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BALL GAME

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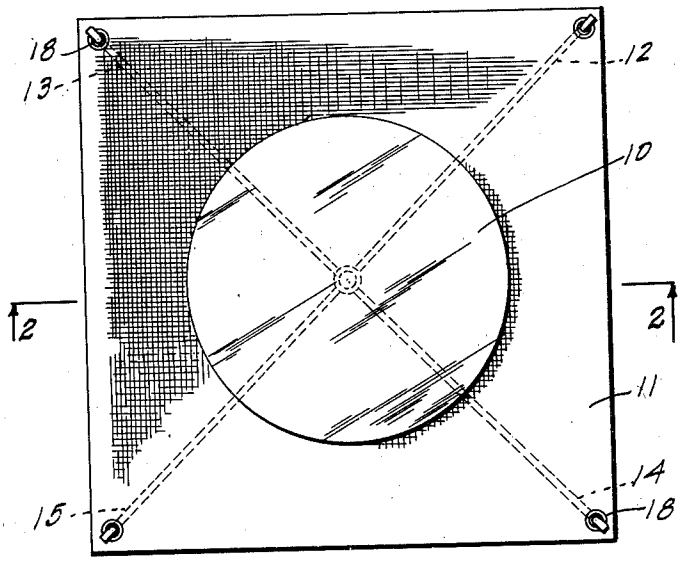


Fig. 1.

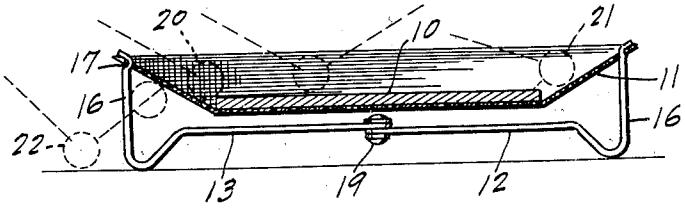


Fig. 2.

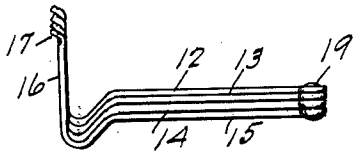


Fig. 3

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BALL GAME

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10 Claims. (Cl. 273—30)

This invention, a ball game, is a modified form of table tennis, modified through the substitution of a target which is supported in a plane above the floor, for the customary table or board, and by the substitution of a sheet of flexible material of greater area than the target and on which the target is supported, for the customary vertical net. The game may be played either with the customary paddles, small racquets, or by hand, and with regulation table-tennis balls.

The objects and advantages of the invention are as follows:

First; to provide a new game of the tennis type in which there can be no question or argument as to the status of a served ball.

Second; to provide a game which can be played in comparatively small quarters.

Third; to provide game apparatus which appropriates but little space, which is light in weight, and which requires a minimum of space when packed.

Fourth; to provide a game apparatus in which failure of the ball to directly strike the target will prevent the ball from bounding to the opposing player.

Fifth; to provide a ball game in which the ball automatically establishes its status.

In describing the invention reference will be made to the accompanying drawing, in which:

Fig. 1 is a top plan view of the game apparatus.

Fig. 2 is a sectional elevation taken on line 2—2 of Fig. 1.

Fig. 3 shows the supporting frame folded.

The invention consists of a target 10 which may be formed of wood, molded plastic, or other suitable rigid, non-resilient, non-flexible material, from which a ball will readily rebound. This target is illustrated as a circular disc but may be of any other suitable form, such as rectangular or square. This target is supported on a sheet 11 of flexible, non-resilient or substantially non-resilient material, preferably of the textile type such as canvas, though it will function with equal facility if formed of sponge rubber, netting or similar materials, and is illustrated as a square section of canvas, though it, like the target, may be made to any other suitable shape. This sheet functions simultaneously as the support for the target and as a net, and is supported by a resilient frame so as to permit cupping of the sheet as illustrated, through the weight of the target. The sheet has relatively greater area than the target to form a non-reboundable area around the target.

The frame consists of a plurality of arms 12, 13, 14 and 15, each of which terminates at one end in an upstanding finger at one end terminating in a hooked end 17 for reception by the eyelets 18 provided in the corners of the sheet, the arms being pivotally connected together at their other ends as indicated at 19. When the frame is not in use it may be folded into a compact unit as indicated in Fig. 3. The frame is preferably formed of spring wire or similar resilient material, with sufficient tension to just draw the sheet taut when it is not supporting a weight, and to deflect or cup under the weight of the target, the cupping functioning to minimize or prevent overshots and thus more efficiently controlling the ball, and though not so desirable, a soft pad could be laid on the floor and the target could be laid on the pad (not illustrated). It would be necessary to form the pad of some material from which the ball would not rebound.

The rules of the game are similar to those for table tennis but are subject to modification. It will be noted that the sheet or pad functions as a net and that it is necessary for the ball to directly strike the top surface of the target, otherwise it will not rebound. If the ball strikes the edge of the target as indicated at 20 it will rebound toward the server or merely stop. If it strikes the portion of the sheet extending beyond the target as indicated at 21, it will not rebound and will either roll back to the target or over the edge of the sheet. If it strikes the floor as indicated at 22, it will rebound against the underside of the sheet. Thus, unless the ball directly strikes the target it will not rebound to any point within the prescribed limits of the court and there can be no question as to the status of the serve because the ball specifically registers and establishes its status by either complete lack of rebound or rebound against the undersurface of the sheet or cup which forms a stop.

