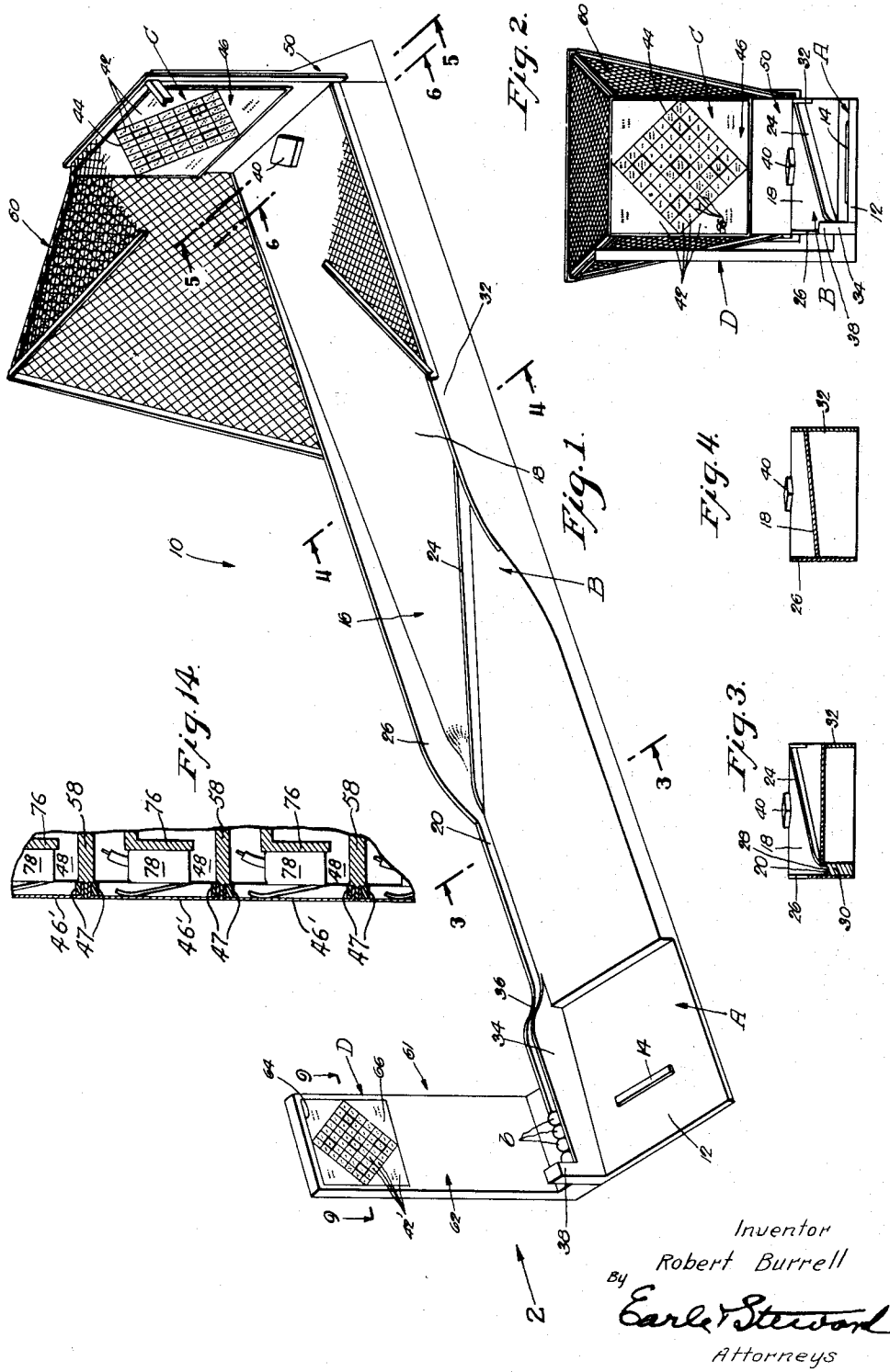
Nov. 3, 1953 R. BURRELL 2,657,931

TARGET BASEBALL GAME

Filed March 29, 1951 3 Sheets-Sheet 1



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TARGET BASEBALL GAME

Filed March 29, 1951 3 Sheets-Sheet 2

Fig. 8.

