

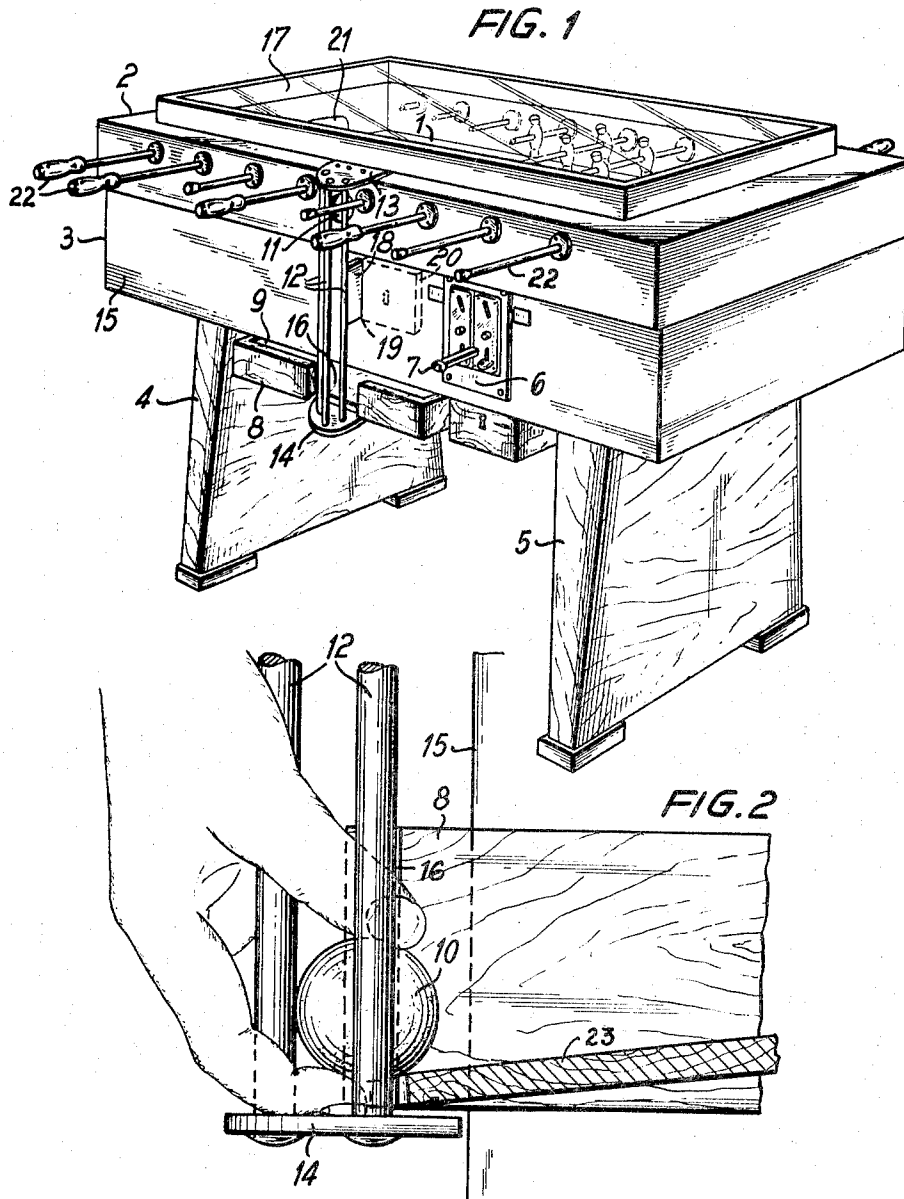
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PLAYING PIECE GUARD DEVICE FOR TABLE GAMES

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PLAYING PIECE GUARD DEVICE FOR TABLE GAMES

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This invention relates broadly to a table game of the type wherein upon insertion of coins and by operation of a releasing rod a long barrier releases a number of playing pieces or balls into a playing piece dispensing box for selective use on the table and more particularly to a playing piece guard means for such games to prevent use of the playing pieces in other than the intended manner.

The playing piece guard device of the present invention is intended mainly for use on table soccer games of the type manufactured by Leonhart, Harburg, near Landau, Isar, Germany, such as Turner-Sieger (tournament winner) Model Record 63, well known in the coin operated machine art, and is shown and described in connection with such a game, but it is to be understood that the guard device of the present invention is also applicable for use on other types of games where playing pieces, such as balls, discs, etc., must be removed from a supply receptacle and moved to the game board or table for play.

The main object of the present invention is to provide a construction of playing piece guard device for coin operated table games which permits the playing pieces to be moved from the playing piece dispensing box to the point of entry to the playing surface in the usual manner while preventing unauthorized use or removal of the playing pieces from the game.

