US 20140274434A1

(19) United States

(12) Patent Application Publication

(10) Pub. No.: US 2014/0274434 A1

(43) Pub. Date: Sep. 18, 2014

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(54) GOLF FLAG REPLACEMENT SYSTEM

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(21) Appl. No.: **13/833,705**

(22) Filed: **Mar. 15, 2013**

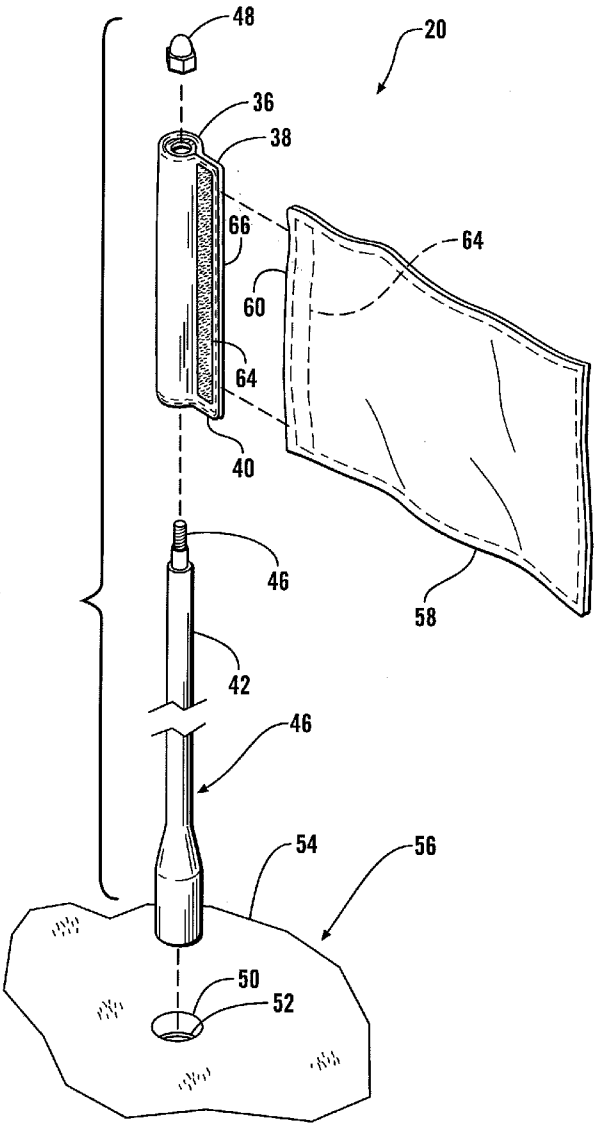
Publication Classification

(51) **Int. Cl.**
A63B 57/00 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**
CPC *A63B 57/0056* (2013.01)
USPC **473/176**

(57) **ABSTRACT**

The rapid and economical replacement of golf flags to indicate the varying position of a flagstick with respect to a golf green is facilitated by a golf flag assembly which has a flag tube element with a radially extending stiff flange which extends from the tube wall. A flexible sleeve extends around the flag tube element to overlie the tube wall and the flange, and has an exterior margin with a first part of a two part hook and loop fastener positioned thereon. A flexible loose flag has an inner margin with a strip of the second part of the two part hook and loop fastener. The loose flag is releasably connected to the flag tube element on the sleeve, permitting it to be rapidly removed and replaced with another loose flag of different appearance indicating a different position of the flagstick on the green.



