in any device or bag designed to carry golf clubs.

The mechanism that governs how deep a tee is to be set is contained within the handle assembly **12**. Indicia **18** in the form of a depth gauge is disposed on the shaft **16** proximate the handle assembly **12**. The bottom surface **20** of the handle assembly **12** acts as a depth gauge marker providing an easily viewed indication as to what tee height the tee setting device **10** will set a tee. In the shown embodiment, the indicia **18** is printed in inches ranging from ¼ inch to 2 inches, wherein the tee setting device is set at the ¾ inch mark. The ¾ inch setting can be ascertained by a person looking at the bottom surface **20** of the handle assembly **12** aligning with the ¾ inch indicia on the shaft **16**. The adjustment scale used is merely exemplary and any other practical range may be used. Similarly, the indicia **18** need not be numbers but can be graphic symbols, color codes or any other distinguishing scale.

Referring to FIG. **2**, a cross-sectional view of the present invention tee setting device **10** is shown. As can be seen, the tapered shaft **16** that extends between the handle assembly **12** and the head assembly **14** is hollow defining a central cavity **22**. A pushrod **24** travels through the center of the central cavity **22** within the shaft **16**. The pushrod **24** is not affixed to the shaft **16**. As a result, the pushrod **24** can move reciprocally back and forth along the longitudinal axis of the shaft **16**.

Referring to FIG. **3** in conjunction with FIG. **2**, it can be seen that the main body of the head assembly **14** has a cavity **28** formed within it that faces the handle assembly **12**. The narrow end **26** of the tapered shaft **16** terminates with the cavity **28**, thereby joining the shaft **16** to the head assembly **14**. The shaft **16** may screw into the head assembly **14**, be adhesively bonded to the head assembly **14** or be press fit into place. A small aperture **30** is located at the bottom of the cavity **28** in the head assembly **14**. The small aperture **30** communicates with the central cavity **22** defined by the shaft **16**. The small aperture **30** thereby connects the central cavity **22** defined by the shaft **16** to the tee engagement chamber **32**, the purpose of which will be later described.

The pushrod **24** extends through the central cavity **22** defined by the shaft **16**. As such, the pushrod **24** extends into the cavity **28** in the head assembly **14**, through the small aperture **30** and into the tee engagement chamber **32**. In the shown embodiment, the end **36** of the pushrod **24** is slightly pointed and extends partially into the tee engagement chamber **32** when the setting device **10** is at rest. The pointed end **36** of the pushrod **24** serves a purpose which will later be described.

A spring stop **38** is attached to the pushrod **24** at a position well within the central cavity **22** of the shaft **16**. The spring stop **38** can be any structure that prevents secondary return spring **40** from passing a predetermined point on the pushrod **24**. The secondary return spring **40** extends between the surface **42** in the head assembly **14**, that defines the small aperture **30**, and the spring stop **38**. The secondary return spring **40** is sized to be too large to pass through the small aperture **30** and too small to pass around the spring stop **38**. As such, when the pushrod **24** is advanced in the direction of arrow **43**, the secondary return spring **40** acts to return the pushrod **24** to its at rest position as illustrated in FIG. **2**. A travel stop **25** is positioned within the shaft **16** as illustrated in FIG. **3**. The secondary return spring extends through the center of the travel stop **25**. When the pushrod **24** is advanced in the direction of arrow **43**, the spring stop **38** eventually abuts against the travel stop **25**. The contact between the spring stop **38** and the travel stop **25** prevents the pushrod **24** from being hyperextended. Accordingly, the secondary return spring **40** is prevented from being over compressed and damaged.

The head assembly **14** is comprised primarily of a generally J-shaped element **50** that defines the cavity **28**, small aperture **30** and tee engagement chamber **32**. In a preferred embodiment, the J-shaped element **50** is made of plastic because of its light weight and corrosion resistance. However, any other material, such as metals or ceramics can also be used. The tee engagement chamber **32** extends from the small aperture **30** to the bottom surface **52** of the J-shaped element **50**. Two elastomeric annular members **54**, **56** are disposed in the tee engagement chamber **32** proximate the bottom surface **52** of the J-shaped element **50**. The first elastomeric annular member **54** is held in place by an annular spacer **55** that compresses the first elastomeric annular member **54** against a ridge **57** within the tee engagement chamber **32**. The second elastomeric annular member **56** abuts against the annular spacer **55** and is held in place by an externally threaded member **58** that screws into the tee engagement chamber **32**. Both of the elastomeric annular members **54**, **56** define central apertures **59**, **60**. These apertures **59**, **60** easily stretch open to allow the head of a tee to be passed into the tee engagement chamber **32**. However, the apertures **59**, **60** return to a diameter that is small enough to firmly engage the shaft of a tee after the head of the tee has been passed through. In an alternate embodiment, the two elastomeric annular members **54**, **56** could be replaced with flexible bristles, spring elements or any other flexible gripping element capable of retaining a golf tee.