Another object of the present invention is to provide a construction of guard means for table type games which insures that the game playing pieces are used only in the intended manner and prevents the introduction of foreign playing pieces into the game.

Other and further objects of the invention reside in the structural arrangement of the guard device which enables a playing piece in the guard to be easily grasped by the player's fingers and moved inside the guard, the arrangement which enables all playing pieces available to the player to be readily observable, and the manner in which the guard device is connected to the game table as set forth more fully in the specification hereinafter following by reference to the accompanying drawings, illustrating by way of example the guard device applied to a table ball game in the form of a table soccer game with the game field covered with a transparent cover plate, in which:

FIGURE 1 is a perspective view of a coin operated table ball game showing the playing piece guard device of the present invention; and

FIG. 2 is an enlarged fragmentary side elevational view of the lower portion of the guard device of FIG. 1 and illustrating the manner in which a playing piece within the guard device is grasped by the player.

Referring to FIG. 1 of the drawings, a table soccer game, well known in the art, is illustrated therein with a game field or playing surface 1 in an upper box portion 2 covered with a transparent plate 17, such as glass or the like, and a lower portion 3 supported by the feet or leg portions 4 and 5.

A ball return goal opening 21 is provided at each end of the game field to receive a ball directed therein by player puppets connected to and manipulated by axial

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and twisting movements imparted to control sticks 22 by the players. The ball openings 21 are connected to a ball-dispensing box 8 by means of return chutes (not shown) connected within the game table.

A coin controller device 6 with a movable releasing rod 7, such as the type disclosed in my patent 3,195,706, issued July 20, 1965, for Coin Controller for Games and the Like, is connected to the lower portion 3 of the game table. By axial actuation of the releasing rod 7, a barrier, not shown, extending longitudinally of the game table over the full width of the playing piece or ball dispensing box 8, is pivoted out of the path of the balls in the rear portion of the box, deposited there by the return chutes, allowing them to roll to the forward wall of the box where the supply of balls available to the player is visible through the slot or top opening 9.

In the past, slot 9 has been of a width greater than the balls and the balls were merely removed from the box by hand by the player as needed and inserted in ball injection opening 11 to introduce a new ball on the game field 1. With the prior table games, in order to save money, after inserting the necessary coins for an initial play, the players take the balls from the dispensing box 8 but then by plugging the goals with handkerchiefs or beer coasters, prevent the balls from being taken away from them through the ball return chutes behind the goals. Thus, they can play unhindered for a long time for a single insertion of the specified number of coins. An attempt has been made to suppress this in the games not covered with a transparent plate by connecting to the goal keeperpiece of the game a plate which projects into the ball return chute, so that a handkerchief pushed into the goal opening prevents movement of the goal keeper and thus renders the game uninteresting since it is not completely operable. However, this measure does not prevent the players from using additional balls of their own in the game or balls from another game table to thus considerably exceed the playing time corresponding to the initially inserted coins. This latter difficulty is also present with game tables covered with a glass plate. It is these difficulties which are eliminated by the present invention.

In the game of the present invention the top opening or slot 9 of the ball dispensing box 8 is of a width smaller than the width of the ball such that the balls available for play are visible through the slot but cannot be removed through the slot. A plurality of rods 12, such as three rods, are connected in staggered position at one end to an upper plate 13, which is firmly connected to the upper box portion cover frame 2 of the playing surface, and at the other end to a lower or bottom plate 14 positioned beneath the free opening 16 in the front wall of the ball dispensing box. The rods 12 are spaced from each other by a distance of more than the width of one finger and less than the diameter of a ball so that the fingers of a hand fit between them but the balls 10 cannot pass through the rods. A rod is positioned adjacent each edge of opening 16 and a third rod is positioned substantially centrally of the opening and outwardly of the other two rods. The rods 12 are disposed substantially parallel with the outer walls of the game table and together with upper plate 13, bottom plate 14 and side wall 15 of table portions 2 and 3 form a playing piece guard or an outwardly disposed closed connecting channel extending between free opening 16 of the ball dispensing box and ball injecting opening 11.

In operation, while all balls released by the coin operator are seen, only a single ball 10 is dispensed from box 8 through opening 16, due to inclined bottom portion 23, to a position as shown in FIG. 2, resting between and against the three rods 12 of the ball guard. The ball 10

is then grasped by two fingers of one hand, preferably the thumb and index finger, inserted between the rods 12, and lifted vertically up the ball guard or channel and then introduced into the ball injection aperture 11 adjacent the top of the channel. The ball guard thus confines the ball at all times to prevent its removal from the table and the insertion of additional foreign playing pieces into the game, while at the same time permitting the balls to be freely manipulated in the manner intended for playing the game. The glass plate 17 covering the top of the game table and game field also prevents a player from inserting additional or foreign balls from another source into the game, and prevents a player from removing balls in play from the game field 1.

