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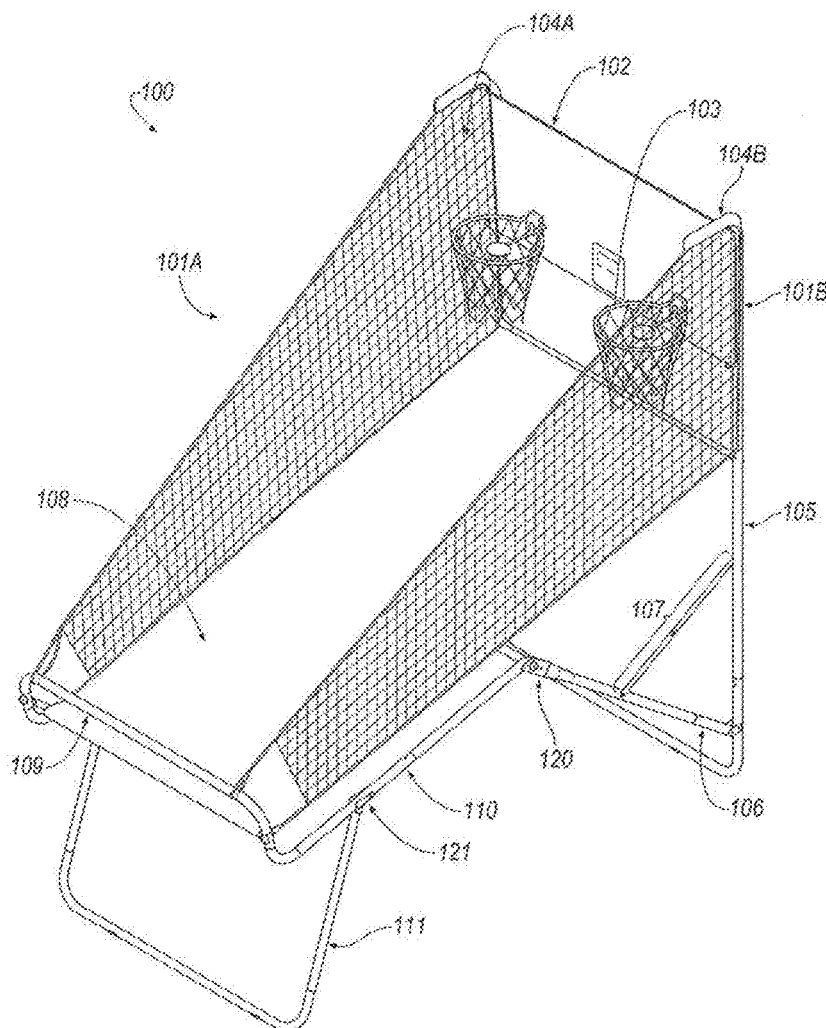
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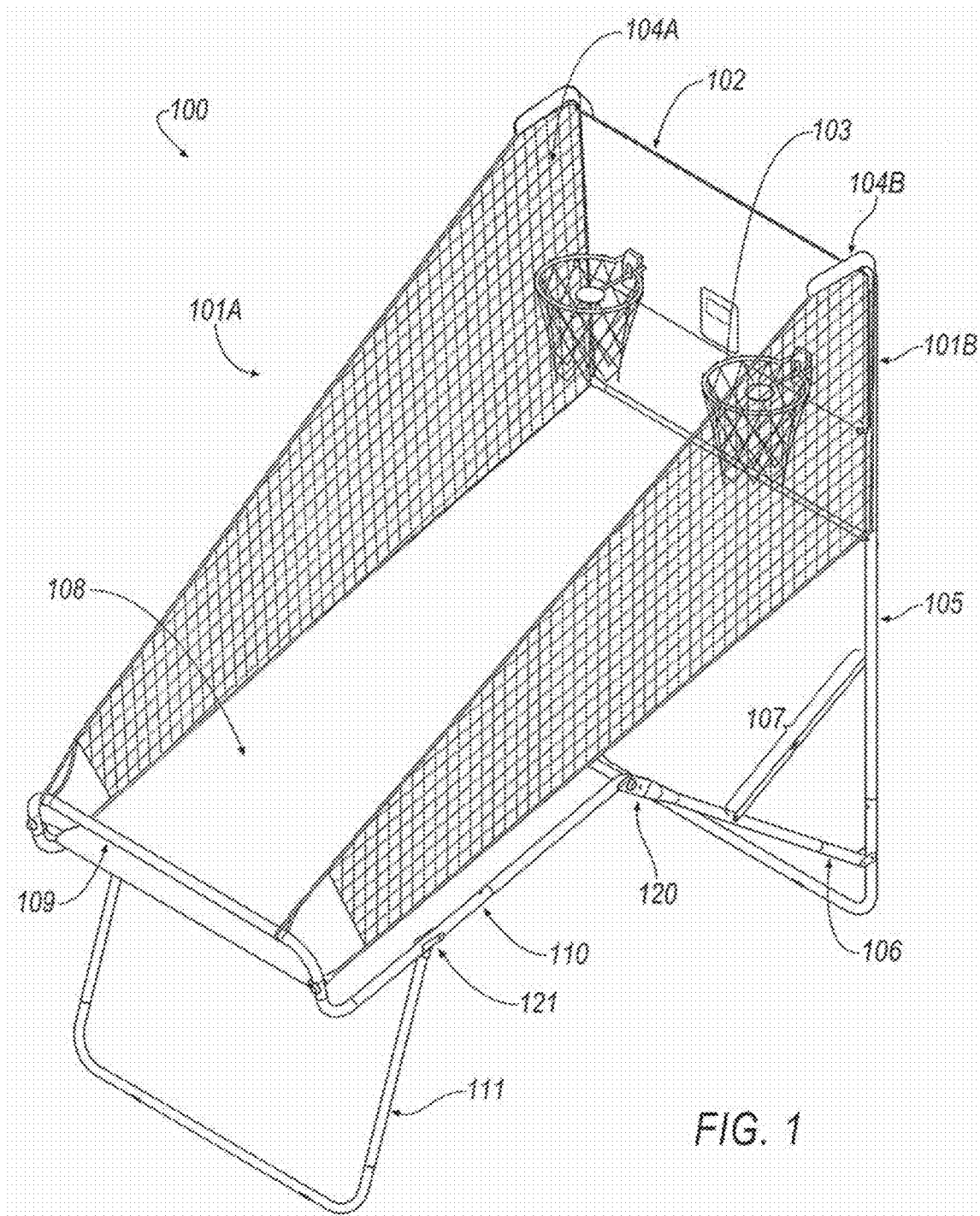
(51) **Int. Cl.**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

The present disclosure relates to a support system for a gaming table including a first support bar of a gaming-table support, a second support bar of a gaming-table support, a third support bar of a gaming-table support, and a gaming-table support locking apparatus. The third support bar has an arcuate shape and is in a pivotable connection with the second support bar. The gaming-table support locking apparatus includes a first locking bar and a second locking bar. The second locking bar is configured to be in one of two states of being: a first state that allows the third support bar to rotate with respect to the second support bar; and a second state that prevents the third support bar to rotate with respect to the second support bar.





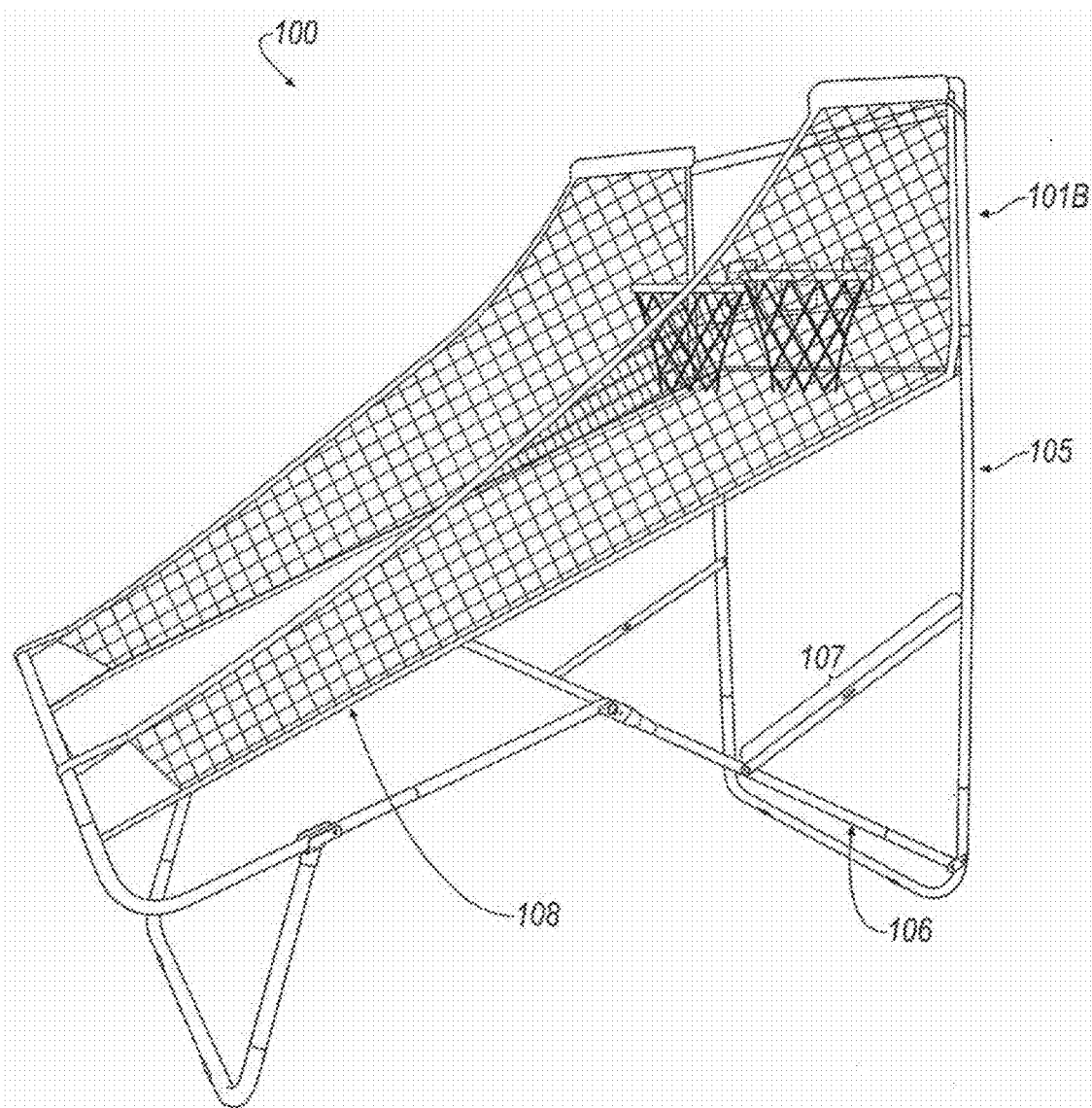
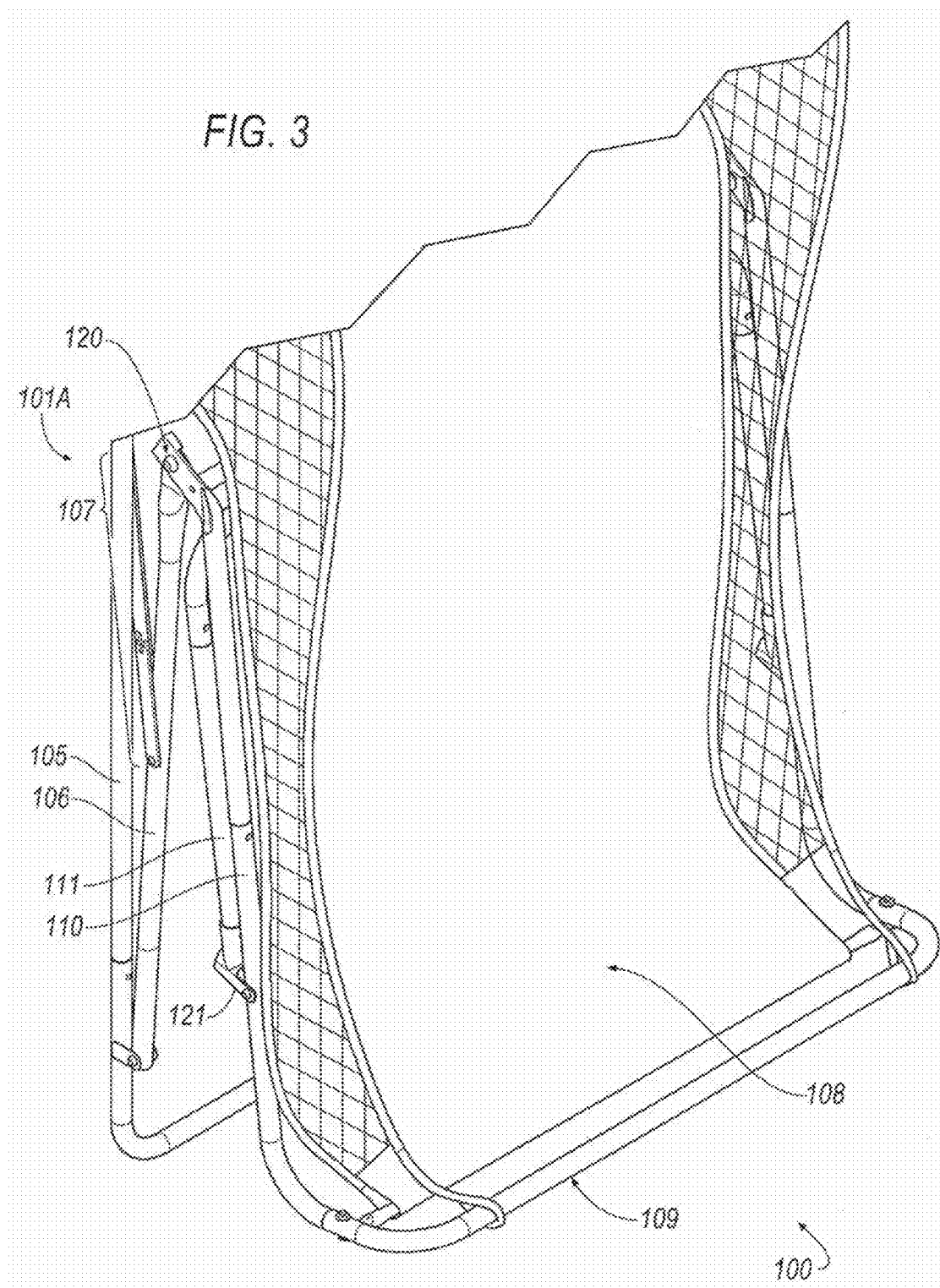
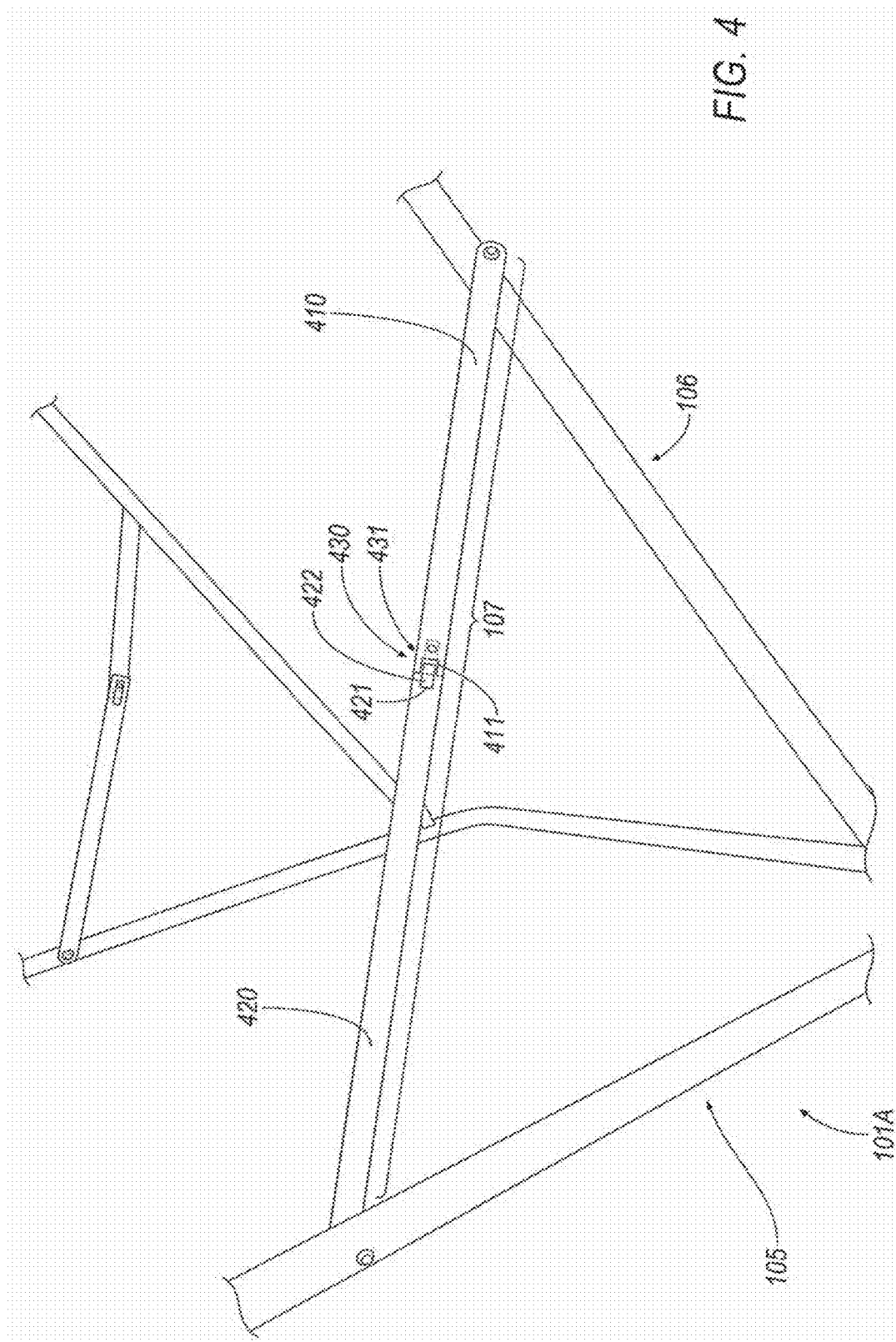