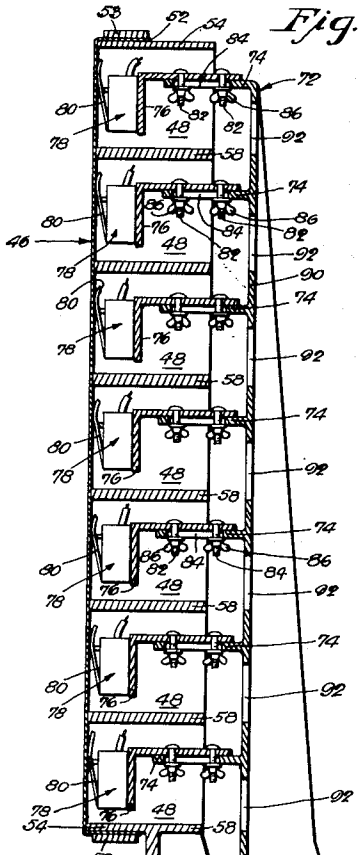


Fig. 5.

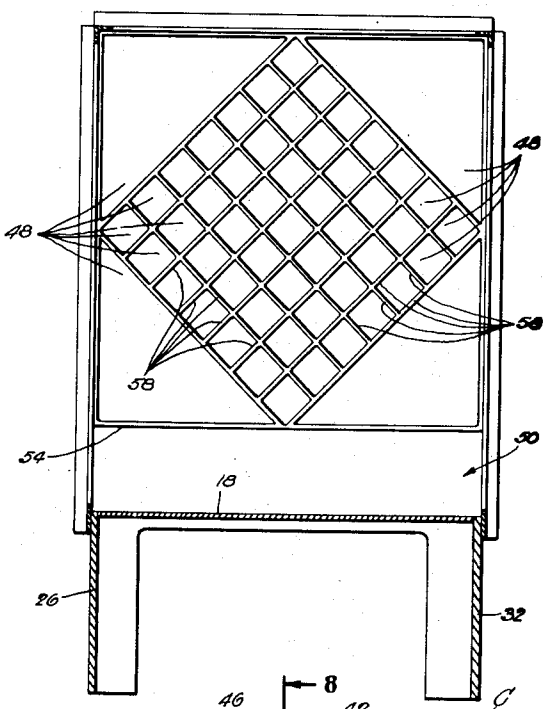


Fig. 7.

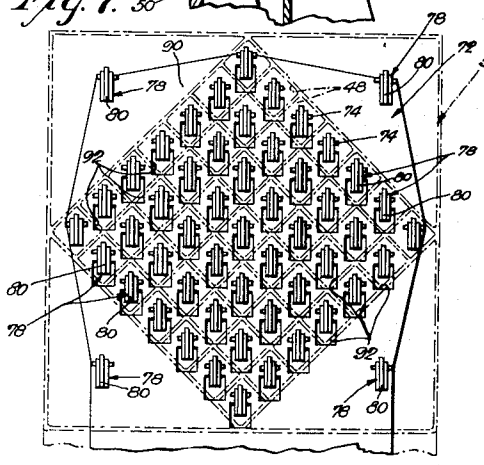


Fig. 6.