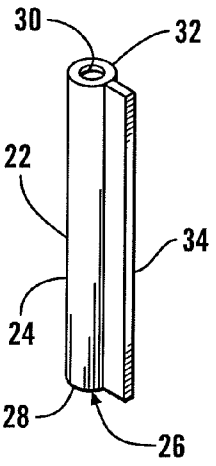


FIG. 1
PRIOR ART

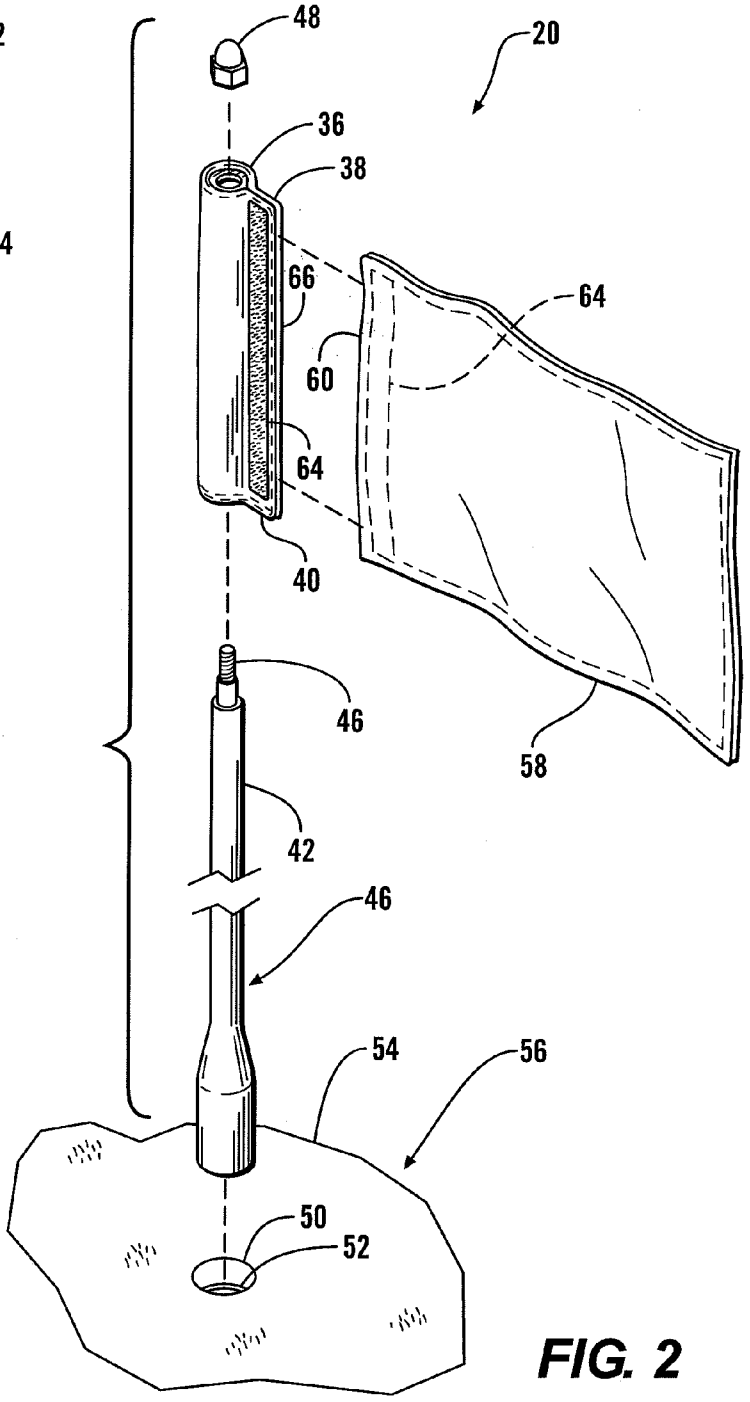


FIG. 2

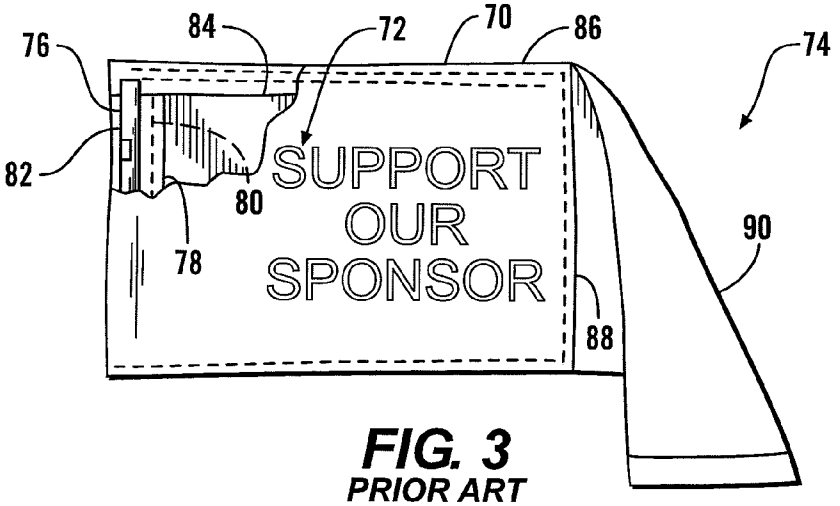


FIG. 3
PRIOR ART

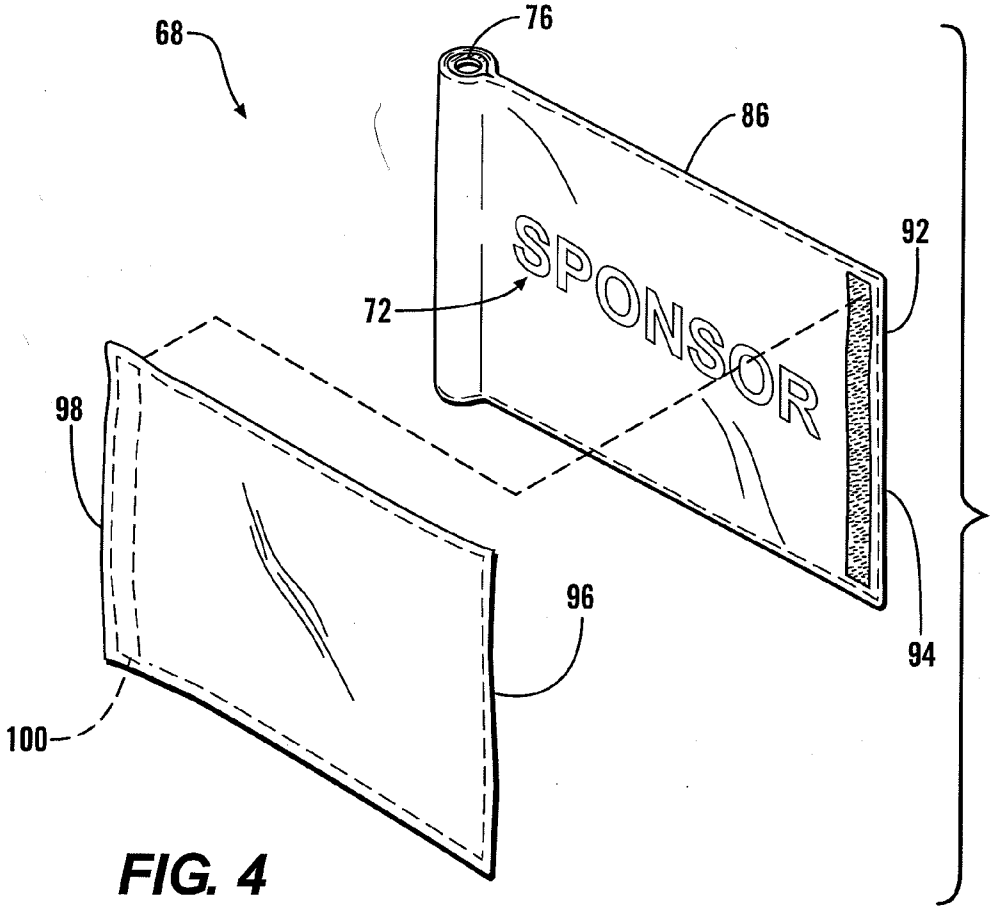


FIG. 4

GOLF FLAG REPLACEMENT SYSTEM

CROSS REFERENCES TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] Not applicable.

STATEMENT AS TO RIGHTS TO INVENTIONS MADE UNDER FEDERALLY SPONSORED RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

[0002] Not applicable.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] The present invention relates to golf flags in general, and more particularly to a system for rapidly replacing the flag on a golf flagstick.