The foot region **61** of the J-shaped element **50** defines a depression **62** that is shaped to hold and retain a golf ball. A slot **64** is disposed in the depression **62** thereby providing the

foot region with a hammer claw configuration. The primary function of the slot **64** is to guide a supported golf ball onto a tee, as will later be explained. The foot region **61** extends at an angle A from the plane of the bottom surface **52**. Angle A is any angle that enables the foot region **61** to hold and retain a golf ball when the shaft **16** is held generally at a vertical orientation.

A divot repair member **65** is pivotably coupled to a surface **66** of the J-shaped element **50** opposite the foot region **61**. Referring to FIG. **4**, it can be seen that the divot repair member **65** can be rotated about pivot member **67**, whereby the divot tongs **68** would extend below the bottom surface **52** of the J-shaped element **50**. A stopper **69** is also disposed on the J-shaped element **50**, The stopper **69** resists the rotation of the divot repair member **65**, thereby preventing the unintentional rotation of the divot repair member **65** when not in use. In FIG. **4***a* it can be seen that projections **53** extend from one end of the divot repair member **65**. The projections enable the divot repair member **65** to pull tees from the ground or lift a tee that is lying on the ground. A spring washer **63** is disposed between the divot repair member **65** and the pivot member **67**. The spring washer **63** biases the divot repair member **65** against the J-shaped element **50** and provides enough flexibility in the movement of the divot repair member **65** to enable the divot repair member **65** to pass over the stopper **69**.

Referring to FIG. **5** in conjunction with FIG. **2**, the handle assembly **12** of the present invention setting device is shown. The shaft **16** extends into the handle assembly **12** and terminates at a slide bearing **70**. The pushrod **24** extends into the handle assembly **12** and abuts against a control rod **72**, whereby a reciprocal movement of the control rod **72** would cause a corresponding movement in the pushrod **24**. The slide bearing **70**, joined to the shaft **16**, fits around the control rod **72**. The slide bearing **70** is free to move back and forth along the length of the control rod **72**. As a result, the control rod **72**, and thus the pushrod **24**, can be moved reciprocally with respect to the shaft **16**. The control rod **72** extends through slide bearing **70** and is firmly coupled to a handle **74**. The shaft **16** passes into the open bottom end **20** of the handle **74**. The shaft **16** never engages the handle **74**. Consequently, the shaft **16** can move reciprocally in and out of the handle **74** as the slide bearing **70** rides along the surface of the control rod **72**.

A guide tube **80** is disposed around the control rod **72**. The guide tube **80** is not directly attached to the control rod **72**, as such the guide tube **80** may move reciprocally along the length of the control rod **72**. A slot **75** having a length L2 is formed through the shaft **16** proximate the slide bearing **70**. The slot **75** travels in the same direction as the longitudinal axis of the shaft **16**. A key element **76** extends from the guide tube **80**. The key element **76** extends through the slot **75** and terminates with an enlarged head **77** that is too large to pass through the slot **75**. As the guide tube **80** moves back and forth along the control rod **72**, the key element **76** slides back and forth within the slot **75**. Accordingly the presence of the key element **76** in the slot **75** limits the distance the guide tube **80** can reciprocally move along the control rod **72**. Additionally, the presence of the key element **76** in the slot **75** prevents the guide tube **80** from rotating with respect to the control rod **72**. Consequently, the guide tube **80** and control rod **72** are maintained in the same rotational relationship.

A slotted structure **82** is formed in the guide tube **80** consisting of a primary slot **84** and branch slots **86** that extend off either side of the primary slot **84**. In the shown embodiment, four branch slots **86** are shown on either side of the primary slot **84**. It will be understood that this configuration is merely exemplary and any number of branch slots may be used on either one or both sides of the primary slot **84**.

A set pin **88** extends from the control rod **72**. The set pin **88** extends into the slotted structure **82** formed in the guide tube **80**. As such, it will be understood that by moving the control rod **72** in relation to the guide tube **80**, the set pin **88** can be moved along the primary slot **84** and turned into any one of the branch slots **86**, thereby creating a mechanical engagement between the guide tube **80** and the centrally positioned control rod **72**. An optional locking pawl **89** may be disposed on the control rod **72** proximate the set pin **88**. The locking pawl **89** may engage a slot (not shown) formed in the guide tube **80**. The locking pawl **89** helps maintain the set pin **88** in the primary slot **84** until the set pin **88** is turned into a branch slot **86**. This helps prevent the set pin **88** from passing into the wrong branch slot **86** during operation.