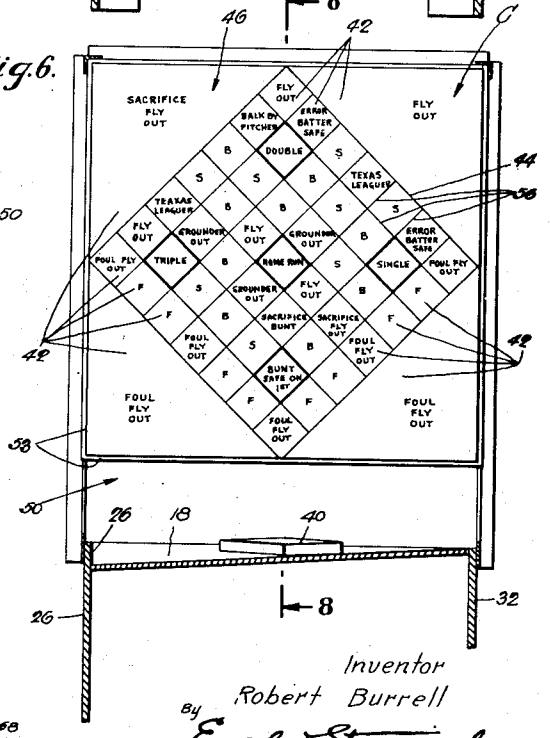
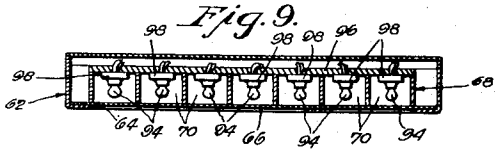


Fig. 9.



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TARGET BASEBALL GAME

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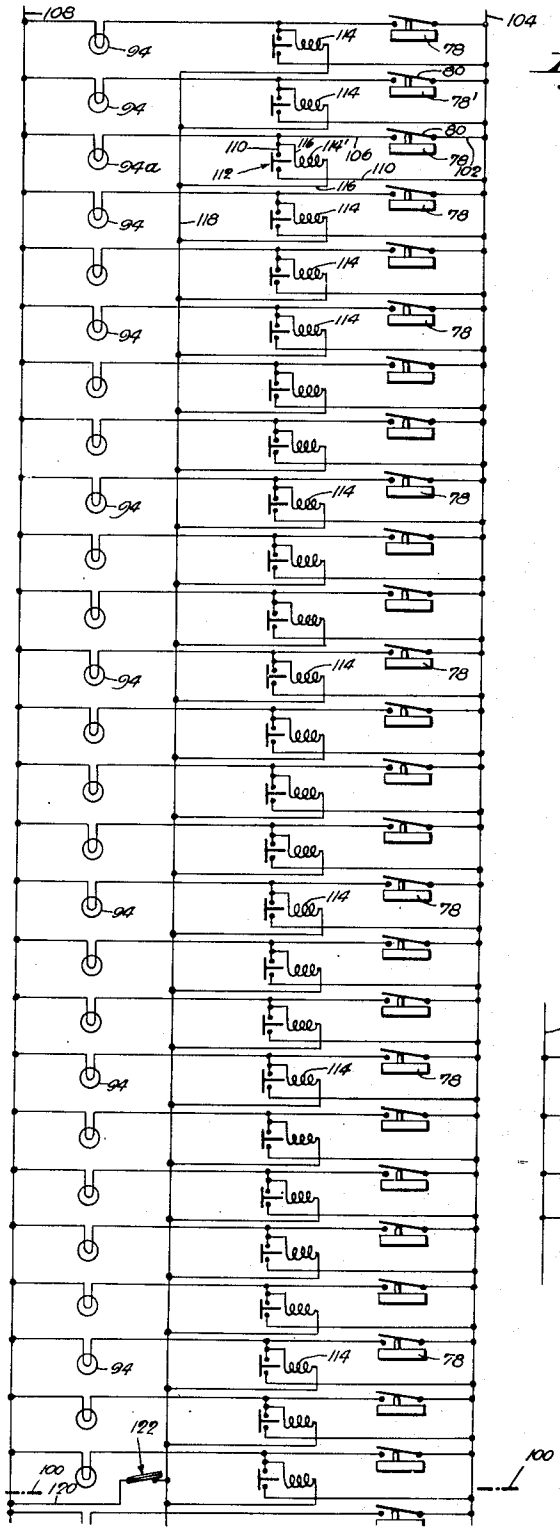

Fig. 12.