The sheet or cup is preferably supported at an elevation of several inches above the floor, with the sides preferably cupped to an angle of about 45° under the weight of the target to form the net, and obviously may be supported at any desired elevation by increasing the height of the supports. The method of suspension permits the sheet to sag under the weight of the target as illustrated, to retain any balls which strike the portion of the sheet surrounding the target or which do not strike the target with sufficient force.

The apparatus is easily assembled and disassembled, merely requiring unfolding of the frame and hooking the eyes in the sheet over the hooks

on the fingers. Packing is very simple since the frame is merely folded as illustrated in Fig. 3 and laid on the target, and the sheet is then folded over the target and frame, forming a package substantially equal in size to the target but slightly thicker.

It will be understood that variations in construction and arrangement of parts, which variations are consistent with the appended claims, may be resorted to without detracting from the spirit or scope of the invention, or sacrificing any of the advantages thereof.

I claim:

1. Game apparatus comprising; a sheet of flexible deadening material and means for supporting said sheet in a horizontal plane in spaced relation to a floor; a target formed of rigid material and supportable centrally of said sheet and cupping said sheet due to its weight to form inclined walls to serve as a net; said target functioning as a rebound area for a served ball, and the portion of the sheet surrounding said target forming a stop for balls failing to strike the target, due to its flexibility and deadening characteristics.

2. A structure as defined in claim 1; said sheet having peripheral attaching means, and said means for supporting said sheet comprising a frame having engaging and supporting means for cooperation with said attaching means, and spanning said sheet and maintaining said sheet in a horizontal position and permitting the sheet to deflect under the weight of the target.

3. A structure as defined in claim 1; said sheet having peripheral attaching means; said means for supporting said sheet comprising a frame having a plurality of arms connected together at one end, a finger projecting upwardly from the other end of each arm and terminating in an engaging and supporting member for cooperation with said attaching means on said sheet.

4. A structure as defined in claim 1; said sheet having eyelets located at various points adjacent its periphery; said means for supporting said sheet comprising a plurality of arms pivotally connected together at one end and having each an upstanding finger terminating in a hooked end for cooperation with said eyelets.

5. A structure as defined in claim 1; said sheet having an eyelet at each corner; said means for supporting said sheet comprising a plurality of arms pivotally connected together at one end to permit folding into a compact unit, and each having an upstanding finger formed at its other end and terminating in a hooked end for cooperation with said eyelets; said arms being formed of resilient material with the hooks of oppositely located fingers normally spanning a distance greater than the diagonal diameter of the sheet, and with the tension of the arms sufficient to tension the sheet alone but insufficient to prevent cupping or deflection of the sheet under the weight of the target.

6. A game apparatus comprising a rigid target and a flexible deadening support therefor for supporting the target in a substantially horizontal plane and extending beyond the periphery of the target to stop balls served which fail to directly strike the target; said target comprising a flat disc of substantially hard material and being freely supported on said support; said support comprising a sheet of flexible material peripherally supported and cupped under the weight of the target to catch and retain balls served which fail to directly strike the target.

7. A game apparatus comprising a rigid target and a flexible deadening support therefor for supporting the target in a substantially horizontal plane and extending beyond the periphery of the target to stop balls served which fail to directly strike the target; said support comprising a sheet of flexible material; a frame for supporting said sheet about its edges in spaced relation to a floor and including releasable attaching means and supporting elements for cooperation with attaching elements provided adjacent the periphery of said sheet.

8. A game apparatus comprising a rigid target and a flexible deadening support therefor for supporting the target in a substantially horizontal plane and extending beyond the periphery of the target to stop balls served which fail to directly strike the target; said support comprising a sheet of flexible deadening material provided with eyelets adjacent its periphery; a frame for supporting said sheet in spaced relation to a floor and comprising a plurality of arms pivoted together at one end to permit folding into a compact unit, with the other ends of the arms terminating in upstanding fingers terminating in hock elements for cooperation with said eyelets; said arms being formed of spring material to tension the sheet under no load while permitting the central portion of the sheet to sag or cup under the weight of the target.

9. A game apparatus comprising; a target consisting of a flat disc of substantially hard material; a sheet of flexible rebound-deadening material having an area greater than that of the disc and having fastening means adjacent its edges; a frame comprising a plurality of arms pivotally connected together at one end and terminating each at its other end in an upstanding finger terminating in an engaging and supporting element for releasable cooperation with said fastening means; said frame being formed of spring material for tensoning said sheet and supporting the sheet substantially horizontally in spaced relation to a floor; said sheet cupping under the weight of the target when the target is supported thereon and forming an encompassing ball-stopping medium for served balls which fail to directly strike the target.

10. A game apparatus comprising; a target of rigid material to cause a ball to rebound; a sheet of flexible material having an area greater than that of the target for supporting the target; means for supporting said sheet in spaced relation to a floor and cooperating only with the periphery of the sheet and permitting said sheet to cup under the application of a central load; said sheet cupping when said target is supported thereon to form a retainer for served balls failing to rebound from said target, with the target-encompassing portion of the sheet forming a stop for served balls failing to directly strike the target, and functioning as a tennis net.

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