[0004] In the game of golf, players seek to hit a ball into a hole defined by a cup embedded in the ground on a manicured lawn or putting green. Each hole is marked by an upstanding flagstick which is removably mounted with respect to the cup. The flagstick may be provided with a wind sensitive flag which is mounted to the flagstick for free rotation. Not only does the flag indicate to the golfer where the hole is located, the orientation of the flag can help the golfer judge the prevailing winds, which will affect the travel of the ball. Because the golfer is driving his ball towards the green from many yards away, the prominent flag can also give information about the configuration of the green, namely the placement of the cup within the green. Different flag designs, for example different colors, can indicate to the golfer the placement of the hole on the green. In one conventional system, a red flag indicates placement towards the front of the green, blue towards the back of the green, and white indicates a hole in the middle of the green. During the course of the golfing season, a hole on a particular green is regularly filled in and a new hole created at a different location, to prevent excessive wear at one region of the green.

[0005] A conventional golf flag assembly comprises a fabric rectangle sewn to enclose a plastic flag tube, which has a narrow plastic protruding flange. The fabric rectangle defines a loose flag which extends outwardly from the tube and surrounds the flange. The flanged tube then freely rotates on the flagstick, allowing the flag to be blown about the flagstick by the wind, helping to indicate wind direction to the golfer. The flag tube receives the flagstick therethrough. An acorn cap or similar element is screwed on to a threaded extension of the flagstick which extends above the flag. When it is time to replace a flag, for example due to wear or for repositioning of the cup, the cap is unthreaded, the old flag lifted off the flagstick, and a new flag is slipped over the flagstick. The cap is then screwed in place to retain the flag and still allow for free rotation of the flag on the flagstick.

[0006] In my U.S. Pat. No. D489,291, the disclosure of which is incorporated by reference herein, I disclosed a golf flag having a stiff plastic flexboard enclosed within a fabric flag sleeve. The flexboard is received within a channel defined between two thin flanges which extend from a plastic tube. The fabric which surrounds the flexboard may be imprinted with a commercial message, allowing the golf flag assembly to be used as an advertising medium on a golf course.

[0007] Replacing conventional golf flags when the hole is moved on the green requires a time-consuming process, and also requires an inventory of golf flag assemblies in multiple colors. When sponsored golf flag assemblies, the inventory demands become even greater, as the custom imprinted message flags must be constructed in each of the requisite colors.

[0008] What is needed is a golf flag assembly and replacement system which minimizes replacement time and inventory.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0009] The golf flag assembly of this invention facilitates the rapid and economical replacement of golf flags to indicate the varying position of a flagstick with respect to a golf green. The golf flag assembly has a flag tube element with a radially extending stiff flange which extends from the tube wall. A flexible sleeve extends around the flag tube element to overlie the tube wall and the flange, and has an exterior margin with a first part of a two part hook and loop fastener positioned thereon. A flexible loose flag has an inner margin with a strip of the second part of the two part hook and loop fastener. The loose flag is releasably connected to the flag tube element on the sleeve, permitting it to be rapidly removed and replaced with another loose flag of different appearance indicating a different position of the flagstick on the green.

[0010] It is an object of the present invention to provide a golf flag assembly which allows the rapid replacement of a flag with another flag of different appearance.

[0011] It is another object of the present invention to provide a method of rapidly replacing golf flags.

[0012] It is another object of the present invention to provide a golf flag assembly which allows the maintenance of a reduced inventory of flags by golf course management.

[0013] Further objects, features and advantages of the invention will be apparent from the following detailed description when taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0014] FIG. **1** is an perspective view of a prior art plastic flag tube.

[0015] FIG. **2** is an exploded isometric view of the golf flag assembly of this invention having a replaceable loose flag.

[0016] FIG. **3** is a front elevational view, partially broken away in section of a prior art golf flag assembly having a rigid flag segment with a loose flag extension.