A primary return spring **90** abuts against the bottom end **91** of the guide tube **80**. The lower portion of the primary return spring **90** rests within a spring block **92** that is firmly anchored to the shaft **16**. The primary return spring **90** therefore acts to bias the guide tube **80** in a direction away from the open bottom end **20** of the handle **74**. The primary return spring **90** does not engage either the pushrod **24** or the control rod **72**. Accordingly, the primary return spring **90** biases the guide tube **80** against the slide bearing **70**. In the shown embodiment, the set pin **88** is not engaged to any of the branch slots **86**. However, it should be understood that by rotating the handle **74** in relation to the shaft **16**, the set pin **88** can be positioned into any of the branch slots **86** present on the guide tube **80**. Depending upon in which of the branch slots **86** the set pin **88** is placed, the distance D2 between the slide bearing **70** and the handle anchor member **83** varies. The closer to the slide bearing **70** the set pin **88** is set, the greater the distance D2 becomes when the apparatus is not in use.

OPERATION

The height at which the present invention setting device **10** will set a golf tee is determined by which of the branch slots **86** the set pin **88** engages. In the shown embodiment of FIG. **5**, the set pin **88** is positioned proximate one of the central branch slots **86**. As is seen by FIG. **6**, when the set pin **88** is turned into this central branch slot, the guide tube **80** is joined to the control rod **72**. When locked into this position, the bottom end **20** of the handle **74** aligns with the "¾ inch" marking on the distance gauge indicia **18** (see FIG. **1**). This enables a golfer to see that the device **10** is ready to set a tee into the ground at a ¾ inch height. The distance gauge indicia **18** on the exterior of the shaft **16** (FIG. **1**) correspond to the different branch slots **86** on the guide tube **80** (FIG. **5**). Referring to FIG. **5**, it will therefore be understood that by moving the set pin **88** into the different slots **86**, a change in position occurs in between the handle **74** and the shaft **16**. This causes the bottom end **20** of the handle **74** to align with the different distance gauge indicia **18** (FIG. **1**) and provides the means for selectively adjusting the overall tee setting device **10**.

As the set pin **88** engages the different branch slots **86** in the guide tube **80**, the relative position between the handle **74** and the shaft **16** changes. Accordingly, the distance D2 between the slide bearing **70** and the handle anchor member **83** also changes. Referring now to FIG. **6**, it can be seen that once the set pin **88** is engaged within one of the branch slots

86 and a force F is applied to the handle 74, the handle 74 moves in the direction of force F. The movement of the handle 74 causes the control rod 72 to move into the shaft 16. The movement of the control rod 72 therein drives the pushrod 24 through the shaft 16. Since the guide tube 80 is temporarily joined to the control rod 24 by the presence of the set pin 88 in the branch slot 86, the guide tube 80 moves with the control rod 24 relative the shaft 16. As can be seen, the movement of the handle 74 and control rod 72 in direction of force F drives the guide tube 80 away from the slide bearing 70, thereby compressing primary return spring 90. The guide tube 80 continues to compress the primary return spring 90 until the primary return spring 90 reaches its point of maximum compression. At this point, the advancement of the handle 74 is stopped by the interference caused by the primary return spring 90 as it abuts against the spring stop 92. As will be later explained, the distance the control rod 72 pushes the pushrod 24 determines how far the pushrod 24 pushes the tee and sets the tee into the ground.

Referring to FIG. 7*a*, the head assembly 14 of the present invention is shown at rest. A tee 100 is set into the tee engagement chamber 32 through the opening on the bottom surface 52 of the J-shaped element 50. The head 101 of the tee is passed through the central aperture 59 of the first annular member 54 and the central aperture 60 of the second annular member 56. The elastomeric material of the first and second annular members 54, 56 allow for the easy passage of the head 101 therethrough. However, the elasticity of the first and second annular members 54, 56 cause them to engage the shaft 102 of the tee 100 and thereby hold the tee 100 into place in a generally vertical orientation. The diameter of the tee engagement chamber 32 is only slightly larger than the head 101 of the tee 100. This prevents the tee 100 from tilting sideways within the tee engagement chamber 32 as the tee 100 is driven into the ground.