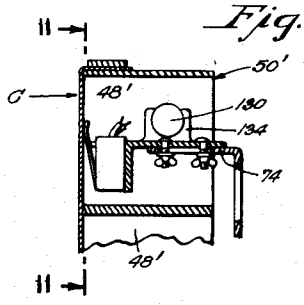

Fig. 10.

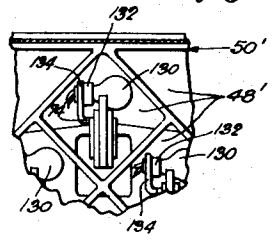

Fig. 11.

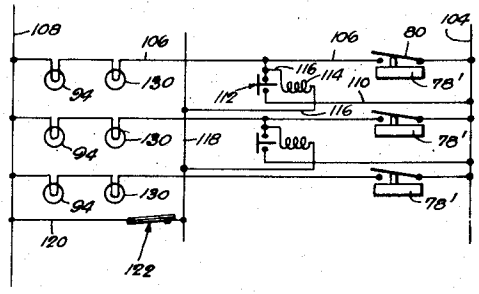

Fig. 13.

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TARGET BASEBALL GAME

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Application March 29, 1951, Serial No. 218,231

2 Claims. (Cl. 273—102.2)

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This invention relates to the game of baseball in general, and to target baseball games in particular.

It is a primary object of the present invention to provide a baseball game which, while offering considerable amusement to a player or to players of opposing teams, will also require for the successful execution of a desired play considerable skill on the part of any player commensurate with that of a pitcher in actual baseball, thereby to render the instant game especially adapted for training purposes insofar as pitching a baseball is concerned.

It is another object of the present invention to provide a baseball game of this type with facilities for playing the game to a large extent in simulation of an actual baseball game and in accordance with the pet strategy of each player, although the success of each play depends on the pitching skill of the player selecting it.

A further object of the present invention is to provide a baseball game of this type with a target which is divided into marked fields that represent various favorable and unfavorable plays in regulation baseball of which any favorable play-field may be selected by a player and aimed at in pitching a baseball in an effort to hit the selected play-field and thereby score the particular play, unless the pitched ball goes wild and hits another play-field which may or may not be favorable to the player.

Another object of the present invention is to provide a baseball game of this type with a target of which each play-field area is plane throughout for the rebound of a pitched baseball therefrom, and is also more or less resilient so as to utilize the momentary yielding of the field under its impact with a pitched ball for the ultimate purpose of recording the particular play scored with the baseball.

It is a further object of the present invention to provide a baseball game of this type with a play indicator or recorder which is a replica of the field-divided target, and of which any play-marked field corresponding to a target field struck with a pitched baseball will be illuminated for a sufficient length of time to afford the player or players the opportunity to note the scored play without giving rise to any dispute over the latter.

It is another object of the present invention to provide for each play-indicating field of the recorder an illuminating electric light bulb and a circuit therefor which includes a control switch located behind the corresponding target field and momentarily closed when the latter yields on its impact with a pitched baseball.

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Another object of the present invention is to provide the instant game with an alley at one end of which is the erect target and at the other end of which is an imitation pitcher's box into which each player has to step in order to pitch a baseball toward the target at the regulation distance between the pitcher's and batter's boxes in real baseball.

It is a further object of the present invention to provide a target which, while having its marked play-fields clearly discernible from the pitcher's box, nevertheless has a relatively small over-all area, thereby to compel a player to pitch a baseball with substantially the same accuracy as an actual baseball pitcher in order to hit the target in or near the intended play-field thereof.

It is another object of the present invention to provide the target at such a level as to compel a player to pitch a ball from much the same stance as that usually assumed by an actual baseball player when pitching a ball to the batter.

A further object of the present invention is to construct the alley of the instant game as a chute in which baseballs rebounding from the target will return to the pitcher's box, yet to keep the alley so low that the same will not in any way obstruct a player's view of the relatively low target at any time while the player goes through the fashionable motions of pitching a baseball.