[0017] FIG. **4** is an exploded isometric view of an alternative embodiment golf flag assembly of this invention having a rigid flag segment with a replaceable loose flag extensions.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0018] Referring more particularly to FIGS. **1-4**, wherein like numbers refer to similar parts, a golf flag assembly **20** of the present invention is shown in FIG. **2**. A prior art golf flag tube element **22** is shown in FIG. **1**. The tube element **22** has a cylindrical tube wall **24** which defines an axial opening **26** extending from a bottom hole **28** to a top hole **30**. The tube element has a top wall **32** which surrounds the top hole **30**, the top hole being smaller in diameter than the bottom hole **28**. A stiff flange **34** extends radially about one inch from the tube wall **24**. In the prior art golf flag assembly, not shown, a loose flexible sleeve encircles the tube element **22**, and defines a loose flexible flag. The inventive golf flag assembly **20**, shown in FIG. **2**, has a tube element **22**, identical to the one shown in FIG. **1**. A flexible sleeve **36** extends around the flag tube element **22** to overlie the tube wall **24** and the flange **34**.

The sleeve **36** has a first seam **38** extending above the flange **34**, and a second seam **40** extending below the flange. The seams **38**, **40**, position and retain the sleeve on the tube element **22**. The sleeve **36** may be formed of any suitable flexible material, for example a durable nylon mesh. The sleeve **36** may be of a green colored material to better obscure grass stains which may be incurred when the flag assembly is set in the grass.

[0019] A flexible loose flag **58** is made up of a single sheet of flexible fabric material, for example a durable nylon mesh material. The edges of the sheet are turned back and sewn to the sheet to form a hem on all four sides of the rectangular sheet. The flexible loose flag **58** will typically be about 14×20 inches.

[0020] The loose flag **58** has an inner margin **60** to which is sewn a strip of loop material **62** of a two part hook and loop fastener, such as VELCRO® fastener manufactured by Velcro USA Inc. A mating strip of hook material **64** of the two part fastener is sewn to an outer margin **66** of the flexible sleeve to overlie portions of the flange. The loose flag is thereby releasably connected to the flexible sleeve attached to the flag tube element.

[0021] The flag assembly **20** receives the shaft **42** of a flagstick **44** through the bottom hole **28**, and then through the axial opening **26**. A narrow diameter threaded element **46** located on the top of the flagstick shaft **42** protrudes through the top hole **30**. A nut or acorn fastener **48** is then threadedly engaged with the threaded element **46** to retain the flag assembly **20** on the flagstick **44**. The threaded element **46** and fastener **48** are preferably selected such that it is not possible to overtighten the fastener so much as to prevent the flag tube from freely rotating on the shaft **42**. It is desirable that the flag assembly be able to turn freely on the shaft to allow the flag to indicate the direction of the wind. The flagstick **44** is received within a cup **52** placed within a hole **50** cut into the grassy turf **54** of the golf green **56**.

[0022] An alternative embodiment golf flag assembly **68** is shown in FIG. **4**, which includes a stiff flag segment **70** which bears display indicia **72** which may be a commercial or promotional message or image. The golf flag assembly **68** incorporates the internal structure of the prior art golf flag assembly **74** shown in FIG. **3**. The prior art device **74** has a plastic tube element **76** with a cylindrical tube wall **82** having an axial opening extending from a bottom hole to a top hole. The axial length of the tube is about 12 inches. A front flange **78** and a rear flange **80** extend radially from the tube wall **82**, the front flange extending about ⅞ inches, and the rear flange about 9/16 inches, defining a channel about 3/16 inches wide between them. A flexible plastic rectangular sheet **84** about 1/16 inch thick extends into the channel, and is fixed to the flanges **78**, **80**, for example by stitching with thread. The sheet **84** may be about 11 inches tall, and may extend outwardly about 13 inches from the tube wall **82**. The sheet **84** can flex when pressure is applied, for example when a caddie or golfer holds or pulls the flag down and holds it against the flagstick so as not to distract putting golfers. When pressure is released it returns to its original position.

[0023] The prior art device **74** has a sleeve **86** which extends around the tube element **22** and which encloses the stiff sheet **84**. The sleeve **86** may be formed of any suitable flexible material, for example a durable nylon mesh. The construction of the sleeve **86** may comprise a single extended rectangle of material folded over, with a double seam at top and bottom and at the exterior margin **88** of the sleeve. The sleeve **86** retains a generally rectangular shape due to the internal stiffening provided by the sheet **84**. Hence the indicia **72** remains readable and does not collapse like a loose flag when the wind dies down. The prior art device **74** has a loose flag **90**, about 12×16 inches, which is fixed, such as by sewn stitching, to the exterior margin **88** of the sleeve.