In FIG. 6, it can be seen that once the set pin 88 is locked into a selected branch slot 86, the movement of the handle 74 causes the control rod 72 and the pushrod 24 to advance a predetermined distance within the shaft 16 before the primary return spring 90 reaches a point of maximum compression. Referring to FIG. 7*b*, it can be seen that as the pushrod 24 is advanced within the shaft 16, the pointed end 36 of the pushrod 24 advances within the tee engagement chamber 32. The pointed end 36 of the pushrod 24 engages the head 101 of the tee 100 and drives the tee 100 into the ground. Accordingly, if the bottom surface 52 of the J-shaped element 50 is placed on the ground, the pushrod 24 acts to push the tee 100 into the ground. The pushrod 24 will continue to push the tee 100 into the ground until the primary return spring 90 in the handle assembly 12 reaches maximum compression (see FIG. 6). When the handle assembly 12 is set at the ¾ inch setting, as shown in FIG. 6, the pointed end 36 of the pushrod 24 stops at a point ¾ inch from the ground. Consequently, the tee 100 is set at a ¾ inch height. As has been previously explained, the handle can be adjusted between settings of ¼ inch and 2 inches. Accordingly, depending upon how the handle assembly is adjusted, the pushrod 24 will set the tee 100 between heights of ¼ inch and 2 inches.

In FIG. 5, the set pin 88 is shown in the primary slot 84 of the slotted structure 82 of the guide tube 80. If the set pin 88 is not turned into one of the branch slots 86,the tee setting device can be used to make a pilot hole in the ground, prior to the setting of a tee. When the set pin 88 is in the primary slot 84, the guide tube 80 does not move with the set pin 88 until the set pin 88 contacts the very bottom of the primary slot 84. At this point, the guide tube 80 finally begins to move and compress the primary return spring 90. Accordingly, the handle 74 advances the pushrod 24 in the shaft 16 a great distance before the handle 74 abuts against the top of the shaft 16 or the primary return spring 90 reaches maximum compression. Referring to FIG. 7*c*, it can be seen that when the handle is not set to a given depth and the pushrod 24 is advanced within the shaft 16, the pointed end 36 of the pushrod 24 extends beyond the bottom surface 52 of the J-shaped element 50. Accordingly, the pointed end 36 of the pushrod 24 can be driven into the ground, thereby creating a pilot hole. The driving of the pointed end 36 into the ground is desirable if the ground is frozen or hard. The creation of the pilot hole enables the tee to be easily set into the ground without breaking the tee. A second alternate use derived from driving the pushrod 24 into the ground is that the pushrod 24 can be used to hold the entire tee setting device in an upright, self-standing position. Once the pushrod 24 is pushed into the ground, the friction from the ground will retain the pushrod 24 in the ground, despite the bias of the secondary return spring 40 trying to pull the pushrod 24 from the ground. As such, the tee setting device can be set into a vertical position on the ground and it will remain in that position, anchored by the pushrod 24 in the ground, until the pushrod 24 is pulled from the ground.

Referring lastly to FIG. 8, it can be seen that a golf ball 110 can be placed within the foot region 61 of the J-shaped element 50. As has previously been described, the foot region 61 has a hammer claw shape that holds a golf ball when the shaft 16 is held vertically. A slot 64 is formed in the center of the J-shaped element 50. The slot 64 is defined by a sloped surface 114 that slopes from the bottom surface 52 to the golf ball 110. As a result, when a tee 100 is placed in the ground and a golf ball 110 is placed in the foot region 61 of the J-shaped element 50, by lowering the J-shaped element 50 onto the tee 100, the slot 64 automatically aligns the tee 100 with the bottom of the golf ball 110. The J-shaped element 50 is then removed, and the golf ball 110 is left resting upon the tee 100.

It will be understood that the various figures described above illustrate only one preferred embodiment of the present invention. A person skilled in the art can therefore make numerous alterations and modifications to the shown embodiment utilizing functionally equivalent components to those shown and described. All such modifications are intended to be included within the scope of the present invention as defined by the appended claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A device for setting a tee, comprising:

retaining means for retaining the tee at an orientation generally perpendicular to the ground;

a tubular shaft having a first end and an opposite second end, wherein said first end is coupled to said retaining means;

a pushrod, disposed within said tubular shaft;

a handle assembly disposed proximate said second end of said tubular shaft in a manner the enables said handle assembly to move independently along said tubular shaft a predetermined distance between a first position and a second position, said handle assembly engaging said pushrod within said tubular shaft and selectively drives said pushrod said predetermined distance through said tubular shaft as said handle assembly travels from said first position to said second position, whereby said pushrod directly contacts the tee held by said retaining means and drives the tee into the ground to a depth related to said predetermined distance traveled by said pushrod; and

adjustment means contained within said handle assembly for selectively adjusting said predetermined distance between said first position and said second position, thereby adjusting the depth at which the tee is set into the ground.