It is still another object of the present invention to provide a baseball game of this type which is of simple yet rugged construction, has an attractive appearance appealing to the baseball-minded of all ages, may readily be installed in any convenient public or private place indoors or outdoors, and is readily accessible for the adjustment, repair or replacement of any operating parts thereof.

Other objects and advantages will appear to those skilled in the art from the following, considered in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

In the accompanying drawings, in which certain modes of carrying out the present invention are shown for illustrative purposes:

Fig. 1 is a perspective view of a baseball game embodying the present invention;

Fig. 2 is a front elevation of the game as viewed in the direction of the arrow 2 in Fig. 1;

Figs. 3 and 4 are sections taken substantially on the lines 3—3 and 4—4, respectively, of Fig. 1;

Fig. 5 is an enlarged section taken substantially on the line 5—5 of Fig. 1, and showing a target of the game with a prominent part thereof removed;

Fig. 6 is an enlarged section taken substantially

on the line 6—6 of Fig. 1, and showing the target complete;

Fig. 7 is an enlarged fragmentary front elevation of certain structure of the target of the game;

Fig. 8 is an enlarged fragmentary section through the target as taken on the line 8—8 of Fig. 6;

Fig. 9 is an enlarged section taken substantially on the line 9—9 of Fig. 1;

Fig. 10 is a fragmentary section similar to a part of that of Fig. 8, and showing a modification of the invention;

Fig. 11 is a fragmentary section taken substantially on the line 11—11 of Fig. 10;

Fig. 12 is a wiring diagram of certain play-recording equipment of the present game;

Fig. 13 is a partial wiring diagram of modified play-recording equipment of the present game, and

Fig. 14 is a fragmentary section similar to a part of the section of Fig. 8, and showing a further modification of the invention.

Referring to the drawings, and more particularly to Figs. 1 and 2 thereof, the reference numeral 10 generally designates a target baseball game which essentially consists of a player's stand A, an alley B, a baseball target C, and play-recording equipment D.

Player's stand A

As shown in Figs. 1 and 2, the player's stand comprises, in the present instance, a low platform 12 which may simply be a board on the floor or ground, and on which a player must stand and go through the usual motions of a baseball player in pitching a baseball against the target C. Marked off or actually provided on the platform 12 is the usual rubber 14 with which a player's foot has to be in contact when pitching a baseball, the same as in conventional baseball.

Alley B

As best shown in Fig. 1, the alley B while being constructed to serve as a return chute 16 to the player's stand A for pitched baseballs that rebound from the target C, is nevertheless of a relatively low over-all height so as to approach as nearly as possible the level condition of a baseball field in front of the pitcher. In the present instance, a substantial length of the top surface 18 of the alley gradually inclines laterally toward one side of the alley in the fashion shown in Figs. 1 to 4, so that a baseball or baseballs rebounding from the target C will roll on said inclined top surface against a side board 26 and be guided by the latter toward and into a gutter 20 which extends to the player's stand A. Provided at or near the front of the inclined top surface 18 of the alley is a transversely extending upright rail 24 which will direct into the gutter 20 any baseball that has not previously rolled down the inclined top surface 18 and along the side board 26 into the gutter. The gutter 20 may, as shown in Fig. 3, be provided by the concaved top 28 of a block 30. The top 18 of the alley may conveniently be made of plastic sheeting or plywood which may readily be formed into the irregular shape shown and suitably secured at spaced intervals to blocks therebeneath (not shown). For pleasant appearance as well as for reinforcement purposes, the alley is at the side opposite the board 26 preferably provided with another side board 32. The gutter 20 is continued alongside the player's stand A as a baseball ramp 34, the gutter 20 gradually ascending at 36 to the level of the ramp 34 which a baseball will surmount when rolling under its own force through the chute 16 and the gutter 20. As usual, the ramp 34 is slightly inclined downwardly toward the rear, and is there provided with a stop lug 38 to prevent the baseballs *b* from rolling off the ramp. Since a home plate is symbolic of baseball, a simulation home plate 40 may be provided on the alley in front of the target C.