FIG. 2





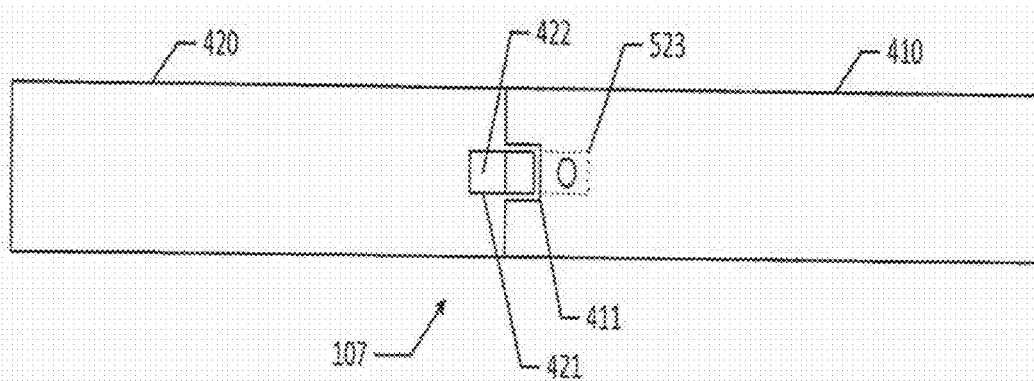


FIG. 5A

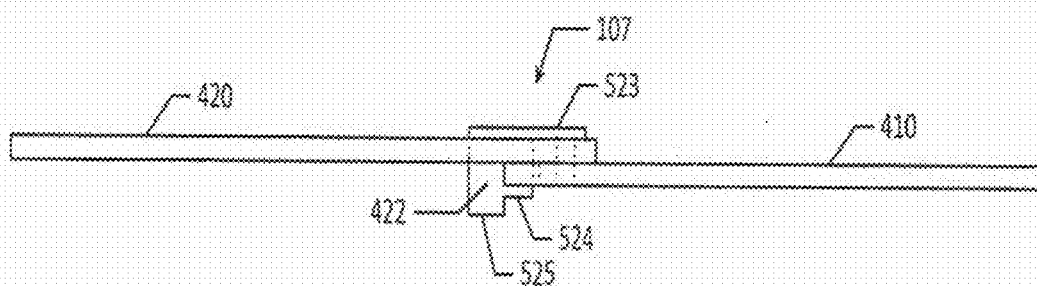


FIG. 5B

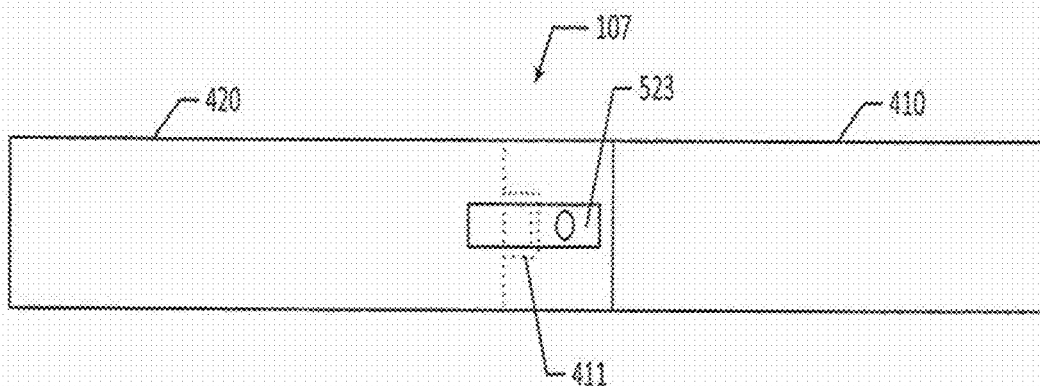
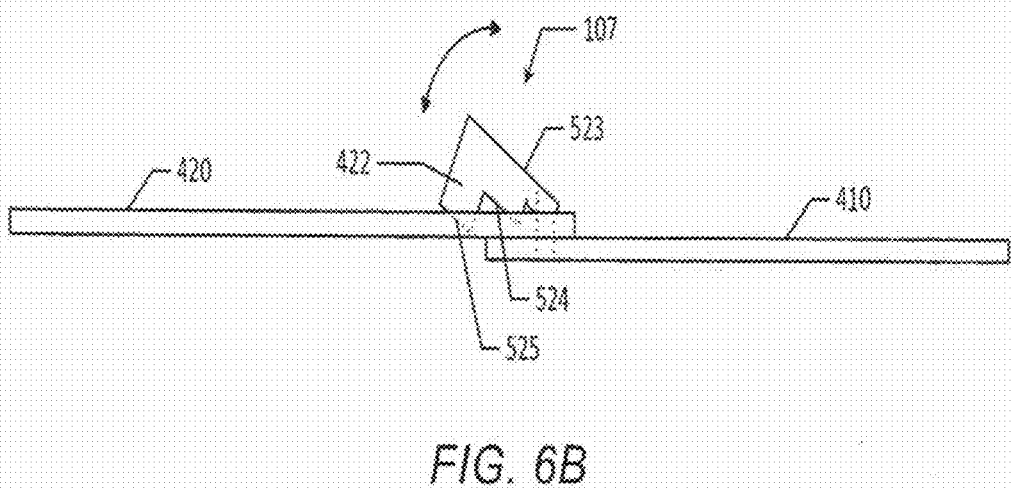
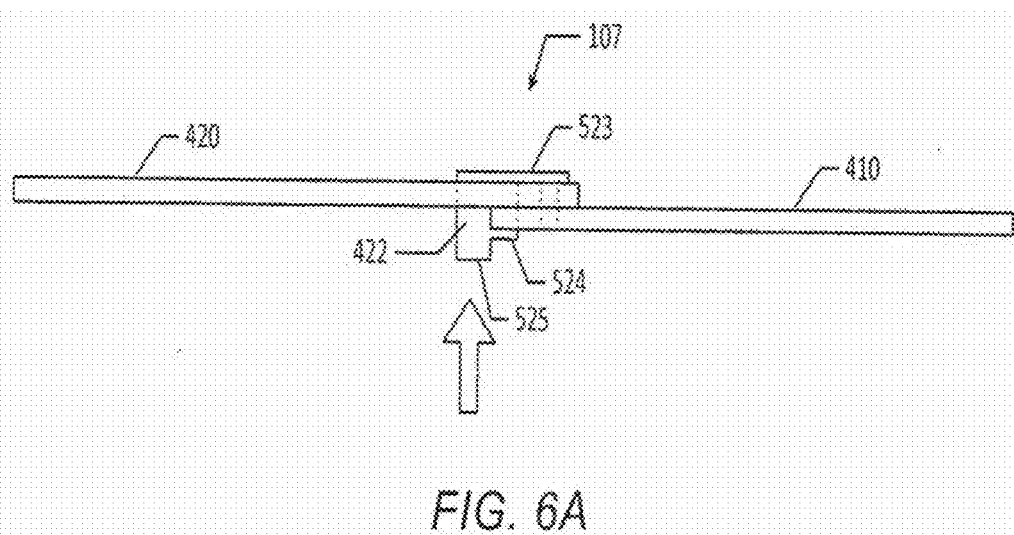


FIG. 5C



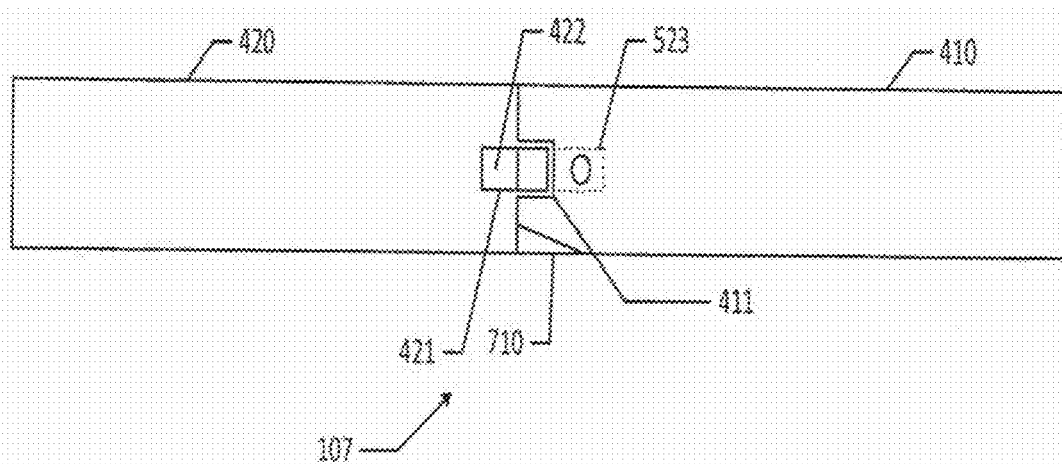


FIG. 7A

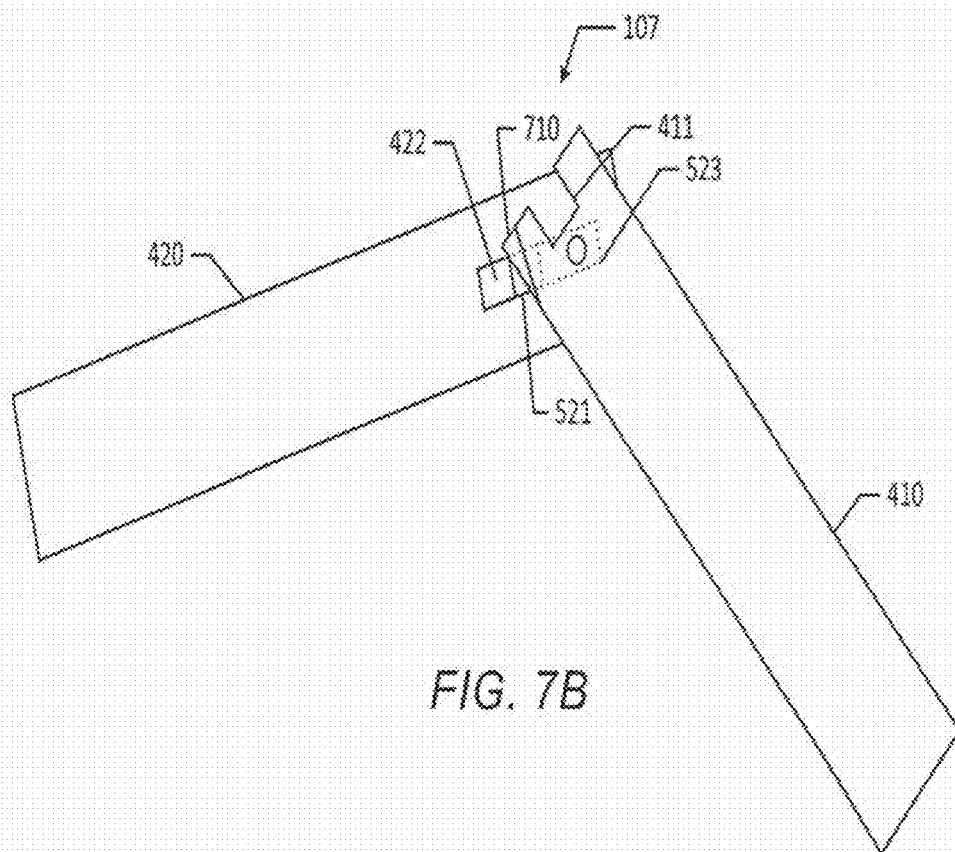
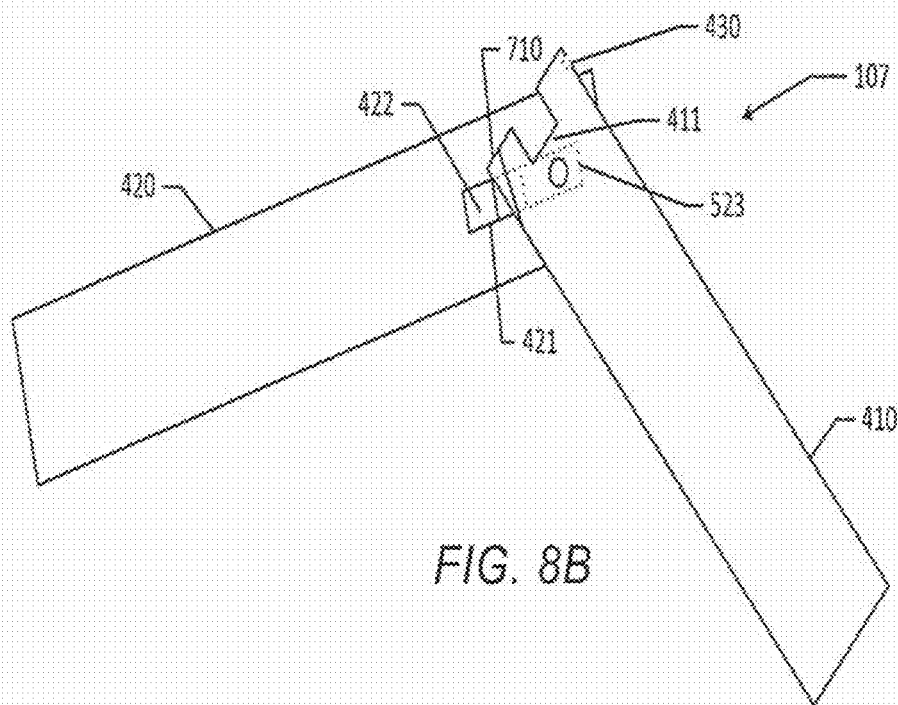
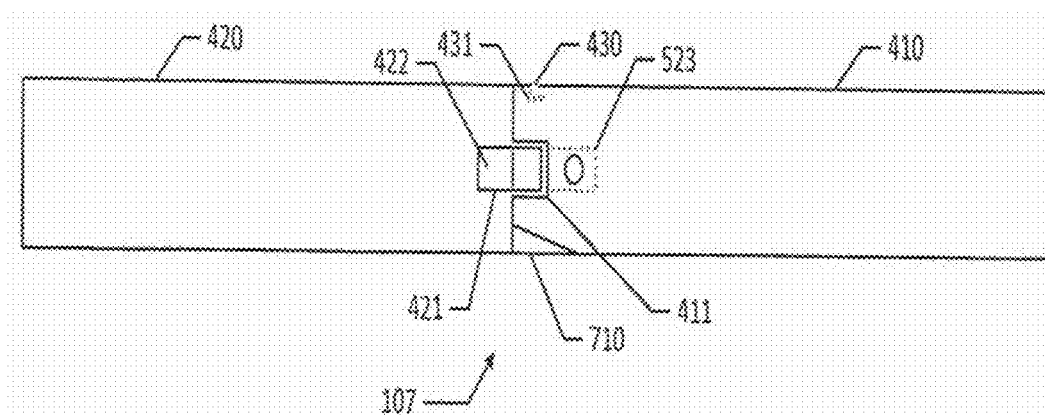