2. The device according to claim **1**, wherein said adjustment means is adjustable in periodic intervals, thereby enabling the tee to be set at a height of between ¼ inch and 2 inches above the ground by said pushrod.

3. The device according to claim **1**, wherein said handle assembly includes;

a hollow handle that surrounds said second end of said tubular shaft;

an elongated member coupled to said hollow handle that extends into said tubular shaft and engages said pushrod, said elongated member having a set pin extending therefrom;

a slotted structure having a plurality of slots disposed thereon between a first end and a second end, said slotted structure surrounding said elongated member in such a manner that said set pin is capable of selectively engaging a targeted slot of said plurality of slots, wherein the position of said slotted structure relative to said elongated member is dependant upon the targeted slot engaged by said set pin.

4. The device according to claim **3**, further including a stopping means disposed in said tubular shaft for engaging said first end of said slotted structure when said handle is at said second position, thereby preventing the movement of said pushrod through said tubular shaft beyond said predetermined distance.

5. The device according to claim **1**, further including a gauge means for providing a visible indication corresponding to said predetermined distance as determined by said adjustment means.

6. The device according to claim **5**, wherein said gauge means includes a plurality of indicia on said hollow shaft, wherein a surface associated with said handle assembly aligns with one of said indicia depending upon the setting associated with said adjustment means.

7. The device according to claim **1**, further including a return means for returning said handle assembly from said second position to said first position after the tee has been set by said pushrod.

8. The device according to claim **1** wherein said retaining means is contained within a head assembly disposed at the end of said tubular shaft opposite said handle assembly, said head assembly further including a tee engaging means for engaging and removing a tee previously set into the ground.

9. The device according to claim **8** wherein said head assembly further includes a means for holding a golf ball whereby said device can be utilized to place the golf ball on a tee after the tee is set in the ground.

10. The device according to claim **8**, wherein said head assembly further includes a divot repair tool positionable between a retracted position and an extended position.

11. The device according to claim **1**, wherein said pushrod has a pointed tip, whereby said pushrod can be driven into the ground by said handle assembly, thereby creating a hole into which the tee can be set.

12. The device according to claim **1**, wherein said retaining means includes at least one elastomeric member having an aperture formed therethrough, whereby a tee can be passed through said aperture and said at least one elastomeric member retains the tee in place.

13. A tee setting device, comprising:

a head assembly defining a hollow chamber therein, said hollow chamber communicating with at least one surface positionable upon the ground;

holding means for holding a tee within said hollow chamber;

a shaft coupled to said head assembly;

a pushrod disposed within said shaft;

a handle coupled to said pushrod for driving said pushrod through said shaft within a predetermined range, whereby said pushrod directly contacts the tee held by said holding means and drives the tee out of the head assembly and into the ground to a depth corresponding to a distance traveled by said pushrod; and

an adjustable stopping means for selectively stopping the travel of pushrod at a target point among a plurality of points contained within said predetermined range.

14. The device according to claim **13**, wherein said predetermined range is at least two inches and said stopping means is adjustable in periodic intervals within said predetermined range.

15. The device according to claim **14**, further including a gauge means for providing a visible indication corresponding to said periodic intervals.

16. The device according to claim **13**, wherein said pushrod has a pointed tip, whereby said pushrod can be driven into the ground by said handle assembly, thereby creating a hole into which the tee can be set.

17. A method of setting a golf tee, comprising the steps of:

providing an elongated member having a hollow channel formed therethrough and a first open end that communicates with said hollow channel;

providing a pushrod within said hollow channel wherein the pushrod can be advanced in said hollow channel;

selectively limiting the distance the pushrod is permitted to travel within said hollow channel, wherein the distance selected corresponds to a predetermined tee height that a person desires to set the tee on the ground;

positioning a tee within said hollow channel proximate said open end;

placing said open end of said elongated member on the ground;

advancing said pushrod in said elongated member wherein said pushrod engages the tee and drives the tee into the ground to a point where the tee extends above the ground at said predetermined tee height.

18. The method according to claim **17**, wherein said predetermined tee height can be selected from between ¼ inch and 2 inches.

19. The method according to claim **17**, further including the step of advancing said pushrod beyond said head assembly to create a hole in the earth, prior to positioning the tee within the elongated member, thereby creating a hole into which the tee can be driven.

* * * * *