Target C

As best shown in Figs. 1, 2 and 6, the instant target C comprises a plurality of fields 42 most of which are, in simulation of the infield in actual baseball, arranged within a diamond 44. The over-all shape of the target C is rectangular, though the most prominent parts of the target are marked off within the diamond 44. The fields or areas 42 of the target are clearly marked, as by printing, with different characteristic plays in baseball. These plays may be marked "Home run," "Single," "Double," "Triple," "Bunt safe on 1st," "Fly out," "Foul fly out," etc.; also "S" for strike, "B" for ball, and "F" for foul.

Regardless of where a pitched baseball hits the target, the ball is to rebound therefrom and be returned in the chute 16 and gutter 20 to the ramp 34. Further, it is one of the major aspects of the instant game to have the various play fields 42 of the target individually yieldable under the impact of a pitched baseball, and to utilize the yielding play field for recording the particular play scored on the recording equipment D to be described. Accordingly, the over-all target area is plane, and the target is, in the present instance, formed by a more or less resilient sheet-like cover 46 over a plurality of pockets 48 in an upright target frame 50 (Figs. 5 and 8). The cover 46 may conveniently be clamped with its margins 52 to the forwardly extending head 54 of the frame 50 as at 53. The cover 46 is divided into the play-fields 42 by lines 56 which are imprinted or otherwise provided on the cover 46, and the latter is so attached to the target frame 50 that the fields 42 of the former line up with the pockets 48 in the latter. The pockets 48 in the target frame 50 are, in the present instance, provided by integral transverse ribs 58 (Figs. 5 and 8) against the forward ends of which the attached cover 46 bears. It may be preferable to interpose between the forward ends of the ribs 58 and the cover 46 any suitable shock-absorbing padding, such as rubber, for instance. Accordingly, the pocket-forming ribs 58 of the frame 50 not only localize to a large extent the vibrations set up in any playing field 42 hit by a pitched baseball, but also rapidly dampen the vibrations in the hit playing field. Suitably mounted in front of the target C is a net cage 60 which is adapted to direct rebounding baseballs from the target into the return chute 16.

Instead of having a single sheet cover 46 over all the pockets 48 in the target frame 50 (Fig. 8), each pocket 48 may be provided with a separate cover 46' (Fig. 14) which may be spread over a rectangular frame 47 and suitably secured in the open front end of the pocket.

Play-recording equipment D

Referring now to Figs. 1 and 2, there is shown a play recorder 61 which may be provided in any suitably constructed upright housing 62 ar-

ranged, in this instance, adjacent the player's stand A, and preferably alongside the ball ramp 34. The housing 62 is provided with a window opening 64 for the display of a preferably translucent play-recording panel 66 which is legibly divided into play-fields 42' that are arranged like the play-fields 42 of the target C and marked, as by printing, with the same baseball plays as the correspondingly arranged play-fields of the target C. Arranged in the housing 62 immediately behind the recorder pane 66 is a honeycomb-type frame 68 (Fig. 9) having pockets 70 which align with the various fields 42' on the pane 66.

The instant play-recording equipment further includes an upright frame 72 which is located immediately behind the target frame 50 (Figs. 7 and 8) and mounted independently of the latter so as not to be subjected to whatever shock or vibration the target frame is subjected by virtue of the impact of a pitched baseball on the target thereon. The frame 72 is, in the present instance, provided with a plurality of forwardly extending lugs 74 which project into the various pockets 48, respectively, in the target frame 50, and carry preferably adjustable brackets 76, respectively, each serving as a mounting for a normally open snap switch 78 of which the actuator arm 80 extends into close proximity to the resilient target C. Each bracket 76 may, for its adjustable mounting on the adjacent lug 74 of the frame 72, be provided with spaced bolts 82 which extend through an elongated slot 84 in said lug and receive wing-type nuts 86. In order that each switch 78 on the frame 72 may readily be accessible in the respective pocket 48 in the target frame 50, the rear web 90 of the frame 72 is adjacent each pocket 48 in the target frame 50 provided with an aperture 92 (Figs. 7 and 8).