FIG. 7B



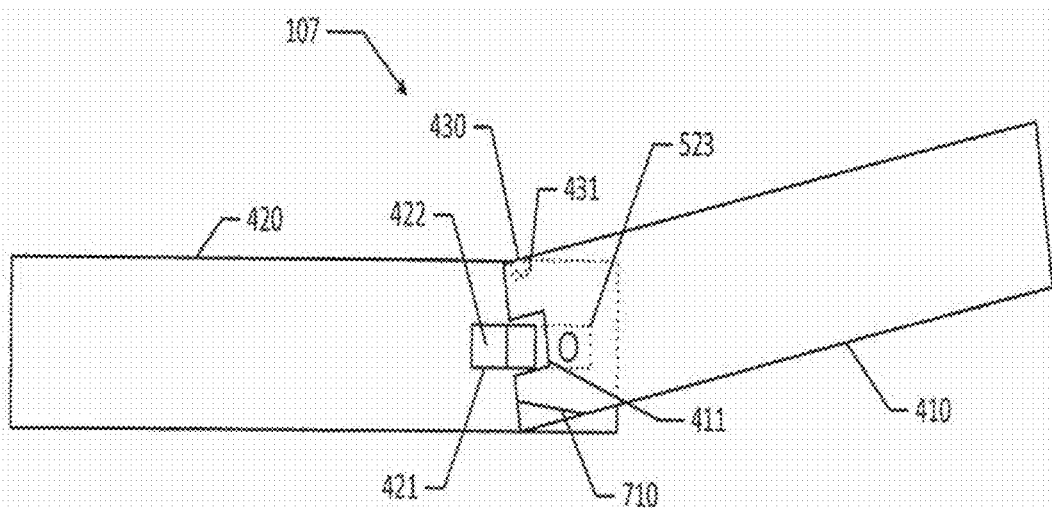


FIG. 8C

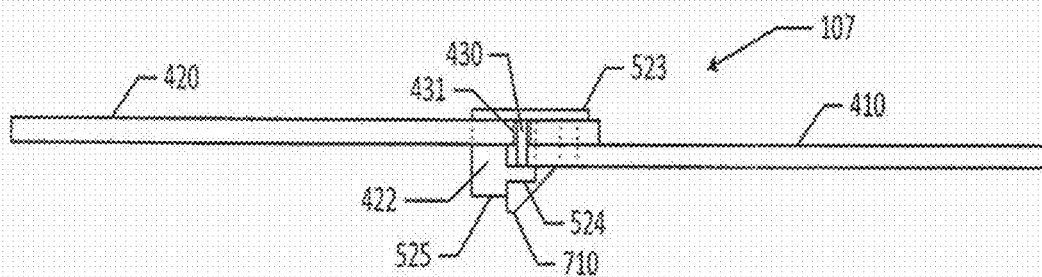
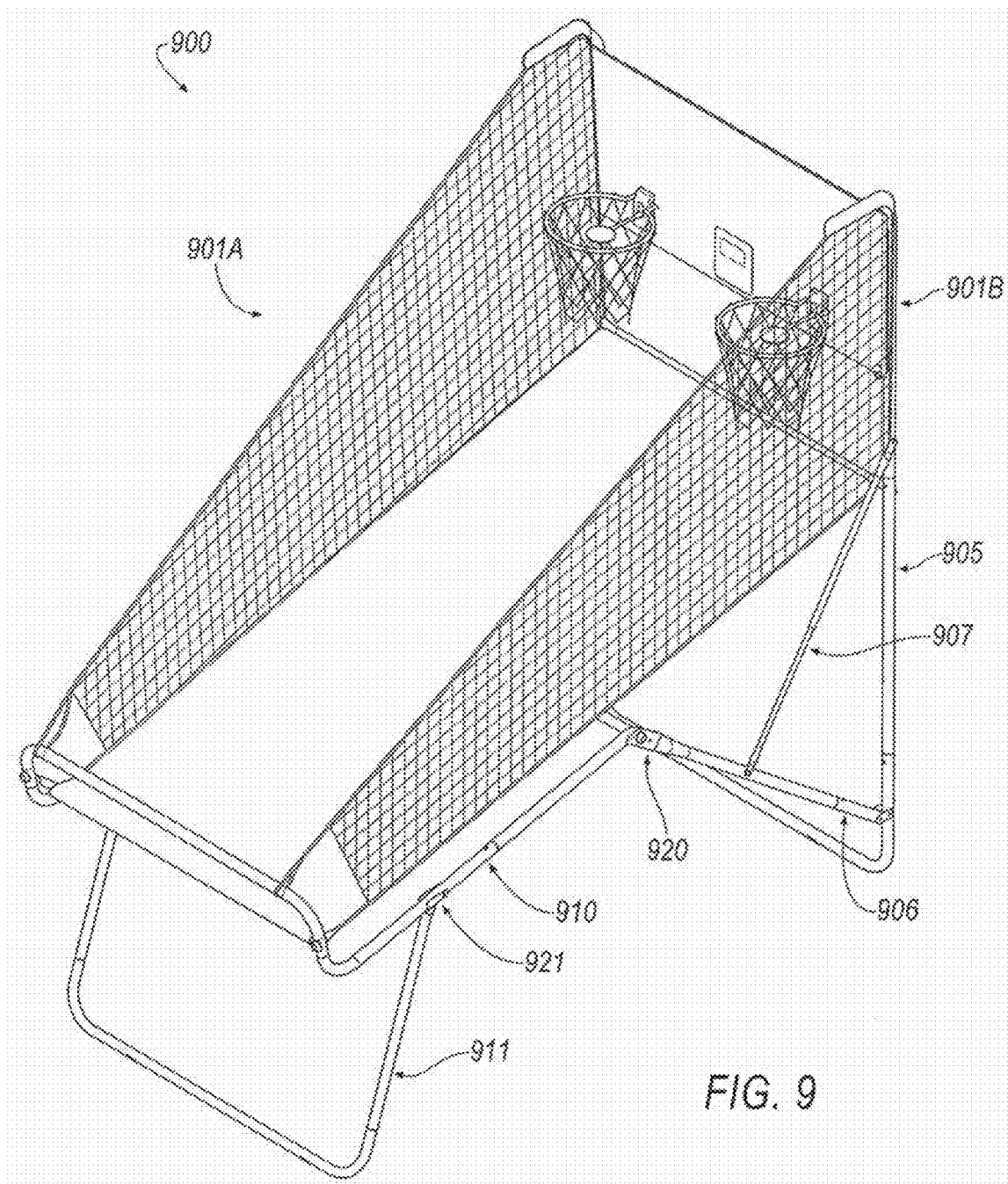
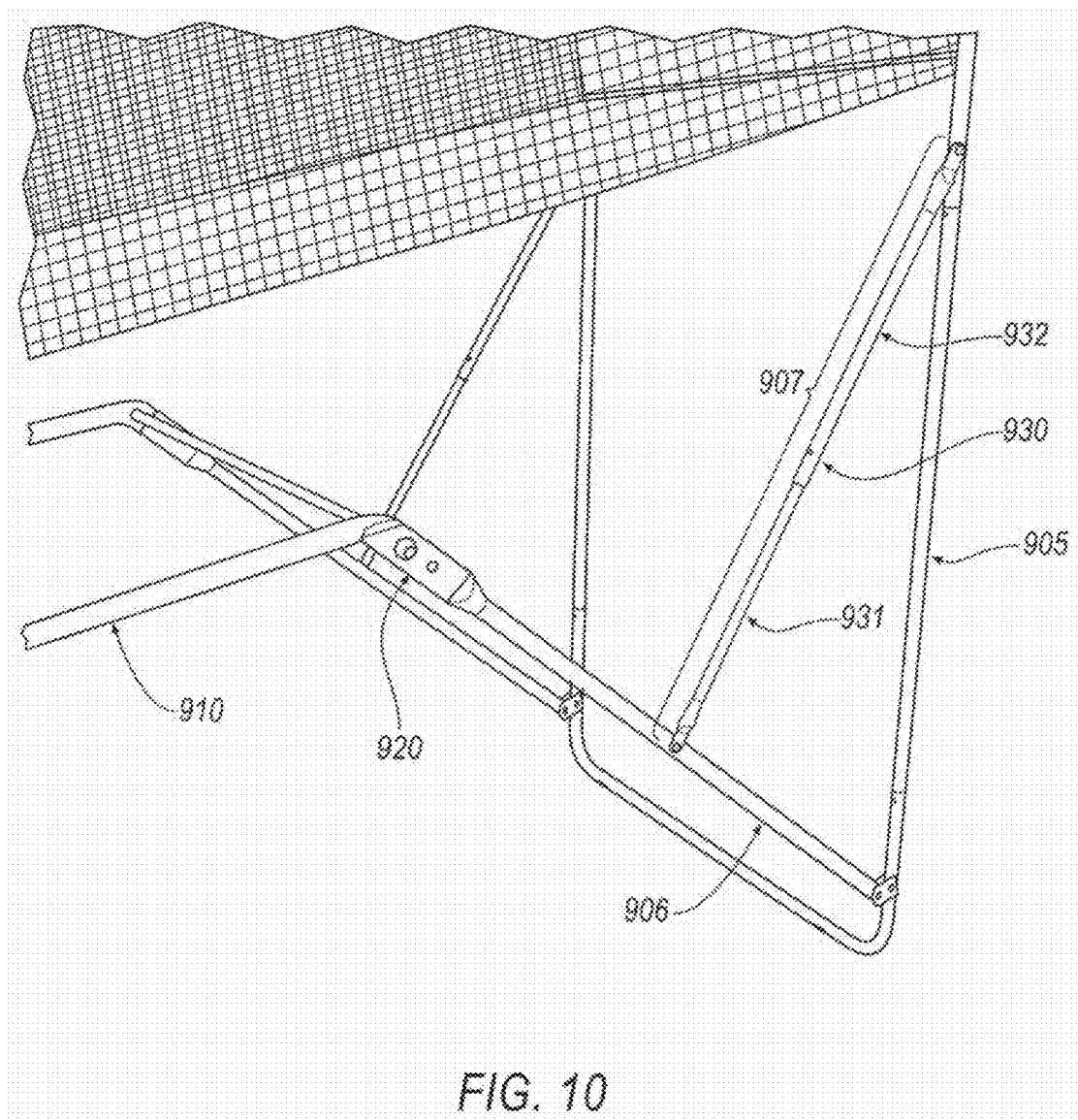
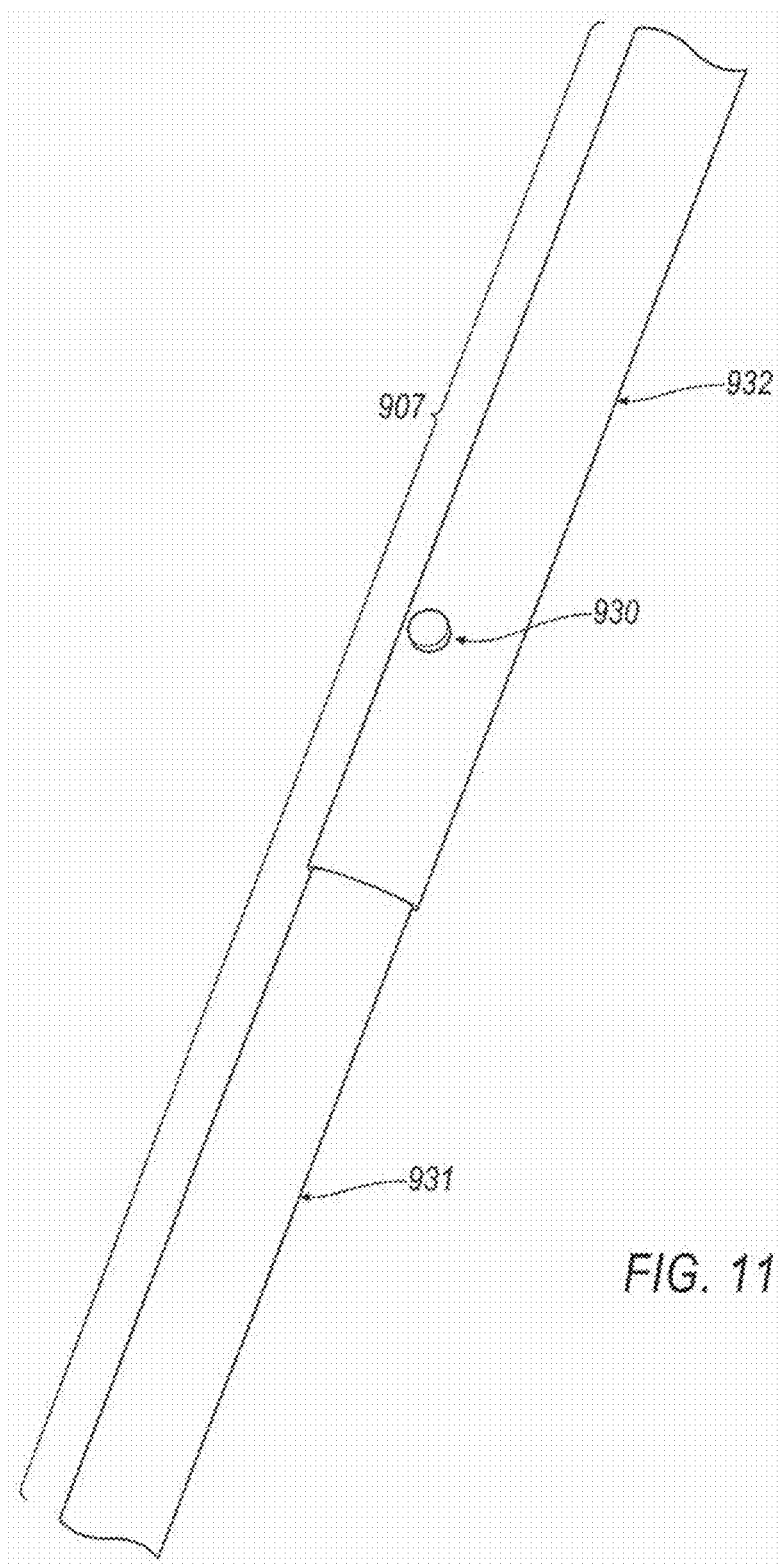
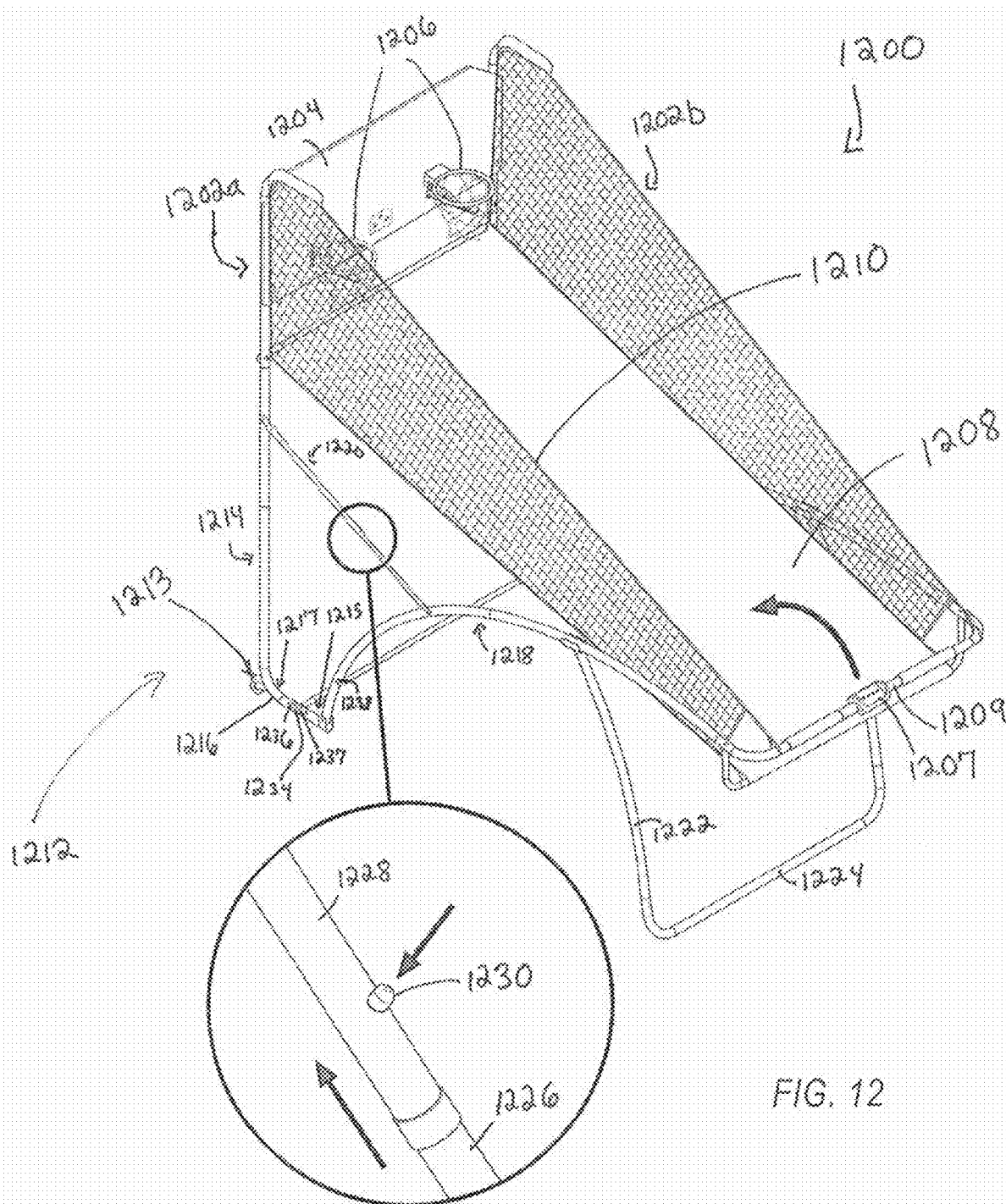