[0024] The alternative embodiment golf flag assembly **68** of the present invention, shown in FIG. **4**, includes a plastic tube element **76** with a stiff flexboard rectangle fixed between the axially extending flanges **78**, **80**, which is enclosed within a fabric sleeve **86**. The flag assembly **68** has a hook segment **92** of a two part hook and loop fastener, fixed to the exterior margin **94** of the sleeve **86**. A flexible loose flag **96** has a loop segment **100** of a hook and loop fastener fixed to its inner margin **98**. The flexible loose flag **96** is thus removably affixed to the sleeve by the cooperation of the two parts of the two part fastener.

[0025] The golf flag assemblies **20**, **68**, of this invention enable a speedy change out of different loose flags when dictated by the turf maintenance requirements of the course, while minimizing the inventory of complete golf flag assemblies a course needs to retain on hand—both of which features contribute to reduced cost.

[0026] Consider the practical method of use of the devices of this invention. When at appointed times or as circumstances warrant, the holes on the golf course's greens are relocated, a technician will dig a new hole, install a cup, and move the flag stick from the old hole to the new hole. Should the hole have been moved to a different part of the green, for example from a front part of the green to a rear part, it will be necessary to change the appearance of the loose flag. It is not necessary for the technician to remove the fastener **48** to replace the entire golf flag assembly. Instead the loose flag is separated at the two part fastener and removed from its attachment to the sleeve and the flag tube element, and a different loose flag having a different appearance—for example a different overall color—is attached in its place and attached with the two part fastener, as a fastener of the same type is provided on the replacement loose flag. The removed loose flag may be installed at another location on the course, or may be returned to inventory.

[0027] It should be noted that although the two part fastener is described as a hook and loop fastener, other appropriate releasable two part fasteners may be used, for example: a button and button hole fastener, a zipper fastener, a magnetic and ferromagnetic material fastener, and a snap fastener.

[0028] It is preferable that the flag tube element be received within a fabric sleeve, and that the loose flag be attached to the sleeve, to maintain an appearance similar to a traditional golf flag assembly, however the loose flag may be attached with two part fastener directly to the flag tube element.

[0029] It is understood that the invention is not limited to the particular construction and arrangement of parts herein illustrated and described, but embraces all such modified forms thereof as come within the scope of the following claims.

I claim:

1. A golf flag assembly for mounting to an upwardly extending flagstick, the assembly comprising:

a flag tube element having a tube with a tube wall which defines an axial opening extending from a bottom hole to a top hole, the flag tube element having a radially extending stiff flange which extends from the tube wall;

a flexible sleeve which extends around the flag tube element to overlie the tube wall and the flange;

a flexible loose flag having an inner margin; and

a two part fastener comprised of a first part releasably connected to a second part, wherein the first part is fixed to the flexible sleeve to overlie portions of the flange, and the second part is fixed to the inner margin of the loose flag, the loose flag being thereby releasably connected to the flexible sleeve attached to the flag tube element.

2. The golf flag assembly of claim **1** wherein the two part fastener is selected from the group of fasteners consisting of: a hook and loop fastener, a button and button hole fastener, a zipper fastener, a magnetic and ferromagnetic material fastener, and a snap fastener.

3. The golf flag assembly of claim **1** wherein the two part fastener comprises strips of hook and loop fastener, and where the first part comprises one of a strip of hook material or loop material, and the second part comprises the other of the hook material or loop material, and wherein the first part is sewn to the flexible sleeve and the second part is sewn to the loose flag along the inner margin.

4. The golf flag assembly of claim **1** further comprising a stiff internal board fixed to the flange of the flag tube element, such that the sleeve extends around the stiff internal board, and further comprising a promotional indicia on the sleeve, and wherein the sleeve has an exterior margin spaced from the tube element beyond the internal board, and wherein the first part of the two part fastener extends along the exterior margin.