The switch 78 in any pocket 48 in the target frame 50 is adapted to be closed momentarily by the adjacent target field 42 when the latter yields under the impact of a baseball pitched thereagainst by a player on the stand A. Associated with each switch 78 is a light bulb 94 in the corresponding pocket 70 in the recorder housing 62. To this end, there is provided in the recorder housing 62 a mounting board 96 (Fig. 9) for electric sockets 98 which project into the respective pockets 70 and receive the light bulbs 94 in illuminating relation with the adjacent fields 42' on the translucent recorder pane 66. Each switch 78 behind the target C is, as hereinafter described, in circuit with the associated light bulb 94 in the recorder housing 62, and is adapted to initiate, on momentary closure, the lighting of said bulb and, hence, the illumination of the corresponding field 42' on the recorder pane 66, for a sufficient length of time to afford the player or players the opportunity to note the scored play without giving rise to any dispute thereover.

The target C may be made of any suitable slightly resilient material such as certain treated animal skins, certain plastics, rubber with or without fabric reinforcement, etc. By way of example, a satisfactory target material has been found in calfskin of the type used for heads of percussion drums. This skin, which is only slightly resilient, may be stretched in wetted condition over the target frame 50 and clamped or otherwise secured in place thereon while still wet, so that the skin becomes fairly taut after drying and will yield not very considerably even when hit by a very fast baseball. Thus, in the case where the target C is made of this or a similar kind of animal skin, the switches 78 are preferably so adjusted on the frame 72 that their actuating arms 80 are very near the target, or actually engage the latter as shown in Fig. 8.

Reference is now had to the wiring diagram in Fig. 12 in which the circuits of the play-recording light bulbs 94 and their associated switches 78 are illustrated. Inasmuch as the target C and the recorder pane 66 are each divided, in the present instance into fifty-three fields, and there is a light bulb 94 provided for each field on the recorder pane 66, and since the circuits of all light bulbs 94 are identical, only one-half of these circuits are shown in Fig. 12 for the sake of brevity of the wiring diagrams, it being understood that the wiring diagram as shown in Fig. 12 is to be duplicated on the other side of the dot-and-dash line 100 in order to show the circuits of all light bulbs 94. Since the circuits of all light bulbs are identical, a detailed description of a single one of these circuits will suffice for an understanding of all circuits involved. Thus, the circuit of the bulb 94a (Fig. 12) includes the snap switch 78, a lead 102 which connects one pole of the switch 78 with one side 104 of an electric power line, a lead 106 which connects the other pole of the switch 78' with the other side 108 of the electric power line. Interposed in the lead 106 is the light bulb 94a. Branching from the lead 106 is a lead 110 which is connected with the side 108 of the electric power line, and in which is interposed a normally open holding switch 112 that is under the control of a relay 114'. The relay 114' is interposed in a lead 116 which branches from the lead 110 and is connected with a lead 118 common to the relays 114 of the circuits of all light bulbs 94. Branching from the lead 118 and connected with the side 108 of the electric power line is a lead 120 in which is interposed a time-delay switch 122. The switch 122 is preferably of any of several well known adjustable types to permit variation of the duration of each closure thereof from the moment current passes therethrough, the switch 122 being in the present instance diagrammatically illustrated as a thermostat-type switch. The snap switch 78 and the leads 102 and 106 form a starting circuit for the light bulb 94a which is momentarily closed on momentary closure of the switch 78. The lead 110 with the interposed relay-controlled switch 112 together with the lead 106 form a holding circuit for the light bulb 94a, said holding circuit being closed immediately on closure of the above-mentioned starting circuit, and remaining closed until the circuit of the relay 114' is opened by the time-delay switch 122, as will be readily understood. Hence, the bulb 94a will, on momentary closure of the associated snap switch 78, become lighted, and will remain lighted for a period of time for which the delay switch 122 is adjusted.