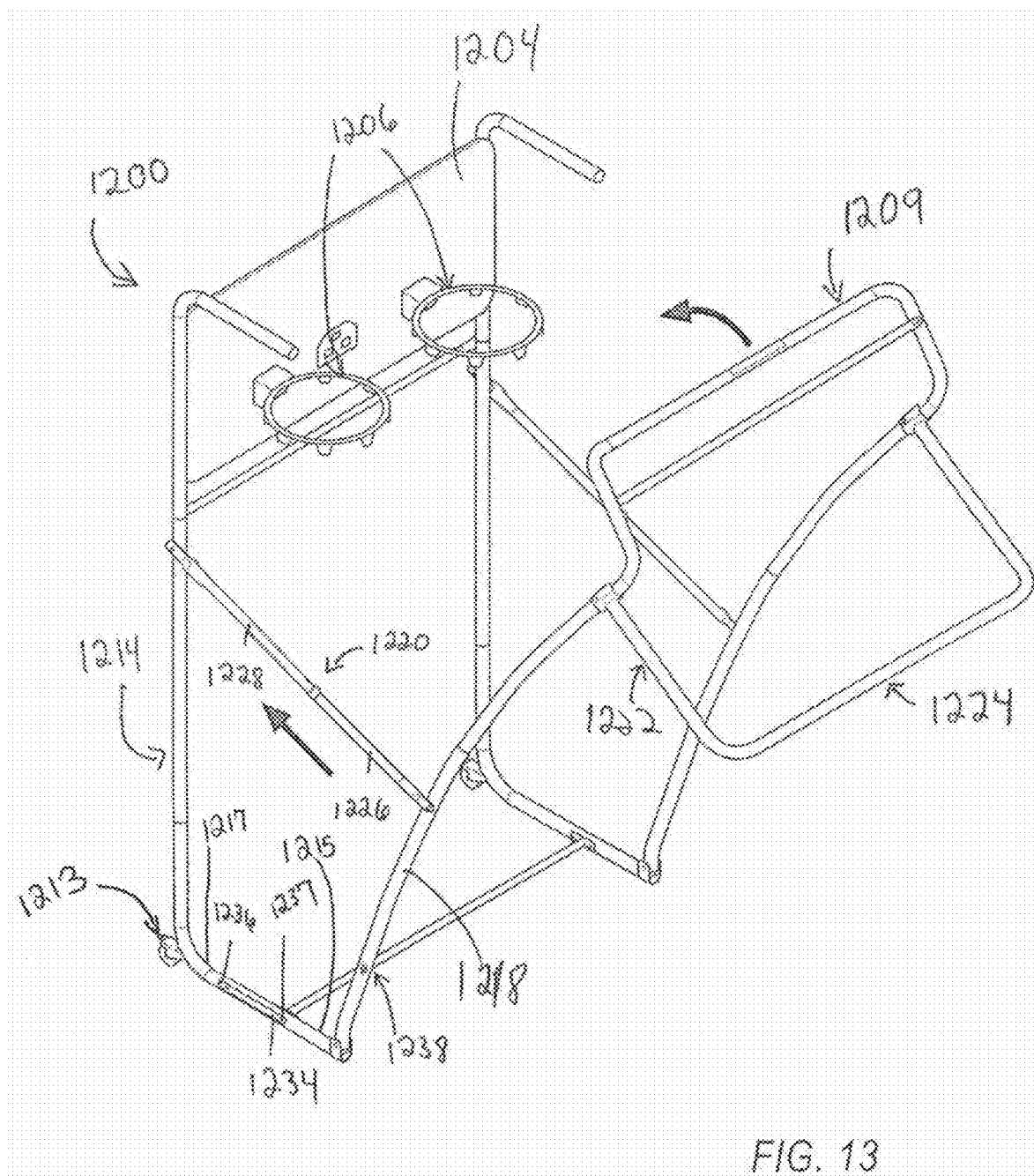
FIG. 8D

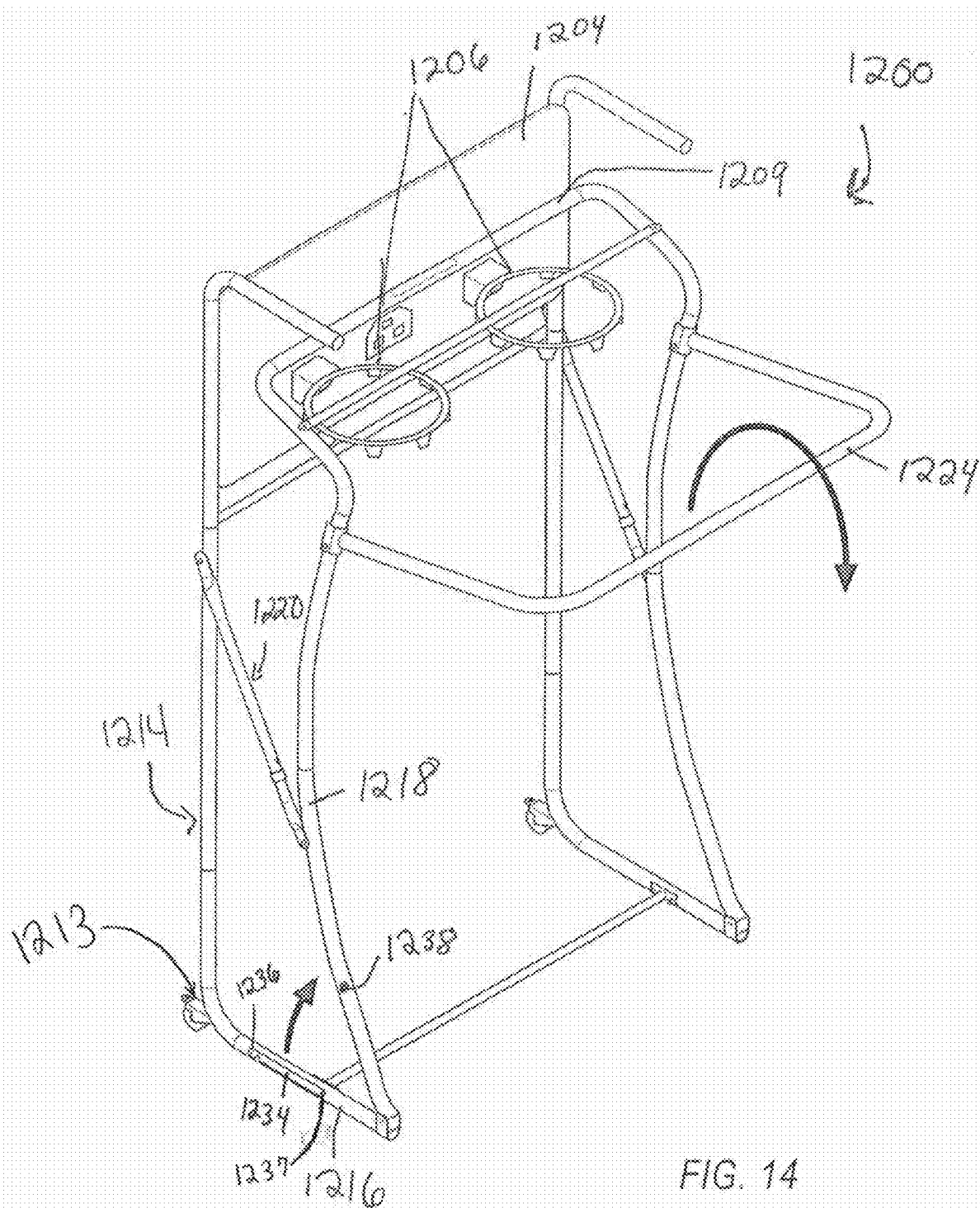


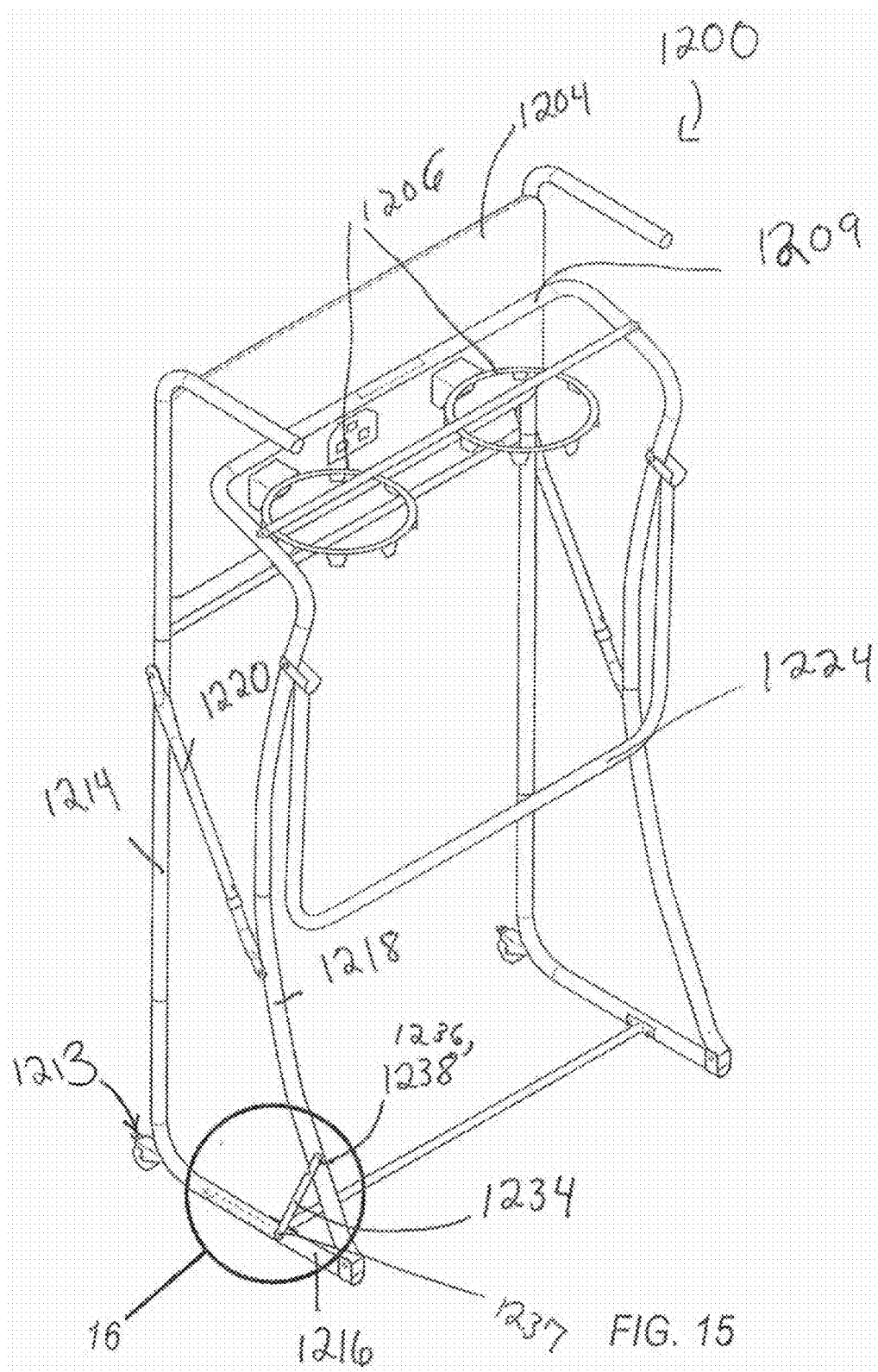












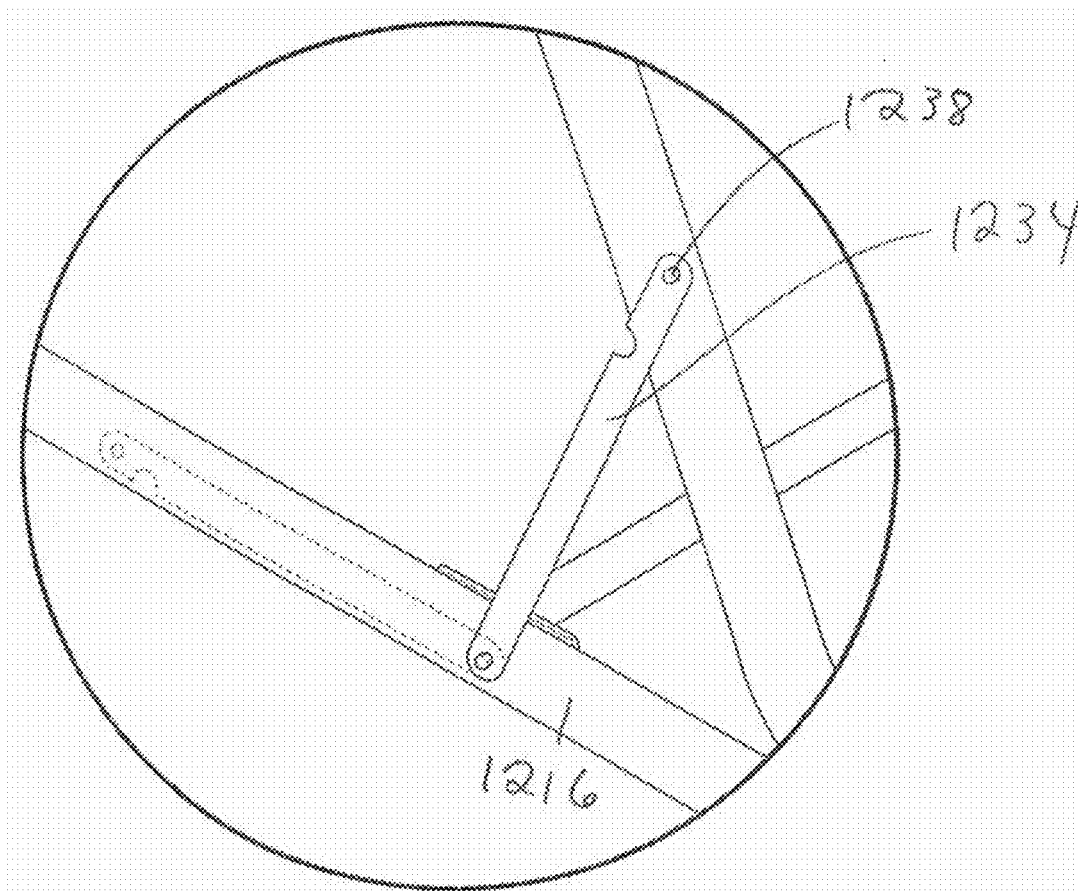


FIG. 16

EASY FOLD LOCKING MECHANISMS

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This U.S. patent application is a Divisional Application of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 16/270,384, filed on Feb. 7, 2019, which is a Continuation-in-Part of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 15/152,752, filed on May 12, 2016, now U.S. Pat. No. 10,201,736, the content of all of which is incorporated by reference herein in its entirety.

BACKGROUND

[0002] Traditional recreational basketball games (e.g., Pop-A-Shot®) often require a substantial amount of floor space for game play. While the backboard itself has a relatively flat profile (e.g., a flat wall with a rim), the side boundary nets and center return net extend far beyond the backboard. The center return net, specifically, must extend all the way to the user, such that made and missed basketballs are returned to the user. These nets often require structural support, such as poles and bars. Effective storage of the recreational basketball game, including these poles and bars, is an important concern. Ideally, recreational basketball games, and related structural supports, should be designed so that assembly and disassembly is efficient and easy for the user.

[0003] Assembly and disassembly of known basketball games may utilize locking mechanisms and, more particularly, quick-locking mechanisms to secure portions of the structure together. Quick-locking mechanisms such as snap clamps and spring-loaded devices allow structural components to be fastened to one another in an efficient manner. For example, snap clamps may employ a flexible fitting, which may be attached (i.e., snapped) and detached (i.e., unsnapped) from a rod or bar. The flexible fitting may be used to fasten multiple rods or bars together or, alternatively, to fasten other components (e.g., a tarp or cloth) to a rod or bar. Likewise, for example, spring-loaded devices may be retractable spring plungers. The body of the spring plunger may be disposed into a hole of a rod or bar, and spring-biased into the hole. By pulling on the spring plunger, the body of the spring plunger may be removed (i.e., retracted) from the hole for the particular rod or bar.

[0004] While being effective, quick-locking mechanisms are often not optimized for user interaction. Quick-locking mechanisms may require multiple components (e.g., a snap clamp requiring two individual rods and a flexible fitting). Additionally, many quick-locking mechanisms are designed for high-strength use. Materials selection regarding the quick-lock mechanisms, for example, may be driven by durability concerns; thus, metal-on-metal may be used. Likewise, quick-lock mechanisms may be spring loaded (e.g., retractable spring plungers) and thus have high force requirements for engagement and disengagement. These quick-lock mechanisms may not be ideal for in-home use because of high spring-force operations, pinch points could result in injury, etc. Concerns such as these become all the more relevant with products that will be used by single users and/or children.