5. A golf flag kit for facilitating rapid adjustment of an installed golf flag to indicate the position of the golf flag on a green; the kit comprising:

an assembly for mounting to an upwardly extending flagstick, the assembly comprising:

a flag tube element having a tube with a tube wall which defines an axial opening extending from a bottom hole to a top hole, the flag tube element having a radially extending stiff flange which extends from the tube wall;

a flexible sleeve which extends around the flag tube element to overlie the tube wall and the flange, the flexible sleeve having an exterior margin to which is fixed the first part of a two part fastener;

a first flexible loose flag having an inner margin, with a second part of the two part fastener fixed thereto, the first flexible loose flag having a first appearance;

a second flexible loose flag having an inner margin, with a second part of the two part fastener fixed thereto, the second flexible loose flag having a second appearance different than the first appearance; and

a third flexible loose flag having an inner margin, with a second part of the two part fastener fixed thereto, the third flexible loose flag having a third appearance different than the first appearance and the second appearance, such that the three flexible loose flags may indicate three different positions of the flagstick to which the assembly is mounted, wherein the first flexible loose flag, the second flexible loose flag, and the third flexible loose flag are interchangeable on the flexible sleeve, allowing one of the loose flags to be removed from its position of attachment to the flexible sleeve to be replaced by another of the loose flags.

6. The golf flag kit of claim **5** wherein the two part fastener is selected from the group of fasteners consisting of a hook and loop fastener, a button and button hole fastener, a zipper fastener, a magnetic and ferromagnetic material fastener, and a snap fastener.

7. The golf flag kit of claim **5** wherein the two part fastener comprises strips of hook and loop fastener, and where the first part comprises one of a strip of hook material or loop material, and the second part comprises the other of the hook material or loop material, and wherein the first part is sewn to the flexible sleeve and the each of the loose flags has a second part sewn to the loose flag along its inner margin.

8. The golf flag kit of claim **5** further comprising a stiff internal board fixed to the flange of the flag tube element, such that the sleeve extends around the stiff internal board, and further comprising a promotional indicia on the sleeve, and wherein the sleeve has an exterior margin spaced from the tube element beyond the internal board, and wherein the first part of the two part fastener extends along the exterior margin.

9. A method of adjusting a golf flag to indicate the changed position of a flagstick on a green, comprising the steps of:

removing a first flexible loose flag from its attachment by a two part fastener to an exterior margin of a flag tube element having a tube with a tube wall which defines an axial opening extending from a bottom hole to a top hole, the flagstick extending through the axial opening; and

attaching a second flexible loose flag of a different appearance than the first flexible loose flag to the position formerly occupied by the first flexible loose flag along the exterior margin, the second flexible loose flag being connected by a two part fastener of the same type as that which formerly connected the first flexible loose flag.

10. The method of claim **9** wherein the two part fastener is selected from the group of fasteners consisting of: a hook and loop fastener, a button and button hole fastener, a zipper fastener, a magnetic and ferromagnetic material fastener, and a snap fastener.

11. The method of claim **9** wherein the two part fastener comprises strips of hook and loop fastener.

12. The method of claim **9** wherein a stiff internal board is fixed to the flag tube element, and a fabric sleeve extends around the stiff internal board, and further comprising a promotional indicia on the sleeve, and wherein the exterior margin is defined on the sleeve spaced from the tube element beyond the internal board, and wherein the first part of the two part fastener extends along the exterior margin.

13. A golf flag assembly for mounting to an upwardly extending flagstick, the assembly comprising:

a flag tube element having a tube with a tube wall which defines an axial opening extending from a bottom hole to a top hole, the flag tube element having a radially extending stiff flange which extends from the tube wall;

a flexible loose flag having an inner margin; and

a two part fastener comprised of a first part releasably connected to a second part, wherein the first part attached to the flag tube element to overlie portions of the flange, and the second part is fixed to the inner margin of the loose flag, the loose flag being thereby releasably connected to the flexible sleeve attached to the flag tube element.

14. The golf flag assembly of claim **13** wherein the two part fastener is selected from the group of fasteners consisting of

a hook and loop fastener, a button and button hole fastener, a zipper fastener, a magnetic and ferromagnetic material fastener, and a snap fastener.

15. The golf flag assembly of claim **1** wherein the two part fastener comprises strips of hook and loop fastener.

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