Since the baseball plays denoted on the target C are those commonly occurring in actual baseball, the instant game may be played in much the same manner as actual baseball insofar as the plays are concerned. Thus, a group of players may agree on a nine inning game, and divide into opposing teams of which the players will alternate in pitching baseballs in the instant game. The rules of the instant game may be promulgated in accordance with actual baseball rules, such as three outs for one half of each

inning, three strikes for an out, four balls for a walk, a home run to sweep all occupied bases home, etc. In thus playing the instant game according to these rules, any team of players may use pet strategy in the course of the game in much the same manner in which a manager of a baseball team has the latter perform according to his pet strategy.

While in the baseball game hereinbefore described no provisions were made for a visual indication of a scored play on the target C itself, the modified game arrangement shown in Figs. 10 and 11 has provisions for the visual indication of a scored play directly on the target C in addition to its indication on the recorder pane 66. Thus, in the modified game arrangement of Figs. 10 and 11, there is provided in each pocket 48' in the target frame 50' an electric light bulb 130 in a socket 132 on an extension 134 of the lug 74 that projects into said pocket 48'. As shown in Fig. 13, each of the bulbs 130 is in series connection with the corresponding bulb 94 in the recorder housing 62 so that these bulbs are simultaneously lighted on closure of the corresponding snap switch 78'. Of course, the target C is, in this instance, made of translucent sheet material. By way of example, the hereinbefore-mentioned drum-head type of skin meets this requirement.

It follows from the preceding that the instant baseball game is not only highly amusing to a player or players and can be played in much the same manner as actual baseball insofar as rules and plays are concerned, but requires for the successful execution of a desired play considerable skill on the part of any player commensurate with that of a pitcher in actual baseball. Thus, by dimensioning the target of the instant game so that its marked play-fields are clearly discernible from the player's stand, yet its over-all area is nevertheless relatively small, a player is compelled to pitch a baseball with substantially the same accuracy as an actual baseball pitcher in order to hit the target in or near the intended play-field thereof. Further, in providing the target at a relatively low level, a player is compelled to pitch a baseball from much the same stance as that assumed by a player when pitching a ball to the batter in actual baseball. Hence, the instant game is especially adapted for training purposes insofar as pitching baseballs is concerned. Thus, besides being suitable for installation, indoors or outdoors, in public or private places for the amusement and training of the interested public in general, the instant baseball game has specific merit for training purposes in organized baseball, as well as for the amusement and exercise of military personnel in governmental establishments, including military hospitals.

The invention may be carried out in other specific ways than those herein set forth without departing from the spirit and essential characteristics of the invention, and the present embodiments are, therefore, to be considered in all respects as illustrative and not restrictive, and all changes coming within the meaning and equivalency range of the appended claims are intended to be embraced therein.

I claim:

1. In a target baseball game, the combination of an upright target comprising a first upright frame provided with a plurality of laterally adjacent pockets having open front ends, respectively, and opening in the respective rear ends thereof, and a resilient sheet cover of animal skin of the drumhead type over the open front end of each pocket, said covers being marked with differential baseball plays and yielding under the impact of baseballs pitched thereagainst; another frame located behind and mounted independently of said first frame out of impact transmission from the latter, said other frame having mountings adjacent said openings in said pockets, respectively, of said first frame; and play-recording means including electric instrumentalities on said mountings, respectively, extending into said pockets, respectively, into close proximity to said covers thereon, any of said instrumentalities being operated by the cover on the associated pocket when yielding under the impact of a pitched baseball to render said recording means operative.

2. The combination in a target baseball game as set forth in claim 1, in which said covers are formed by a continuous sheet of animal skin of the drumhead type bearing against said open front ends of said pockets in said first frame.

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