SUMMARY

[0005] The present disclosure relates generally to an easy fold locking mechanism. More particularly, a gaming-table

support locking apparatus is configured to enable a user to quickly assemble and disassemble structural components, such as the game apparatus, to/from storage-mode and play-mode. In storage-mode, the basketball game apparatus has a nearly flat profile, enhancing ease of storage.

[0006] In an example embodiment, a gaming-table support locking apparatus includes a first hinge bar, a second hinge bar, and a tab connector. The first hinge bar includes a first end configured to connect to a first bar of a gaming-table support and a second end including a tab notch. The second hinge bar includes a first end configured to connect to a second bar of the gaming-table support and a second end rotatably connected to the first hinge bar. The second hinge bar additionally includes a window located between the first end and the second end of the second hinge bar. The tab connector includes a base, a locking section, and a release section. The base is configured to connect to the second hinge bar at the window. The locking section has a first height to extend from the base through the window for engaging the tab notch to form a secure connection. The release section, connected to the locking section, has a second height, greater than the first height, to extend from the base through the window for receiving a force from a user. The release section is configured to be depressed toward the base causing the locking section to disengage from the tab notch.

[0007] In another example embodiment, a method of unlocking a gaming-table support locking apparatus includes disengaging a locking section of a tab connector. Disengaging the locking section of the tab connector includes inputting, by a user, a force on a release section of the tab connector. Disengaging the locking section of the tab connector additionally includes, responsive to receiving the force from the user, bending the tab connector about a fulcrum. The fulcrum is a rotatable connection between a first hinge bar and a second hinge bar, and a base of the tab connector is attached to the rotatable connection. Disengaging the locking section of the tab connector additionally includes depressing the release section of the tab connector towards the base of the tab connector, causing the locking section of the tab connector to disengage from a tab notch on the first hinge bar. The method of unlocking the gaming-table support locking apparatus further includes visually ensuring that the locking section of the tab connector has been disengaged from the tab notch on the first hinge bar. The method of unlocking the gaming-table support locking apparatus further includes rotating the second hinge bar, including the window, about the first hinge bar.

[0008] In yet another example embodiment, a gaming-table apparatus includes two side support panels and a backboard panel disposed between the two side support panels and including at least one hinged basketball rim. Each of the two side support panels includes a first bar of a gaming-table support, a second bar of a gaming-table support, and a gaming-table support locking apparatus. Each gaming-table support locking apparatus includes a first hinge bar including a first end configured to connect to the first bar of a gaming-table support and a second end including a tab notch. Each gaming-table support locking apparatus additionally includes a second hinge bar. The second hinge bar includes a first end configured to connect to the second bar of the gaming-table support and a second end rotatably connected to the first hinge bar. The second hinge bar additionally includes a window located between the first

end and the second end of the second hinge bar. The second hinge bar additionally includes a tab connector having a base, a locking section, and a release section. The base is configured to connect to the second hinge bar at the window. The locking section has a first height extending from the base through the window for engaging the tab notch to form a secure connection. The release section is connected to the locking section and has a second height, greater than the first height, extending from the base through the window for receiving a force from a user. The release section is configured to be depressed toward the base causing the locking section to disengage from the tab notch.

[0009] Additional features and advantages of the disclosed method and apparatus are described in, and will be apparent from, the following Detailed Description and the Figures.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES

[0010] FIG. 1 shows a diagram of an example basketball game apparatus, according to an example embodiment of the present disclosure.

[0011] FIG. 2 shows a diagram of an example basketball game apparatus, according to an example embodiment of the present disclosure.

[0012] FIG. 3 shows a diagram of a fully folded example basketball game apparatus, according to an example embodiment of the present disclosure.

[0013] FIG. 4 shows a diagram of a gaming-table support locking apparatus, according to an example embodiment of the present disclosure.

[0014] FIG. 5A-5C shows a multi-view diagram of a gaming-table support locking apparatus, according to an example embodiment of the present disclosure.

[0015] FIG. 6A-6B shows release of the gaming-table support locking apparatus, according to an example embodiment of the present disclosure.

[0016] FIG. 7A-7B shows rotation of the gaming-table support locking apparatus, in response to release of the gaming-table support locking apparatus, according to an example embodiment of the present disclosure.

[0017] FIG. 8A-8D shows rotation and restricted rotation of the gaming-table support locking apparatus, in response to release of the gaming-table support locking apparatus, according to an example embodiment of the present disclosure.

[0018] FIG. 9 shows a diagram of an alternate example basketball game apparatus, according to an example embodiment of the present disclosure.

[0019] FIG. 10 shows a diagram of an alternate gaming-table support locking apparatus, according to an example embodiment of the present disclosure.

[0020] FIG. 11 shows a diagram of an alternate gaming-table support locking apparatus, according to an example embodiment of the present disclosure.

[0021] FIG. 12 shows a diagram example of a basketball game apparatus, according to one embodiment of the present disclosure.

[0022] FIG. 13 shows a diagram of a semi-closed example basketball game apparatus, according to one embodiment of the present disclosure.

[0023] FIG. 14 shows a diagram of a closed example basketball game apparatus, according to one embodiment of the present disclosure.

[0024] FIG. 15 shows a diagram of a closed example basketball game apparatus, according to one embodiment of the present disclosure.

[0025] FIG. 16 shows a diagram of a gaming-table support system, according to one embodiment of the present disclosure.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0026] As used herein, the terms “a” or “an” shall mean one or more than one. The term “plurality” shall mean two or more than two. The term “another” is defined as a second or more. The terms “including” and/or “having” are open ended (e.g., comprising). The term “or” as used herein is to be interpreted as inclusive or meaning any one or any combination. Therefore, “A, B or C” means “any of the following: A; B; C; A and B; A and C; B and C; A, B and C”. An exception to this definition will occur only when a combination of elements, functions, steps or acts are in some way inherently mutually exclusive.

[0027] Reference throughout this document to “one embodiment,” “certain embodiments,” “an embodiment,” or similar term means that a particular feature, structure, or characteristic described in connection with the embodiment is included in at least one embodiment. Thus, the appearances of such phrases in various places throughout this specification are not necessarily all referring to the same embodiment. Furthermore, the particular features, structures, or characteristics may be combined in any suitable manner on one or more embodiments without limitation.

Exemplary Embodiments

[0028] Referring now to the figures, FIG. 1 shows a diagram of an example basketball game apparatus 100, according to an example embodiment of the present disclosure. In an example embodiment, the basketball game apparatus 100 includes two side panels 101A-B and a backboard panel 102. In an example embodiment the two side panels 101A-B are mirror images of one another, such that each of the two side panels 101A-B includes the same structure and components. The backboard panel 102 additionally includes at least one basketball rim 103. In an example embodiment, the basketball rim 103 is hinged, such that it may fold flat and parallel with the backboard panel 102.

[0029] Each of the two side panels 101A-B of the basketball game apparatus 100 additionally includes a side boundary net 104A-B. Further, each of the two side panels 101A-B additionally includes a first bar of a gaming-table support 106 and a second bar of a gaming-table support 105. In other example embodiments, each side panel 101A and 101B may include additional bars of the gaming-table support (e.g., a third bar of the gaming-table support 110 and a fourth bar of the gaming-table support 111). Each of the first bar of the gaming-table support 106 and the second bar of the gaming-table support 105 are configured to support a portion of the basketball game apparatus 100 above the floor. For example, the first bar of the gaming-table support 106 and the second bar of the gaming-table support 105 may support a side boundary net (e.g., side boundary net 104A). Support may be enhanced by implementation of the additional bars of the gaming-table support (e.g., the third bar of the gaming-table support 110 and the fourth bar of the gaming-table support 111). Likewise, the second bar of the gaming-table support 105 supports a portion of the backboard panel 102. In an

alternate example embodiment, only the second bar of the gaming-table support **105** supports the side boundary net (e.g., side boundary net **104A**). In a different alternate example embodiment, both the first bar of the gaming-table support **106** and the second bar of the gaming-table support **105** are configured to support a portion of a center return net **108**. Each of the two side panels **101A-B** may additionally include at least one gaming-table support locking apparatus (e.g., gaming-table support locking apparatus **107**). In other embodiments, each of the two side panels **101A-B** may include multiple gaming-table support locking apparatus. In other embodiments, each of the two side panels **101A-B** may include additional features such as hinges (e.g., first hinge **120** and second hinge **121**).

[0030] In an example embodiment, the gaming-table support locking apparatus **107** may be disposed between the first bar of the gaming-table support **106** and the second bar of the gaming-table support **105**. The gaming-table support locking apparatus **107** may be fixed to each of the first bar of the gaming-table support **106** and the second bar of the gaming-table support **105** by respective hinge bars, such as a first hinge bar and a second hinge bar. As used herein, each of the first hinge bar and the second hinge bar are configured to connect to a bar of the gaming-table support (e.g., the first bar of the gaming-table support **106**). Likewise, each of the first hinge bar and the second hinge bar are configured to be rotatably connectable to one another, such that one of the hinge bars (e.g., the second hinge bar) may rotate with respect to another hinge bar (e.g., the first hinge bar). The first hinge bar and the second hinge bar are only two features of the gaming-table support locking apparatus **107**; there are many other features.

[0031] The gaming-table support locking apparatus **107** may additionally include a window, a tab connector, and a tab notch each of which are described in greater detail below. The first hinge bar may include the tab notch. The second hinge bar may include the window, such as a hole, aperture, or geometric void. The tab connector may be connected to the second hinge bar at or near the window. The tab connector may extend through the window, such that it engages with the tab notch. This engagement, as described in greater detail below, especially with reference to FIGS. 4-8D, provides for locking, release, and rotation of the gaming-table support locking apparatus **107**.

[0032] As disclosed herein, the gaming-table support locking apparatus **107** remedies the deficiencies associated with traditional quick-locking mechanisms. For example, the gaming-table support locking apparatus **107** is self-contained. It does not require a number of different components that could be lost or misplaced (e.g., a snap clamp with a flexible fitting and two rods or bars). Likewise, for example, the gaming-table support locking apparatus **107** is designed to require an ideal force (e.g., the pushing force from one finger of the user) for unlocking or release. It does not require the high-forces associated with many spring-loaded devices. The mechanical design of the gaming-table support locking apparatus **107** provides for secure connections in both locked and unlocked states.

[0033] Additionally, for example, the gaming-table support locking apparatus **107** provides for visual identification of the mechanism's condition (i.e., locked or unlocked). For example, the user may visually identify that the hinge bars on the gaming-table support locking apparatus **107** are aligned, and thus assume that the mechanism is in a locked

condition; alternatively, if the hinge bars on the gaming-table support locking apparatus **107** are not aligned, the user may assume that the mechanism is in an unlocked condition. Likewise, for example, the user may visually identify a portion of the tab connector passing through the tab notch, and thus assume that the mechanism is in a locked condition; alternatively, if the tab connector does not pass through the tab notch, the user may assume that the mechanism is in an unlocked condition. The gaming-table support locking apparatus **107** performs each of these functions while optimizing additional constraints (e.g., materials selection) and minimizing the risk of injury (e.g., pinch point injuries). For example, by having the ability to visually identify when the mechanism is in an unlocked condition, the user is less likely to injure themselves while inadvertently rotating the gaming-table support locking apparatus **107** (as disclosed below). Rather, the user can visually identify that the gaming-table support locking apparatus **107** is unlocked (or locked) and interact with the apparatus accordingly. This makes the gaming-table support locking apparatus **107** ideal for in-home use and particularly ideal for use with basketball game apparatus **100**.

[0034] The backboard panel **102** may include additional features such as visual graphics, an electronic scoreboard, a manual scoreboard, a whiteboard or chalkboard, video camera technology, audio technology, speakers, etc. In other example embodiments, the backboard panel **102** may be configured for other types of games such as any one of billiards, foosball, bumper billiards, air hockey, table tennis, target toss, pinball soccer, finger football, bowling, chess, checkers, Chinese checkers, backgammon, basketball toss, football toss, bean bag toss, etc. Likewise, an alternate example embodiment, the backboard panel **102** may be configured to multi-game options (e.g., 6-in-1 or 20-in-1 gaming-table configurations). In alternate example embodiments, the first bar of the gaming-table support **106**, the second bar of the gaming-table support **105**, and the gaming-table support locking apparatus **107** may be configured to support these other types of games. In an example embodiment, the backboard panel **102** includes a plurality of basketball rims **103** (e.g., two or more). Likewise, the basketball rim **103** may include additional features such as a net, an electronic scoring sensor, a manual scoring sensor, etc.

[0035] The basketball game apparatus **100** may additionally include a center return net **108**, disposed between the two side panels **101A-B**. The center return net **108** may extend from the backboard panel **102** out toward a user. The center return net **108** may end at a cross bar **109**. The center return net **108**, in addition to the side boundary net **104A-B** on each side panel **101A** and **101B**, may catch objects (e.g., basketballs) and send them to the user. For this reason, the center return net **108** typically has a downward slope (i.e., extending towards the floor as it extends away from the backboard panel **102**). The cross bar **109** serves as a stop-point for any objects caught by the center return net **108**. For example, once a basketball is caught by the center return net **108**, it rolls downward along the slope of the center return net **108** until it is stopped by the cross bar **109**. The cross bar may include additional features that may interact with the backboard panel **102**. For example, if the backboard panel **102** includes an electronic scoreboard, the cross bar **109** may include a control panel, from which the user may select

game-type, number of players, scoring limit, time limit, etc. Communications with the backboard panel **102** may be wired and/or wireless.

Folded Basketball Game Apparatus

[0036] FIG. 2 shows a diagram of an example basketball game apparatus **100** of FIG. 1, according to an example embodiment of the present disclosure. In the example embodiment, the basketball game apparatus **100** is shown from a side view illustrating one of the two side panels **101B**. This side panel **101B** includes gaming-table support locking apparatus **107**. The gaming-table support locking apparatus **107** includes additional features such as the first hinge bar, the second hinge bar, the window, the tab connector, and the tab notch (as noted above and detailed below).

[0037] As illustrated, the gaming-table support locking apparatus **107** is in a locked orientation, such that, the hinge bars associated with the gaming-table support locking apparatus **107** are aligned with one another. In the locked orientation, the hinge bars may not rotate with respect to one another (as described in greater detail below with reference to FIGS. 4-8C). This allows the structure of the basketball game apparatus **100** (e.g., side panels **101A-B**) to remain fixed and sturdy. By comparison, for example, in an unlocked orientation the gaming-table support locking apparatus **107** is released. This means that the first bar of the gaming-table support **106** and the second bar of the gaming-table support **105** may collapse into a flat-form. Likewise, additional bars of the gaming-table support (e.g., the third bar of the gaming-table support **110** and the fourth bar of the gaming-table support **111**) may collapse into a flat-form. Collapsing of the additional bars of the gaming-table support into a flat-form may include rotation about hinges (e.g., first hinge **120** and second hinge **121**) as described herein. The center return net **108**, likewise, may collapse into a flat-form.

[0038] As compared to FIG. 2, FIG. 3 shows a diagram of a fully folded example basketball game apparatus **100**, according to an example embodiment of the present disclosure. In an example embodiment, the basketball game apparatus **100** is folded into a flat-form. In this flat form, each of the two side panels **101A-B** are collapsed. While only one side panel **101A** is shown, a similar operation may be expected by the other side panel (e.g., side panel **101B**). In an example embodiment, when side panel **101A** collapses, side boundary net **104A** is rotated inward such that it is parallel with the backboard panel **102**. Likewise, the basketball rim **103** is folded flat and parallel with the backboard panel **102**. Each of the first bar of the gaming-table support **106**, the second bar of the gaming-table support **105**, the gaming-table support locking apparatus **107**, the third bar of the gaming-table support **110**, and the fourth bar of the gaming-table support **111** are all collapsed into a flat-form. Additionally, the center return net **108** and the cross bar **109** are in a flat configuration. As fully folded, the basketball game apparatus **100** has a flat profile for easy storage (e.g., in a closet, under a bed or couch, etc.).

Gaming-Table Support Locking Apparatus

[0039] FIG. 4 shows a diagram of the gaming-table support locking apparatus **107** of FIGS. 1-3, according to an example embodiment of the present disclosure. As illustrated in FIG. 4, one gaming-table support locking apparatus

107 for a side panel (e.g., side panel **101A**) is shown in detail. In an example embodiment, an additional gaming-table support locking apparatus for another side panel (e.g., side panel **101B**) may, likewise, exist (as depicted in FIGS. 1-2).