The height provided for inclination of the return channels is usually very small and playing balls in games can normally be collected one behind the other only if they are relatively heavy balls, that is, for example, if they are constructed of steel so that even at small inclinations of the feed or return channels the balls can reliably overcome minor obstacles in the channels and return to the dispensing box 8 without jamming the game. However, in a game using light balls, as for example, balls used in table soccer games, the balls can become caught by minor obstacles in their path and for this reason the balls are collected in a row in side-by-side relation behind a barrier in the dispensing box so the inclination of the return channels or chutes can be used to best advantage. When the barrier is pivoted away after insertion of the necessary coins all the balls roll down a short but sufficiently inclined surface 23 to the front wall of the dispensing box 8, projecting from beneath the game table. When playing with light balls the player generally prefers a wide ball dispensing box and is accustomed to such an arrangement so he can pick up any ball with the fingers and push them into the ball injection opening 11 onto the game field. The accustomed habit of the players due to long usage of games of this type is not disturbed by the present invention.

As all the balls roll to the front wall of the dispensing box one of the balls projects through opening 16 and comes to rest in a confined position between the rods 12. As shown in FIG. 2, the inclined bottom surface 23 of box 8 is spaced above bottom plate 14, and rods 12 are spaced from the terminating edge of surface 23 by an amount such that a ball 10 is retained by rods 12 in a position spaced above bottom plate 14 by an amount of approximately the height of one finger. This enables a player to effortlessly insert a finger, such as an index finger, beneath the ball when grasping the same to lift it up the ball guard for insertion in aperture 11.

A relatively wide plate 18 is rigidly secured to at least one rod 12 of the ball guard which extends adjacent the outer wall 15 of the game table, intermediate the ends of the rod, and extends toward the lower portion 3 of the game table at generally right angles. A vertical slot 19 is provided in wall 15 of the table and plate 18 extends into said slot and is locked therein, interior of the machine, by a lock 20 connected adjacent slot 19. In this manner the ball guard or connecting channel is locked in its position of use on the table and this connection prevents the rods from being bent away from the table by force or torn off at their point of attachment. The guard can also be easily removed from machine maintenance merely by unlocking the lock 20 and removing several screws.

While the invention has been shown and described in a preferred embodiment, it is realized that modification can be made without departing from the scope of the invention, and it is to be understood that no limitations upon the invention are intended other than those imposed by the scope of the appended claims.

What I claim as new an desire to secure by Letters Patent of the United States, is as follows:

1. A playing piece guard device for table games of the type having outer wall means disposed about a game surface, a playing piece injection opening in one outer wall means for introducing a playing piece into play on the game surface, and a playing piece dispensing means for retaining a plurality of playing pieces and having a dispensing opening for the playing pieces adjacent the lower edge of the one outer wall means, comprising an upper plate member connected to said one outer wall means above the playing piece injection opening, a bottom plate member positioned beneath the dispensing opening, a plurality of rod members connected between said upper plate member and said bottom plate member and disposed substantially parallel with said one outer wall means, said rod members and said one outer wall means defining a closed outwardly extending playing piece conveying channel between said dispensing opening and said injection opening and adapted to receive and retain a playing piece dispensed from said dispensing opening, and said rod members spaced from each other a distance sufficient to enable the player's fingers to extend between said rod members and grasp a playing piece for movement from said dispensing opening to said injection opening.

2. A playing piece guard device as set forth in claim 1 in which said rod members are accurately disposed and spaced from each other a distance of more than the width of a player's finger and less than the width of a playing piece.

3. A playing piece guard device as set forth in claim 1 in which said playing piece dispensing means includes an inclined bottom wall portion having a terminating edge at said dispensing opening and at least one of said rod members spaced from said terminating edge a predetermined distance to maintain a playing piece disposed between said one rod member and said terminating edge in spaced relation above said bottom plate member, whereby a player's finger can be placed beneath the playing piece to grasp the same.

4. A playing piece guard device as set forth in claim 1 in which said rod members are substantially vertically disposed.

5. A playing piece guard device as set forth in claim 1 in which an inner rod member of said plurality of rod members is connected adjacent said one outer wall means, said one outer wall means having a substantially vertical slot therein, lock means connected to said one outer wall means adjacent said vertical slot, and a plate member connected to said inner rod member and extending through said vertical slot into engagement with said lock means for retaining said rod members and said upper and bottom plate members in position.

6. A playing piece guard device, as set forth in claim 5 in which said plate member is connected to said inner rod member intermediate its ends and is disposed in substantially the same vertical plane as said inner rod member.

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