[0040] In an example embodiment, the gaming-table support locking apparatus **107** includes a first hinge bar **410** and a second hinge bar **420**. In an example embodiment, the first hinge bar **410** and the second hinge bar **420** have rectangular shapes. In an example embodiment, the first hinge bar **410** and the second hinge bar **420** are comprised of a rigid material. For example, the rigid material may be any one of a rigid plastic, a metal, or any other material with a high modulus of elasticity (i.e., low flexibility). The first hinge bar **410** has a first end that is configured to connect to a first bar of a gaming-table support **106**. The first hinge bar **410** also has a second end that has a tab notch **411**. In an example embodiment, the tab notch **411** is a geometric void, disposed on an edge of the second end of the first hinge bar **410**. In an example embodiment, the tab notch **411** has a rectangular profile. In an alternate example embodiment, the tab notch **411** has a different geometric profile, such as circular, half-circular, elliptical, triangular, hexagonal, octagonal, hooked, J-shaped, U-shaped, or any other geometric profile.

[0041] The second hinge bar **420** includes a first end that is configured to connect to a second bar of a gaming-table support **105**. The second hinge bar **420** also has a second end that is rotatably connectable to the first hinge bar **410**. In an example embodiment, the rotatable connection is made a location on or near the second end of the second hinge bar **420** and at a location on the first hinge bar **410** between the first end of the first hinge bar **410** and the second end of the first hinge bar **410**. More particularly, the rotatable connection is made a location on or near the second end of the second hinge bar **420** and at a location on the first hinge bar **410** near the second end of the first hinge bar **410**. In an example embodiment, this rotatable connection is a riveted lap joint. In alternate example embodiments, this rotatable connection may be a riveted butt joint, a butt hinge, a t-hinge, a strap hinge, a gate hinge, or any other equivalent type of hinge, joint, or linkage.

[0042] The second hinge bar **420** additionally includes a window **421**. In an example embodiment, the window **421** is a geometric void, disposed on the second hinge bar **420**. In an example embodiment, the window **421** has a rectangular profile. For example, the window **421** may be dimensioned to have a length of one inch, and a width of one-half inch. In alternate examples, the window **421** may have larger or smaller dimensions. In an alternate example embodiment, the window **421** has a different geometric profile, such as circular, half-circular, elliptical, triangular, hexagonal, octagonal, hooked, J-shaped, U-shaped, or any other geometric profile. The window **421** is located between the first end and the second end of the second hinge bar **420**. More preferably, the window **421** is located near the second end of the second hinge bar **420**. Additionally, the window **421** is disposed entirely within the second hinge bar **420**, such that none of the geometric void defining the window **421** intersects an edge of the second hinge bar **420**. In an alternate example embodiment, at least a portion of the geometric void defining the window **421** intersects at least one edge of the second hinge bar **420**.

[0043] The gaming-table support locking apparatus **107** additionally includes a tab connector **422**, which is

described in greater detail with reference to FIGS. 5A-C below. The tab connector 422 is at least partially received by the window 421. In an example embodiment, the width of the window 421 and the width of the tab connector 422 are equivalent. In an example embodiment, the tab connector 422 is comprised of a flexible material. For example, the flexible material may be any one of a flexible plastic, a rubber, or any other material with a low modulus of elasticity (i.e., high flexibility). In an example embodiment, the tab connector 422 has a rectangular shape. For example, the tab connector 422 may be dimensioned to have a length of two inches, and a width of one-half inch. Likewise, as previously noted, the window 421 may be dimensioned to have a length of one inch, and a width of one-half inch. Therefore, in the example above, one inch of the length of the tab connector 422 is at least partially received by the window 421, whereas one inch of the length of the tab connector 422 is not received by the window 421. In alternate examples, the tab connector 422 may have larger or smaller dimensions. In an example embodiment, the tab connector 422 is a different color than the first hinge bar 410 and the second hinge bar 420, such that the tab connector 422 may be readily identifiable by the user. For example, the first hinge bar 410 and the second hinge bar 422 may be colored gray, whereas the tab connector 422 may be colored orange. In a different example embodiment, all components of the gaming-table support locking apparatus 107 are the same color.

[0044] In an example embodiment, the gaming-table support locking apparatus 107 additionally includes an extrusion 430 and an extrusion notch 431. The extrusion 430 and extrusion notch 431 may restrict rotation between the first hinge bar 410 and the second hinge bar 420 in a given direction. Constraining the first hinge bar 410 and the second hinge bar 420 to only rotate in a given direction ensures proper folding of the gaming-table support locking apparatus 107 and the basketball game apparatus 100. For example, the extrusion 430 and extrusion notch 431 ensure that individual components of the basketball game apparatus 100 (e.g., the first bar of the gaming-table support 106 and the second bar of the gaming-table support 105) do not fold in the wrong direction.

[0045] For example, the first hinge bar 410 has an extrusion 430, disposed on an edge of the first hinge bar 410 (e.g., a top edge of the first hinge bar 410). In an example embodiment, the extrusion 430 is a portion of the first hinge bar 410 extending in the direction perpendicular to the first hinge bar 410 and towards the tab connector 422 (e.g., a portion of the first hinge bar 410 with a thickness that is greater than that of the first hinge bar 410). Because the extrusion 430 has an extrusion thickness that is greater than a thickness of the first hinge bar 410, the extrusion 430 extends beyond the first hinge bar 410. In an example embodiment, the extrusion 430 has a rectangular profile. In an alternate example embodiment, the extrusion 430 has a different geometric profile, such as circular, half-circular, elliptical, triangular, hexagonal, octagonal, hooked, J-shaped, U-shaped, or any other geometric profile.

[0046] Likewise, for example, the second hinge bar 420 has an extrusion notch 431. The extrusion notch 431 is a geometric void, disposed on an edge of the second hinge bar 420 (e.g., a top edge of the second hinge bar 420). In an example embodiment, the extrusion notch 431 has a rectangular profile, larger than that of the extrusion 430. In an

alternate example embodiment, the extrusion notch 431 has a different geometric profile, such as circular, half-circular, elliptical, triangular, hexagonal, octagonal, hooked, J-shaped, U-shaped, or any other geometric profile. As disclosed above, the extrusion 430 and the extrusion notch 431 are disposed on the same edge (i.e., the top edge) of their respective hinge bars. In a different example embodiment, the extrusion 430 and the extrusion notch 431 are disposed on a different edge (e.g., the bottom edge) of their respective hinge bars.

[0047] The extrusion notch 431 is aligned with the extrusion 430, such that the extrusion 430 engages with the extrusion notch 431 as the extrusion 430 extends in the direction perpendicular to the first hinge bar 410 and towards the tab connector 422. For example, the extrusion 430 extends in the direction perpendicular to the first hinge bar 410 and towards the tab connector 422. The extrusion 430 passes through at least a portion of the extrusion notch 431. In this way, the extrusion 430, which is disposed on the first hinge bar 410, intersects at least a portion of the extrusion notch 431 on the second hinge bar 420. This intersection, between a component of the first hinge bar 410 (e.g., the extrusion 430) with a component of the second hinge bar 420 (e.g., the extrusion notch 431) may restrict rotation between the first hinge bar 410 and the second hinge bar 420 in a given direction. Restriction of rotation is described in additional detail below with reference to FIGS. 8A-D. In a different example embodiment, components may be reversed. For example, the extrusion 430 may be disposed on the second hinge bar 420 and the extrusion notch 431 may be disposed on the first hinge bar 410. In another different example embodiment, there may be a plurality of extrusions disposed on a single bar. For example, the first hinge bar 410 may have a plurality of extrusions. Likewise, for example, the second hinge bar 420 may have a plurality of extrusion notches.

Tab Connector

[0048] FIG. 5A-5C shows a multi-view diagram of the gaming-table support locking apparatus 107 in the locked state likewise depicted in FIG. 4, according to an example embodiment of the present disclosure. Each of FIG. 5A, FIG. 5B, and FIG. 5C is a different orthogonal view of the same gaming-table support locking apparatus 107. As noted previously, the basketball game apparatus 100 may include a plurality of gaming-table support locking apparatus (e.g., a gaming-table support locking apparatus 107 on each of the side panels 101A-B). Therefore, while the description that follows refers to gaming-table support locking apparatus 107, similar components and functionality may be expected by other gaming-table support locking apparatus.

[0049] As previously disclosed, the gaming-table support locking apparatus 107 includes a tab connector 422. More particularly, the tab connector 422 includes a base 523, a locking section 524 and a release section 525. In an example embodiment, the base 523 is a molded plastic piece that is configured to connect to both the second hinge bar 420 and to other components of the tab connector 422 (e.g., the locking section 524 and release section 525). In a different example embodiment, the base 523 is made up of a different flexible material such as flexible plastic, rubber, etc. The base 523 is configured to connect to the second hinge bar 420 at the window 421. In a different example embodiment, the base 523 is configured to connect to the second hinge bar

420 at a location near the window **421**. The base **523** connects to the second hinge bar **420** on the side opposite the first hinge bar **410** (e.g., the second hinge bar **420** is between the base **523** and the first hinge bar **410**). The base **523** has a rectangular profile, and is relatively thin (e.g., a thickness comparable to the thickness of the second hinge bar **420**). In other example embodiments, the base **523** may be thicker and/or have a different geometric profile, such as circular, half-circular, elliptical, triangular, hexagonal, octagonal, hooked, J-shaped, U-shaped, or any other geometric profile. In an example embodiment, the width of the base **523** is slightly less than that of the window **421**. This ensures that the base **523** and additional components of the tab connector **422** (e.g., the locking section **524** and release section **525**) may at least partially pass through the window **421** in certain configurations.

[0050] The tab connector **422** further includes the locking section **524**. In an example embodiment, the locking section **524** is a molded plastic piece that is configured to connect to the base **523**. In a different example embodiment, the locking section **524** is made up of a different flexible material such as flexible plastic, rubber, etc. The locking section **524** connects to the base **523** on the side of the base **523** closer to the first hinge bar **410** (e.g., in a direction from the base **523** towards the window **421**). The locking section **524** has a rectangular profile, and is relatively thick, compared to the base **523**. For example, the locking section **524** has a first height extending from the base **523** through the window **421**, such that the entire rectangular profile of the locking section **524** extends through the window **421**. In other example embodiments, locking section **524** may have a different geometric profile, such as circular, half-circular, elliptical, triangular, hexagonal, octagonal, hooked, J-shaped, U-shaped, or any other geometric profile. In an example embodiment, the profile of the locking section **524** is slightly less than the width of the window **421**. This ensures that the entire profile of the locking section **524** may extend through the window **421**.

[0051] Additionally, the locking section **524** extends from the base **523**, through the window **421**, and through the tab notch **411**, such that it engages the tab notch **411** to form a secure connection. More particularly, by engagement, the locking section **524** has the first height, extending from the base **523**, in the direction perpendicular to the second hinge bar **420** and towards the window **421**. The locking section **524** passes through the window **421**. Likewise, the locking section **524** passes through at least a portion of the tab notch **411**. In this way, the locking section **524**, which is disposed on the second hinge bar **420**, intersects at least a portion of the tab notch **411** on the first hinge bar **410**. This intersection between a component of the second hinge bar **420** (e.g., the locking section **524**) with a component of the first hinge bar **410** (e.g., the tab notch **411**) forms a secure connection that restricts rotation between the first hinge bar **410** and the second hinge bar **420**. For example, the first hinge bar **410** cannot rotate with respect to the second hinge bar **420** (and vice-a-versa) because if the first hinge bar **410** rotates, the tab notch **411** likewise would rotate, but the locking section **524** (which is not attached to the first hinge bar **410**) would not rotate. Thus, the presence of the locking section **524** intersecting the tab notch **411** restricts rotation.

[0052] The tab connector **422** further includes the release section **525**. In an example embodiment, the release section **525** is a molded plastic piece that is configured to connect to

the base **523** and the locking section **524**. In a related example embodiment, the base **523**, the locking section **524**, and the release section **525** are one single component (e.g., an injection molded plastic component). In a different example embodiment, the release section **525** is made up of a different flexible material such as flexible plastic, rubber, etc. The release section **525** connects to the base **523** on the side of the base **523** closer to the first hinge bar **410** (e.g., in a direction from the base **523** towards the window **421**). Likewise, the release section **525** is connected to the locking section **524**. The release section **525** has a rectangular profile, and is relatively thick, compared to the base **523**. For example, the release section **525** has a second height, greater than the first height of the locking section **524**. The second height of the release section extends from the base **523** through the window **421**, such that the entire rectangular profile of the locking section **524** extends through the window **421**. In other example embodiments, release section **525** may have a different geometric profile, such as circular, half-circular, elliptical, triangular, hexagonal, octagonal, hooked, J-shaped, U-shaped, or any other geometric profile. In an example embodiment, the profile of the release section **525** is slightly less than the width of the window **421**. This ensures that the entire profile of the release section **525** may extend through the window **421**.

[0053] In an example embodiment, there are some notable differences between the release section **525** and the locking section **524**. For example, the release section **525** has a second height greater than the first height of the locking section **524**. Though the release section **525** extends from the base **523**, through the window **421**, the release section **525** does not extend through the tab notch **411**. Rather, the release section **525** does not intersect the geometric void defined by the tab notch **411** in any way. Additionally, because the release section **525** has a second height greater than the first height of the locking section **524**, the release section **525** is configured to receive force from a user (as explained below with reference to FIGS. 6A-B). By comparison, the first height of the locking section **524**, though intersecting the tab notch **411**, may barely extend beyond the tab notch **411** in the direction away from the base **523** (e.g., the locking section **524** may be flush or nearly flush with the first hinge bar **410** at the tab notch **411**). Thus, in an ideal embodiment, the locking section **524** is configured to intersect a portion of the tab notch **411**, whereas the release section **525** is configured to not intersect a portion of the tab notch **411** but extend beyond the locking section **524** in the direction away from the base **523** to receive force from a user.

[0054] FIG. 6A-6B shows the gaming-table support locking apparatus **107** in a released state, according to an example embodiment of the present disclosure. For example, by depressing the tab connector **422**, as illustrated by FIG. 6A, (e.g., pushing on the tab connector **422** with a finger), and more particularly depressing the release section **525** of the tab connector **422**, the tab connector **422** is physically actuated through the window **421**, as illustrated by FIG. 6B.

[0055] More specifically, for example, a user may depress the tab connector **422** by pushing on the release section **525** in a direction perpendicular to the second hinge bar **420** and towards the base **523**, to release the tab connector **422**. More particularly, by release, the user depresses the tab connector **422** (e.g., pushes on the tab connector **422** with a finger), and

more particularly depresses the release section 525 of the tab connector 422. In an example embodiment, the release section 525 of the tab connector 422 includes a tactile feature (e.g., bumps, ridges, concave/convex indentation, etc.) configured to receive force (e.g., tactile force) from the user. In alternate example embodiments, the force may be via other mechanical actuation, electro-mechanical actuation, robotics, etc. In an alternate example embodiment, the tab connector 422 may be depressed through other means such as with an external tool. In a different alternate example embodiment, the tab connector 422, and more particularly the base 423 has an external grip, such that the tab connector 422 may be pulled, via the external grip, from the side of the base 423 as opposed to being depressed from the side of the release section 525.

[0056] In response to depressing the release section 525, the tab connector 422 is at least partially actuated through the window 421. For example, in an example embodiment, responsive to receiving the physical actuation, the tab connector 422 bends about a fulcrum, the fulcrum being location where the base 523 of the tab connector 422 is connected to the second hinge bar 420 (e.g., the tab connector 422 may act as a Class 2 lever). The release section 525 is configured to be depressed toward the base 523. As previously noted, the release section 525 is connected to both the base 523 and the locking section 524. Alternatively, the base 523, the locking section 524, and the release section 525 are one single component (e.g., an injection molded plastic component). Because the release section 525 and the locking section 524 are both connected to the base 523, as the release section 525 is depressed toward the base 523 the locking section 524, likewise, is depressed toward the base 523. This causes the locking section 524 to disengage from the tab notch 411.

[0057] More particularly, by disengagement, the locking section 524 has the first height, extending from the base 523, in the direction perpendicular to the second hinge bar 420 and towards the window 421. The locking section 524 passes through the window 421. However, the locking section 524 no longer passes through at least a portion of the tab notch 411. In other words, the locking section 524, which is disposed on the second hinge bar 420, no longer intersects at least a portion of the tab notch 411, on the first hinge bar 410. The secure connection, which restricted rotation between the first hinge bar 410 and the second hinge bar 420, has been eliminated, such that the locking section 524 no longer restricts rotation of the second hinge bar 420 about the first hinge bar 410. At the same time, though depressed, the release section 525 may still extend at least partially through the window 421. This ensures that the user (e.g., the user's finger) is not contacting the first hinge bar 410 or the second hinge bar 420. For example, the user's finger remains on the release section 525, which is at least partially raised and is thus clear of the tab notch 411 and the window 421. This ensures that the user's finger does not come into contact with pinch points (e.g., the first hinge bar 410, the second hinge bar 420, the tab notch 411, or the window 421) as the first hinge bar 410 and the second hinge bar 420 rotate (as described below and illustrated by FIG. 7A-B).

[0058] In an example embodiment, the window 421 and a portion of the tab connector 422, including the locking section 524 and the release section 525 have equivalent shapes. For example, the window 421 may have a rectangular shape. Likewise, the locking section 524 and the

release section 525 have a rectangular shape. In this sense, the locking section 524 and the release section 525 extend from the base 523 through the window 421, such that a minimal gap exists between the perimeter of the locking section 524 and the release section 525, and the window 421. While the example embodiment above explains a rectangular-shaped configuration, the window 421 and a portion of the tab connector 422, including the locking section 524 and the release section 525 may have other geometric shapes (e.g., circular, half-circular, elliptical, triangular, hexagonal, octagonal, or any other geometric shape). For example, the locking section 524 and the release section 525 may each be a half-circle, such that combined they form a complete circular shape. Likewise, for example, the window 421 may have a circular shape, such that a minimal gap exists between the perimeter of the locking section 524 and the release section 525, and the window 421.

[0059] In a different example embodiment, components may be reversed. For example, the tab connector 422, including the base 523, the locking section 524, and the release section 525, and the window 421 may be disposed on the first hinge bar 410. Likewise, the tab notch 411 may be disposed on the second hinge bar 420. In another different example embodiment, there may be a plurality of windows and a plurality of tab connectors disposed on a single bar. For example, the second hinge bar 420 may have a plurality of windows and a plurality of tab connectors. Likewise, for example, the first hinge bar 410 may have a plurality of tab notches.

[0060] Prior to the release section 525 being depressed towards the base 523 (and the locking section 524 disengaging from the tab notch 411), the gaming-table support locking apparatus 107 is in a locked orientation. For example, and as previously noted the locking section 524 of the tab connector 422 extends from the base 523 through the window 421. The locking section 524 engages the tab notch 411 and forms a secure connection. Thus, the second hinge bar 420 is restricted from rotating about the first hinge bar 410 in either direction. In this sense, the gaming-table support locking apparatus 107 is locked.

Rotation of Gaming-Table Support Locking Apparatus

[0061] FIG. 7A-7B shows rotation of the gaming-table support locking apparatus 107, in response to release of the gaming-table support locking apparatus, according to an example embodiment of the present disclosure. For example, the tab connector 422 is released (as described above with reference to FIGS. 6A-6B). Responsive to releasing the tab connector 422, the tab connector 422 no longer restricts rotation of the second hinge bar 420, such that the second hinge bar 420 is able to rotate in a particular direction about a first hinge bar 410.

[0062] More particularly, and as previously noted, the second hinge bar 420 and the first hinge bar 410 are rotatably connected. In an example embodiment, this rotatable connection is a riveted lap joint. The second hinge bar 420 may rotate about the first hinge bar 410 such that the second hinge bar 420 may be aligned in relation to the first hinge bar 410, as illustrated by FIG.

[0063] Likewise, the second hinge bar 420 may rotate about the first hinge bar 410 such that the second hinge bar 420 may be angled in relation to the first hinge bar 410, as illustrated by FIG.

[0064] In an example embodiment, the rotatable connection is configured such that the second hinge bar 420 may rotate to any degree, in relation to the first hinge bar 410.

[0065] In an example embodiment, the first hinge bar 410 includes a flare 710. For example, the flare 710 is a corner of the first hinge bar 410 that extends away from the second hinge bar 420. The flare 710 may encourage proper alignment between the first hinge bar 410 and the second hinge bar 420 as the gaming-table support locking apparatus 107 transitions from an unlocked configuration to a locked configuration. Additionally, the flare 710 may facilitate the transition from unlocked configuration to a locked configuration. For example, the gradual slope of the flare 710 will ensure that the tab connector 422 (more particularly the locking section 524) is properly engaged (i.e., not extending through the window 421) as the first hinge bar 410 and the second hinge bar 420 rotate to a locked configuration.

[0066] In a related example embodiment, rotation may be restricted in a particular direction, or to a particular degree. For example, FIG. 8A-8D shows rotation and restricted rotation of the gaming-table support locking apparatus 107, in response to release of the gaming-table support locking apparatus, according to an example embodiment of the present disclosure. More particularly, FIGS. 8A and 8D are different orthogonal views of the gaming-table support locking apparatus 107 including the extrusion 430 and the extrusion notch 431. As illustrated, particularly with reference to FIG. 8D, the extrusion 430 has an extrusion thickness that is greater than a thickness of the first hinge bar 410, extending in the direction perpendicular to the first hinge bar 410 and towards the tab connector 422. The extrusion notch 431 is disposed on an edge of the second hinge bar 420 and is aligned with the extrusion 430. The extrusion 430 engages with the extrusion notch 431 as the extrusion 430 extends in the direction perpendicular to the first hinge bar 410 and towards the tab connector 422. FIG. 8D also illustrates the flare 710, on the corner of the first hinge bar 410 and extending away from the second hinge bar 420.

[0067] FIGS. 8B-8C illustrate an exemplary operation and rotation with the extrusion 430. For example, responsive to releasing the tab connector 422, the gaming-table support locking apparatus 107 is able to rotate in a first direction (as illustrated by FIG. 8B). More particularly, the second hinge bar 420 is able to rotate about the first hinge bar 410 in a first direction. However, as illustrated by FIG. 8C, when the second hinge bar 420 rotates about the first hinge bar 410 in a second direction, the extrusion 430 engages with the extrusion notch 431. Because the extrusion 430 (a component of the first hinge bar 410) cannot rotate through the second hinge bar 420, the extrusion 430 restricts rotation of the first hinge bar 410 relative to the second hinge bar 420 (and vice-a-versa). In this sense, the extrusion 430 on the first hinge bar 410 restricts rotation in the second direction. It is important to note that this restriction of rotation is occurring regardless of the fact that the tab connector 422 is released. In other words, even though the tab connector 422 is released, the second hinge bar 420 is unable to rotate about the first hinge bar 410 in the second direction, because the extrusion 430 has engaged with the extrusion notch 431. As disclosed above, the extrusion 430 and the extrusion notch 431 are disposed on the same edge (i.e., the top edge) of their respective hinge bars. In a different example embodiment,

the extrusion 430 and the extrusion notch 431 are disposed on a different edge (e.g., the bottom edge) of their respective hinge bars.

Method of Releasing the Gaming-Table Support Locking Apparatus

[0068] In an example embodiment, with reference to FIG. 6A-B, a method of unlocking the gaming-table support locking apparatus includes disengaging the locking section 524 of the tab connector 422. More particularly, and as illustrated by FIG. 6A, disengaging the locking section 524 of the tab connector 422 includes inputting, by a user, a force on the release section 525 of the tab connector 422. In an example embodiment, the force may be via a human finger. In different example embodiments, the force may be via other mechanical actuation, electromechanical actuation, robotics, etc. As illustrated by FIG. 6B, the method further includes, responsive to receiving the force from the user, bending the tab connector 422 about a fulcrum. In an example embodiment, the fulcrum is the rotatable connection between a first hinge bar 410 and a second hinge bar 420. The base 523 of the tab connector 422 is attached to this rotatable connection. The method further includes depressing the release section 525 of the tab connector 422 towards the base 523 of the tab connector 422, causing the locking section 524 of the tab connector 422 to disengage from the tab notch 411 on the first hinge bar 410. The method further includes visually ensuring that the locking section 524 of the tab connector 422 has been disengaged from the tab notch 411 on the first hinge bar 410. The method further includes rotating the second hinge bar 420, including the window 421, about the first hinge bar 410.

Use of Gaming-Table Support Locking Apparatus in Relation to Folded Basketball Game Apparatus

[0069] In an example embodiment, the basketball game apparatus 100 may include additional structural limitations. For example, and with reference to FIG. 1, in addition to the components disclosed, the basketball game apparatus 100 includes the third bar of a gaming-table support 110 and the fourth bar of a gaming-table support 111 on each of the two side panels 101A-B. In an example embodiment, the second bar of the gaming-table support 105 is mechanically coupled to the first bar of the gaming-table support 106 by a gaming-table support locking apparatus 107. A first end of the first bar of the gaming-table support 106 is rotatably coupled to the second bar of the gaming-table support 105. A second end of the second bar of the gaming-table support 105 is connected to a first end of the third bar of the gaming-table support 110 by the first hinge 120. A second end of the third bar of the gaming-table support 110 is connected to the cross bar 109. The third bar of the gaming-table support 110 is also connected to a first end of the fourth bar of a gaming-table support 111 by the second hinge 121. A second end of the fourth bar of the gaming-table support 111 contacts the floor. In an example embodiment, at least some bars of the gaming-table support (e.g., the second end of the fourth bar of the gaming-table support 111) have wheels that contact the floor.

[0070] In an example embodiment, by releasing the gaming-table support locking apparatus 107 on side panel 101A, and likewise releasing the gaming-table support locking apparatus on side panel 101B, the gaming-table support

locking apparatus 107 rotates (on each side panel). Likewise, the first bar of the gaming-table support 106 rotates up to the second bar of the gaming-table support 105. The third bar of the gaming-table support 110 and the fourth bar of the gaming-table support 111 rotate with respect to the first hinge 120 and the second hinge 121. In this way, the entire basketball game apparatus 100 may fold into a compact flattened configuration.

[0071] For example, in an example embodiment, the process of folding the basketball game apparatus 100 includes unlocking two side panels 101A-B, including releasing the gaming-table support locking apparatus 107 on side panel 101A, and likewise releasing the gaming-table support locking apparatus on side panel 101B. Additionally, the user may rotate the fourth bar of the gaming-table support 111 about the second hinge 121, so that the fourth bar of the gaming-table support 111 is underneath and parallel to the third bar of the gaming-table support 110. The user may push the cross bar 109 in a vertical direction towards a floor and in a horizontal direction towards the backboard panel 102, such that the third bar of the gaming-table support 110 and the fourth bar of the gaming-table support 111 rotate about the first hinge 120 to be parallel with the first bar of the gaming-table support 106. These components may then collapse parallel to the second bar of the gaming-table support 105, as long as the gaming-table support locking apparatus 107 is in an unlocked orientation. The user may then raise the hinged basketball rim 103, such that the hinged basketball rim 103 is parallel with the backboard panel 102. The user may then rotate the side boundary net 104A and 104B on each side panel 101A and 101B, such that each side boundary net 104A and 104B is parallel with the backboard panel 102. The user may additionally detach the cross bar 109 from a first end of the fourth bar of the gaming-table support 111 on each of the side panels 101A-B. Once in its compact flattened configuration, the basketball game apparatus 100 may be stored in any storage location (e.g., in a closet, under a bed, behind a door, etc.).

Alternate Gaming-Table Support Locking Apparatus

[0072] An alternate example basketball game apparatus 900 may include similar structural components while utilizing an alternate gaming-table support locking apparatus 907. In a non-limiting alternate example embodiment, as illustrated by FIGS. 9-11, the basketball game apparatus 900 includes two side panels 901A-B. As illustrated by FIG. 9, in an example embodiment the two side panels 901A-B are mirror images of one another, such that each of the two side panels 901A-B includes the same structure and components. Further, each of the two side panels 901A-B additionally includes a first bar of a gaming-table support 906 and a second bar of a gaming-table support 905. In other example embodiments, each side panel 901A and 901B may include additional bars of the gaming-table support (e.g., a third bar of the gaming-table support 910 and a fourth bar of the gaming-table support 911). Each of the first bar of the gaming-table support 906 and the second bar of the gaming-table support 905 are configured to support a portion of the basketball game apparatus 900 above the floor. Each of the two side panels 901A-B may additionally include at least one gaming-table support locking apparatus (e.g., gaming-table support locking apparatus 907). In other embodiments, each of the two side panels 901A-B may include multiple gaming-table support locking apparatus. In other embodi-

ments, each of the two side panels 901A-B may include additional features such as hinges (e.g., first hinge 920 and second hinge 921).

[0073] With reference to FIGS. 10-11, in an example embodiment, the gaming-table support locking apparatus 907 is disposed between the first bar of the gaming-table support 906 and the second bar of the gaming-table support 905. The gaming-table support locking apparatus 907 is fixed to each of the first bar of the gaming-table support 906 and the second bar of the gaming-table support 905. In this alternate example embodiment, the gaming-table support locking apparatus 907 is composed of two bars: a first telescoping bar 931 and a second telescoping bar 932, which are telescopically engaged with one another. A first end of the first telescoping bar 931 is rotatably fixed to the first bar of the gaming-table support 906. A first end of the second telescoping bar 932 is rotatably fixed to the second bar of the gaming-table support 905. A second end of the first telescoping bar 931 is telescopically engaged with the second end of the second telescoping bar 932. For example, the first telescoping bar 931 is at least partially disposed inside the second telescoping bar 932, such that the first telescoping bar 931 may slide relative to the second telescoping bar 932. The gaming-table support locking apparatus 907 additionally includes a telescope button 930. For example, the telescope button 930 is an internal push button locking mechanism. In an example embodiment, the telescope button 930 extends through a window of the gaming-table support locking apparatus 907. For example, the telescope button 930 extends through a window defined by each of the first telescoping bar 931 and the second telescoping bar 932.

[0074] Through implementation of the telescope button 930, the gaming-table support locking apparatus 907 may be either not engaged (i.e., preventing telescoping) or engaged (i.e., allowing telescoping). For example, when the telescope button 930 is not engaged, it extends through the window of the gaming-table support locking apparatus 907. The first telescoping bar 931 and the second telescoping bar 932 are unable to slide (e.g. telescope) relative to one another because the telescope button 930 extends through the window defined by each of the first telescoping bar 931 and the second telescoping bar 932. However, when the telescope button 930 is engaged by a user, such that it no longer extends through the window of the gaming-table support locking apparatus 907, the first telescoping bar 931 and the second telescoping bar 932 slide (e.g., telescope) relative to one another. For example, the length of the gaming-table support locking apparatus 907 may be telescopically adjustable when the telescope button 930 is engaged because the first telescoping bar 931 and the second telescoping bar 932 are able to slide relative to one another.

[0075] In an example embodiment, by telescoping, the gaming-table support locking apparatus 907 may perform a similar function as rotation of the first hinge bar 410 and the second hinge bar 420 by the gaming-table support locking apparatus 107. For example, to close (e.g., collapse) the basketball game apparatus 900, the first bar of the gaming-table support 906 is rotated to be flat and parallel with the second bar of the gaming-table support 905. Because the gaming-table support locking apparatus 907 is disposed between the first bar of the gaming-table support 906 and the second bar of the gaming-table support 905, the length of the gaming-table support locking apparatus 907 must shorten or reduce as the first bar of the gaming-table support 906 is

rotated to be flat and parallel with the second bar of the gaming-table support 905. To create this adjustably shortened length, a telescopically adjustable gaming-table support locking apparatus 907 is used. For example, as the first bar of the gaming-table support 906 is rotated to be flat and parallel with the second bar of the gaming-table support 905, the first telescoping bar 931 slides and is disposed within the second telescoping bar 932, such that the total length of the gaming-table support locking apparatus 907 may be shortened or reduced. In this way, a telescopically adjustable gaming-table support locking apparatus 907 may facilitate the collapsing and storage of the basketball game apparatus 900.

[0076] Likewise, when the basketball game apparatus 900 is opened (e.g., opened from a collapsed configuration to a playable configuration), the first bar of the gaming-table support 906 is rotated away from the second bar of the gaming-table support 905. Because the gaming-table support locking apparatus 907 is disposed between the first bar of the gaming-table support 906 and the second bar of the gaming-table support 905, the length of the gaming-table support locking apparatus 907 must extend or increase as the first bar of the gaming-table support 906 is rotated away from the second bar of the gaming-table support 905. To have an extendable length, the first telescoping bar 931 slides away from the second telescoping bar 932, such that the total length of the gaming-table support locking apparatus 907 may be extended or increased. In this way, a telescopically adjustable gaming-table support locking apparatus 907 may facilitate the opening of the basketball game apparatus 900.

[0077] As disclosed herein, the gaming-table support locking apparatus 907 is self-contained. It does not require a number of different components that could be lost or misplaced (e.g., a snap clamp with a flexible fitting and two rods or bars). Likewise, for example, the gaming-table support locking apparatus 907 is configured to require an ideal force (e.g., the pushing force from one finger of the user) for engagement of the telescope button 930. The mechanical design of the gaming-table support locking apparatus 907 provides for secure connections in both locked and unlocked states. Additionally, for example, the gaming-table support locking apparatus 907 provides for visual identification of the mechanism's condition (i.e., locked or unlocked). For example, the user may visually identify the telescope button 930, and thus assume that the mechanism is in a locked condition; alternatively, if the telescope button 930 on the gaming-table support locking apparatus 907 is not visible, the user may assume that the mechanism is in an unlocked condition. The gaming-table support locking apparatus 907 performs each of these functions while optimizing additional constraints (e.g., materials selection) and minimizing the risk of injury (e.g., pinch point injuries). This makes the gaming-table support locking apparatus 907 ideal for in-home use and particularly ideal for use with basketball game apparatus 900.

Support System for a Gaming Table

[0078] FIG. 12 shows an example of a basketball game apparatus 1200 when the basketball game apparatus 1200 is in an opened state (e.g., opened from a collapsed configuration to a playable configuration). The basketball game apparatus 1200 may include side panels 1202a, 1202b, a backboard 1204, a center return net 1208, and an end bar

1209. The side panels 1202a, 1202b may be mirror images of one another, such that each of the two side panels 1202a, 1202b includes the same structure and components. The side panels 1202a, 1202b may also each include a support structure 1212 and a netting structure 1210 that extends from the backboard 1204 to the end bar 1209.

[0079] The backboard 1204 may include additional features such as visual graphics, an electronic scoreboard, a manual scoreboard, a whiteboard or chalkboard, video camera technology, audio technology, speakers, etc. In other example embodiments, the backboard 1204 may be configured for other types of games such as any one of billiards, foosball, bumper billiards, air hockey, table tennis, target toss, pinball soccer, finger football, bowling, chess, checkers, Chinese checkers, backgammon, basketball toss, football toss, bean bag toss, etc. Likewise, an alternate example embodiment, the backboard 1204 may be configured to multi-game options (e.g., 6-in-1 or 20-in-1 gaming-table configurations). In alternate example embodiments, the support structure 1212 may be configured to support these other types of games. In an example embodiment, the backboard 1204 includes at least one basketball rim 1206. Likewise, the basketball rim 1206 may include additional features such as a net, an electronic scoring sensor, a manual scoring sensor, etc. In some examples, the basketball rim 1206 is hinged such that it may fold flat and parallel to the backboard 1204.

[0080] The center return net 1208 may be disposed between the two side panels 1202a, 1202b and extend from the backboard 1204 out toward the end bar 1209. In some examples, the center return net 1208 has a downward slope that extends toward the floor as it extends away from the backboard 1204, allowing the center return net to catch objects (e.g., basketballs) and send them to the user. The end bar 1209 may serve as a stop point for any objects caught by the center return net 1208. For example, once a basketball is caught by the center return net 1208, it rolls downward along the slope of the center return net 1208 until it is stopped by the end bar 1209. The end bar 1209 may include additional features that may interact with the backboard 1204. For example, if the backboard 1204 includes an electronic scoreboard, the end bar 1209 may include a control panel 1207, from which the user may select game-type, number of players, scoring limit, time limit, etc. Communications with the backboard 1204 may be wired and/or wireless.

[0081] The support structure 1212 may be configured to support a portion of the basketball game apparatus 1200 above the floor. The support structure 1212 may include a first support bar 1214, a second support bar 1216 attached to the first support bar, a third support bar 1218 attached to the second support bar 1216, a support locking apparatus 1220 attached to the first support bar 1214 and third support bar 1218, a fourth support bar 1222 attached to the third support bar 1218, and a fifth support bar 1224 attached to the fourth support bar 1222. The first support bar 1214 and the third support bar 1218 may support the netting structure 1210 and the backboard 1204. In some examples, the first support bar 1214 may include a wheel 1213. The wheel may be mounted on the first support bar 1214 such that when the basketball game apparatus 1200 is in the opened state, the wheel 1213 does not contact the ground.

[0082] The second support bar 1216 may be substantially parallel to the ground and may be substantially perpendicular to the first support bar 1214. The second support bar 1216 may include a proximal portion 1217 and a distal portion

1215. The second support bar **1216** may attach to the third support bar **1218** at the distal portion **1215** of the second support bar **1216**. In some examples, the second support bar **1216** is be unitary with the first support bar **1214**, and is formed as one part therewith. In other examples, the second support bar **1216** is detachable from the first support bar **1214**. Support may be enhanced by implementation of additional bars of the support structure **1212**.

[0083] In some examples, the second support bar **1216** includes a safety latch **1234** disposed on an outer surface of the second support bar **1216**. The safety latch **1234** may be disposed between the proximal portion **1217** and distal portion **1215**. The safety latch **1234** may be elongated and in pivotable connection with the second support bar **1216**. The safety latch **1234** may include a pin **1236** configured to engage with a window **1238** on the third support bar **1218**.

[0084] With reference to FIGS. **12-15**, in some examples, the third support bar **1218** is arcuate shaped. The third support bar may also have no hinges. The third support bar having an arcuate shape and having no hinges provides various benefits for the support system for the gaming table. For example, a user who is engaging the apparatus in a lock state will not pinch their hand on any hinges. Furthermore, the arcuate shape of the third support bar **1218** allows for more compact shipping because members of the third support bar **1218** can be shipped in two separate pieces. The arcuate shape of the third support bar **1218** also allows for cost reduction in manufacturing because it allows for one less hinge to have to be manufactured and assembled onto the support system for the gaming table. Furthermore, the arcuate shape of the third support bar **1218** exhibits greater resistance to kinking, compared to straight support bars, when exposed to various types of loading.

[0085] With continued reference to FIG. **12**, in an example embodiment, the support locking apparatus **1220** is disposed between and fixed to the first support bar **1214** and the third support bar **1218**. In this example, the support locking apparatus **1220** is composed of two bars: a first telescoping bar **1226** and a second telescoping bar **1228**, which are telescopically engaged with one another. A first portion of the first telescoping bar **1226** may be rotatably fixed to the first support bar **1214**. A first portion of the second telescoping bar **1228** may be rotatably fixed to the third support bar **1218**. A second portion of the first telescoping bar **1226** may be telescopically engaged with a second portion of the second telescoping bar **1228**. The first telescoping bar **1226** may be at least partially disposed inside the second telescoping bar **1228**, such that the first telescoping bar **1226** may slide relative to the second telescoping bar **1228**. The support locking apparatus **1220** additionally includes a telescope button **1230**. For example, the telescope button **1230** may be an internal push button locking mechanism. In an example embodiment, the telescope button **1230** extends through a window of the support locking apparatus **1220**. For example, the telescope button **1230** extends through a window defined by each of the first telescoping bar **1226** and the second telescoping bar **1228**.

[0086] Through implementation of the telescope button **1230**, the support locking apparatus **1220** may be either not engaged (i.e., preventing telescoping) or engaged (i.e., allowing telescoping). For example, when the telescope button **1230** is not engaged, it extends through the window of the support locking apparatus **1220**. The first telescoping bar **1226** and the second telescoping bar **1228** are unable to

slide (e.g., telescope) relative to one another because the telescope button **1230** extends through the window defined by each of the first telescoping bar **1226** and the second telescoping bar **1228**. However, when the telescope button **1230** is engaged by a user, such that it no longer extends through the window of the support locking apparatus **1220**, the first telescoping bar **1226** and the second telescoping bar **1228** slide (e.g., telescope) relative to one another. For example, the length of the support locking apparatus **1220** may be telescopically adjustable when the telescope button **1230** is engaged because the first telescoping bar **1226** and the second telescoping bar **1228** are able to slide relative to one another.

[0087] With reference to FIGS. **12-14**, an example embodiment of the basketball game apparatus **1200** is depicted. FIG. **12** depicts the basketball game apparatus **1200** in the opened state. In the example embodiment, the support locking apparatus **1220** may perform a similar function as rotation of the first hinge bar **410** and the second hinge bar **420** by the gaming-table support locking apparatus **107**. For example, to close (e.g., collapse) the basketball game apparatus **1200**, the third support bar **1218** is rotated to be flat and parallel with the first support bar **1214**.

[0088] FIG. **13** depicts the basketball game apparatus **1200** in a semi-closed state with netting structure **1210** and center return net **1208** omitted from view. Because the support locking apparatus **1220** is disposed between the first support bar **1214** and the third support bar **1218**, the length of the support locking apparatus **1220** may shorten or reduce as the third support bar **1218** is rotated to be flat and parallel with the first support bar **1214**. To create this adjustably shortened length, a telescopically adjustable support locking apparatus **1220** may be used.

[0089] FIG. **14** depicts the basketball game apparatus **1200** in a closed state with netting structure **1210** and center return net **1208** omitted from view. In an example, as the third support bar **1218** is rotated to be flat and parallel with the first support bar **1214**, the first telescoping bar **1226** slides and is disposed within the second telescoping bar **1228**, such that the total length of the support locking apparatus **1220** may be shortened or reduced. In this way, a telescopically adjustable support locking apparatus **1220** may facilitate the collapsing and storage of the basketball game apparatus **1200**. When the basketball game apparatus **1200** is in the closed state, a user can tilt the basketball game apparatus **1200** in a direction, causing the wheel **1213** to contact the ground. The wheel **1213** in contact with the ground will decrease friction and allow the user to use less of his or her own strength to move the basketball apparatus **1200**.

[0090] Likewise, when the basketball game apparatus **1200** is opened (e.g., opened from a collapsed configuration to a playable configuration), the third support bar **1218** may be rotated away from the first support bar **1214**. Because the support locking apparatus **1220** is disposed between the first support bar **1214** and the third support bar **1218**, the length of the support locking apparatus **1220** may extend or increase as the third support bar **1218** is rotated away from the first support bar **1214**. To have an extendable length, the first telescoping bar **1226** slides away from the second telescoping bar **1228**, such that the total length of the support locking apparatus **1220** may be extended or increased. In

this way, a telescopically adjustable support locking apparatus **1220** may facilitate the opening of the basketball game apparatus **1200**.

[0091] As disclosed herein, the support locking apparatus **1220** is self-contained. It does not require a number of different components that could be lost or misplaced (e.g., a snap clamp with a flexible fitting and two rods or bars). Likewise, for example, the support locking apparatus **1220** is configured to require an ideal force (e.g., the pushing force from one finger of the user) for engagement of the telescope button **1230**. The mechanical design of the support locking apparatus **1220** provides for secure connections in both locked and unlocked states. Additionally, for example, the support locking apparatus **1220** provides for visual identification of the condition of the support locking apparatus **1220** (i.e., locked or unlocked). For example, the user may visually identify the telescope button **1230**, and thus assume that the support locking apparatus **1220** is in a locked condition; alternatively, if the telescope button **1230** on the support locking apparatus **1220** is not visible, the user may assume that the support locking apparatus **1220** is in an unlocked condition. The support locking apparatus **1220** performs each of these functions while optimizing additional constraints (e.g., materials selection) and minimizing the risk of injury (e.g., pinch point injuries). This makes the support locking apparatus **1220** ideal for in-home use and particularly ideal for use with basketball game apparatus **1200**.

[0092] With reference to FIGS. **14-16**, an example embodiment of the basketball game apparatus **1200** is depicted. The second support bar **1216** may include the safety latch **1234**. The safety latch **1234** may be fastened to the second support bar **1216** by a pivot pin **1237**. The safety latch **1234** may be in pivotable connection with the second support bar **1216** and configured to engage the third support bar **1218** by latching onto the window **1238**. FIG. **14** depicts the safety latch **1234** in an unengaged safety state. In an example, when the safety latch **1234** is not engaged with the window **1238**, the safety latch **1234** is in an unengaged safety state. The safety latch **1234** may be stowed away in a position parallel to the second support bar **1216**. When the safety latch is in the unengaged safety state, the third support bar **1218** may pivot freely about the second support bar **1216** via the pivot pin **1237**.

[0093] As depicted in FIG. **15**, in another example, when safety latch **1234** is engaged with the window **1238**, the safety latch **1234** is in an engaged safety state. When the safety latch **1234** is in the engaged safety state, the pin **1236** of the safety latch **1234** may be inserted into the window **1238** of the third support bar **1218**. The engagement of the pin **1236** into the window **1218** may prevent the third support bar **1218** from pivoting about the second support bar **1216** whether the support locking apparatus **1220** is in the locked condition or the unlocked condition. The safety latch **1234** enhances safety of the basketball game apparatus **1200** because the safety latch **1234** may prevent the third support bar **1218** from pivoting about the second support bar **1216** even when the support locking apparatus **1220** is in the unlocked condition. Therefore, if the safety latch **1234** is in the engaged safety state, the basketball game apparatus **1200** may remain in the closed state even if the support locking apparatus **1220** is in the unlocked condition. The safety latch **1234** minimizes the risk of injury of a support bar of the basketball game apparatus **1200** falling on a user because

even if the support locking apparatus **1220** is unintentionally in the unlocked condition, the gaming apparatus **1200** will be prevented from being in the opened state and will therefore not fall on and injure a user.

[0094] A number of implementations have been described. Nevertheless, it will be understood that various modifications may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the disclosure. Accordingly, other implementations are within the scope of the following claims.

CONCLUSION

[0095] It should be understood that various changes and modifications to the example embodiments described herein will be apparent to those skilled in the art. Such changes and modifications can be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the present subject matter and without diminishing its intended advantages. It is therefore intended that such changes and modifications be covered by the appended claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A gaming-table apparatus comprising:
 - two side support panels, wherein each of the two side support panels include:
 - a first support bar of a gaming-table support;
 - a second support bar of a gaming-table support attached to the first support bar and substantially perpendicular to the first support bar;
 - a third support bar of a gaming-table support attached to the second support bar, the third support bar having an arcuate shape and in a pivotable connection with the second support bar;
 - a gaming-table support locking apparatus attached to the third support bar and the first support bar, wherein the gaming-table support locking apparatus includes:
 - a first locking bar;
 - a second locking bar connected to the first locking bar, wherein the second locking bar is configured to be in one of two states of being:
 - a first state that allows the third support bar to rotate with respect to the second support bar; and
 - a second state that prevents the third support bar to rotate with respect to the second support bar; and
 - a backboard panel disposed between two side support panels and including at least one hinged basketball rim.
 - 2. The gaming-table apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a safety latch disposed on the second support bar, wherein the latch is configured to engage the third support bar.
 - 3. The gaming-table apparatus of claim 2, wherein the safety latch includes a fastener configured to engage with a window on the third support bar.
 - 4. The gaming-table apparatus of claim 2, wherein the safety latch is elongated.
 - 5. The gaming-table apparatus of claim 1, wherein the second support bar is configured to engage the ground.
 - 6. The gaming-table apparatus of claim 1, wherein the third support bar is attached to a fourth support bar.
 - 7. The gaming-table apparatus of claim 1, wherein the first locking bar is telescopically engaged with the second locking bar.

8. The gaming-table apparatus of claim 7, wherein the second locking bar defines a window, and the first locking bar includes a button configured to be in one of two states of being:

- a locked state that prevents the first locking bar to move telescopically with the second locking bar, wherein the button is engaged with the window, and wherein the button extends beyond the window; and
- a freed state that allows the first locking bar to move telescopically with the second locking bar and wherein the button is not engaged with the window.

9. A gaming-table apparatus comprising:

two side support panels, wherein each of the two side support panels includes:

- a first bar of a gaming-table support;
- a second bar of the gaming-table support; and
- a gaming-table support locking apparatus, wherein the gaming-table support locking apparatus comprises:
 - a first hinge bar defining a tab notch,
 - a second hinge bar defining a window, and
 - a tab connector connected to the second hinge bar and configured to permit the second hinge bar in one of two states of being:
 - a locked state that prevents rotation of the first hinge bar relative the second hinge bar, and
 - an unlocked state that permits rotation of the first hinge bar relative the second hinge bar; and

a backboard panel, disposed between the two side support panels and including at least one hinged basketball rim.

10. The apparatus of claim 9, wherein the tab connector comprises a base configured for arrangement within the window formed by the second hinge bar, wherein the base is pivotably-connected to the second hinge bar within the window.

11. The apparatus of claim 10, wherein the tab connector comprises a locking section defined by a locking section height that extends from the base and through both of the window formed by the second hinge bar and the tab notch formed by the first hinge bar.

12. The apparatus of claim 10, wherein the tab connector comprises a release section defined by a release section height that extends from the base and through the window formed by the second hinge bar.

13. A gaming table apparatus comprising:

two side support panels, wherein each of the two side support panels include:

- a first support bar;
- a second support bar;
- a locking mechanism attached to at least one of the support bars, the locking mechanism including:
 - a first locking bar; and
 - a second locking bar connected to the first locking bar, wherein the second locking bar is configured to be in one of two states of being:

- a first state that allows the second support bar to rotate with respect to the first support bar; and
- a second state that prevents the second support bar to rotate with respect to the first support bar;

a backboard panel disposed between the two side support panels;

a cross bar disposed between the two side support panels; and

a return net disposed between the two side support panels, the return net including a first portion connected to the backboard panel and a second portion connected to the cross bar.

14. The gaming table apparatus of claim 13, wherein the backboard panel includes at least one rim.

15. The gaming table apparatus of claim 13, wherein the backboard panel includes a scoreboard.

16. The gaming table apparatus of claim 13, wherein the return net has a downward slope that extends toward the floor as it extends away from the backboard panel.

17. The gaming table apparatus of claim 13, wherein each side support panel includes a side boundary net.

18. The gaming table apparatus of claim 13, wherein the first locking bar and the second locking bar are composed of a rigid material.

19. The gaming table apparatus of claim 13, wherein the rigid material is one of a rigid plastic and metal.

20. The gaming table apparatus of claim 13, wherein when the second locking bar is in the second state, the first locking bar and the second locking bar align to form a straight line.

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