

(12) **Patent Application Publication**
Marold et al.

(43) **Pub. Date:** **Aug. 28, 2008**

Publication Classification

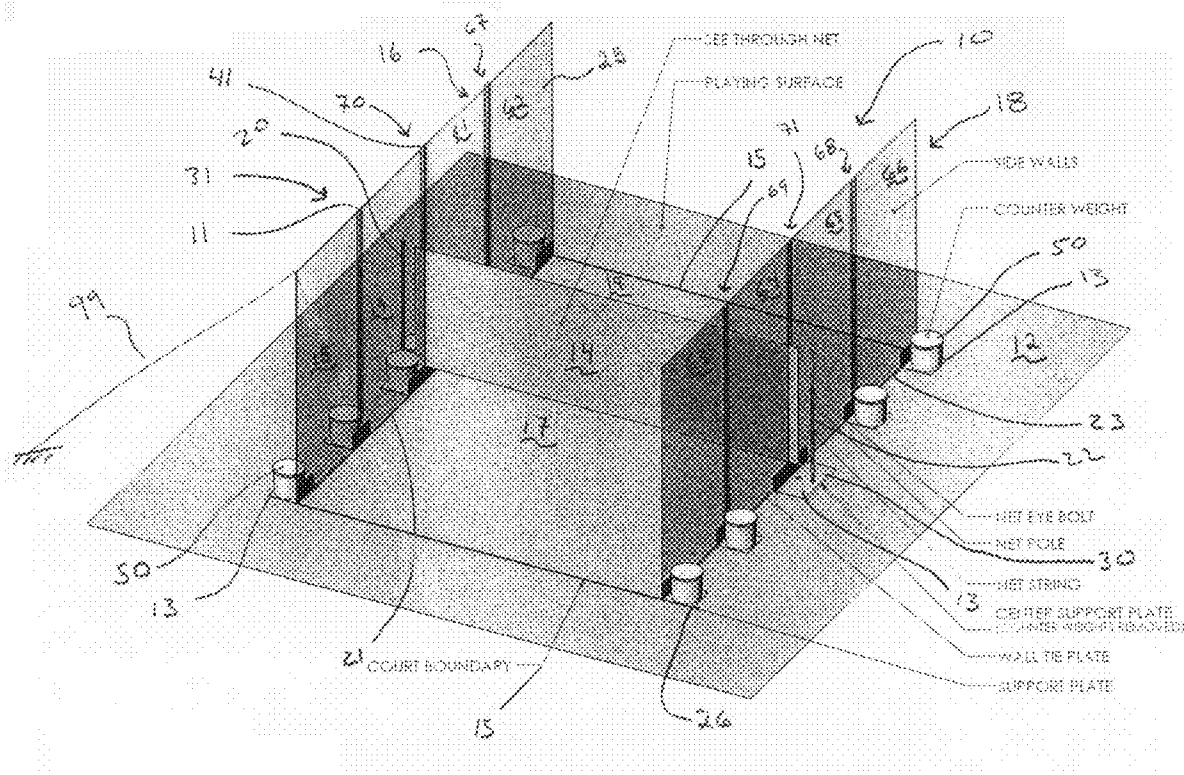
(51) **Int. Cl.**
A63B 67/00 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.** 473/473

(57) **ABSTRACT**

An apparatus for playing a game of footbag is disclosed. In one embodiment, the apparatus includes a playing surface, a net, a first side wall, and a second sidewall. The net, together with the first and second sidewalls, divides the playing surface into first and second playing zones. A court boundary provides the rear-most ends of the first and second playing zones. The net is supported in substantially vertical position by a first support post and a second support post. The first and second support posts, together with the first and second sidewalls, are held in place by a series of support brackets and counterweights that are spaced along opposing first and second sides of the court.

(22) Filed: **Feb. 22, 2007**



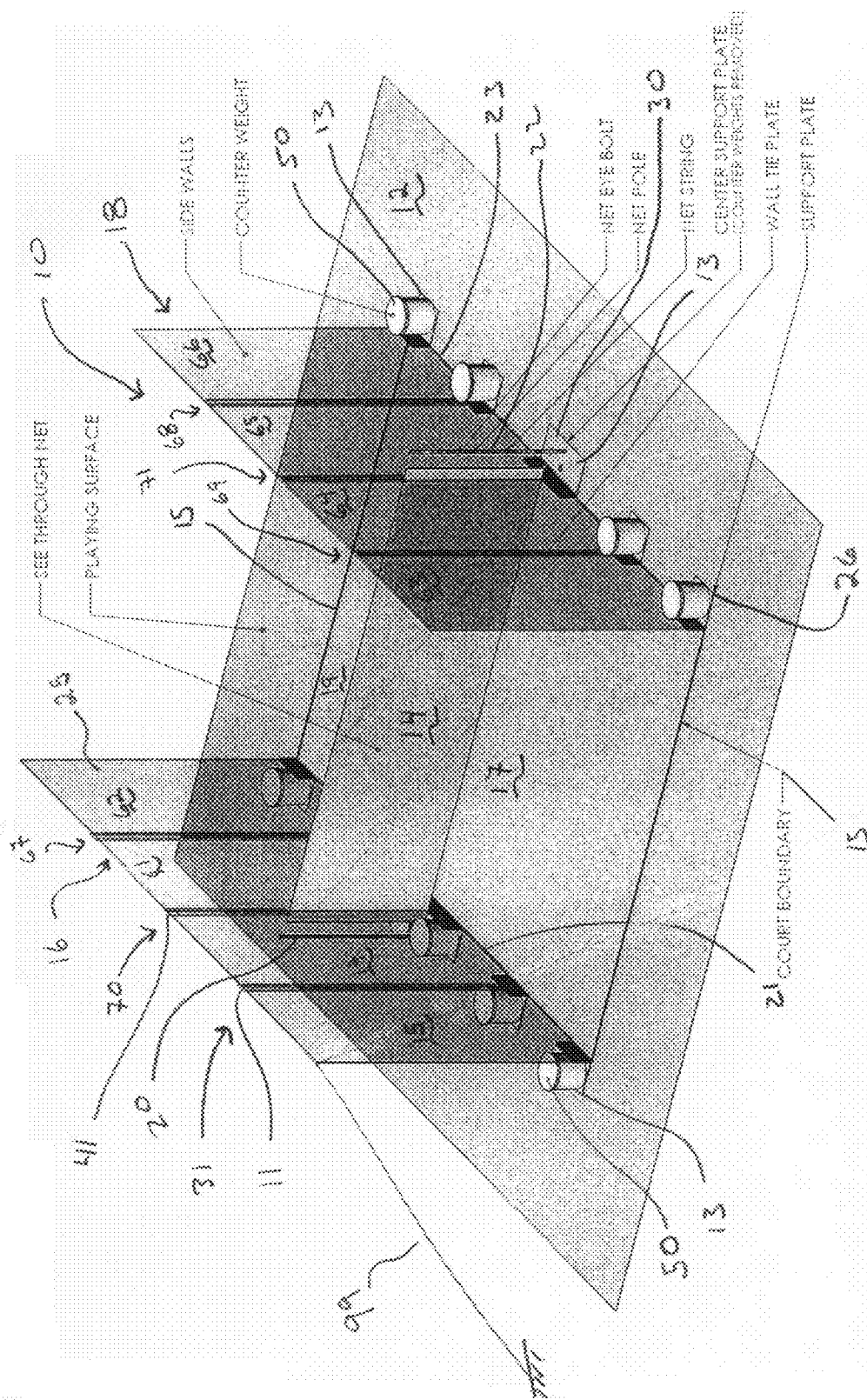
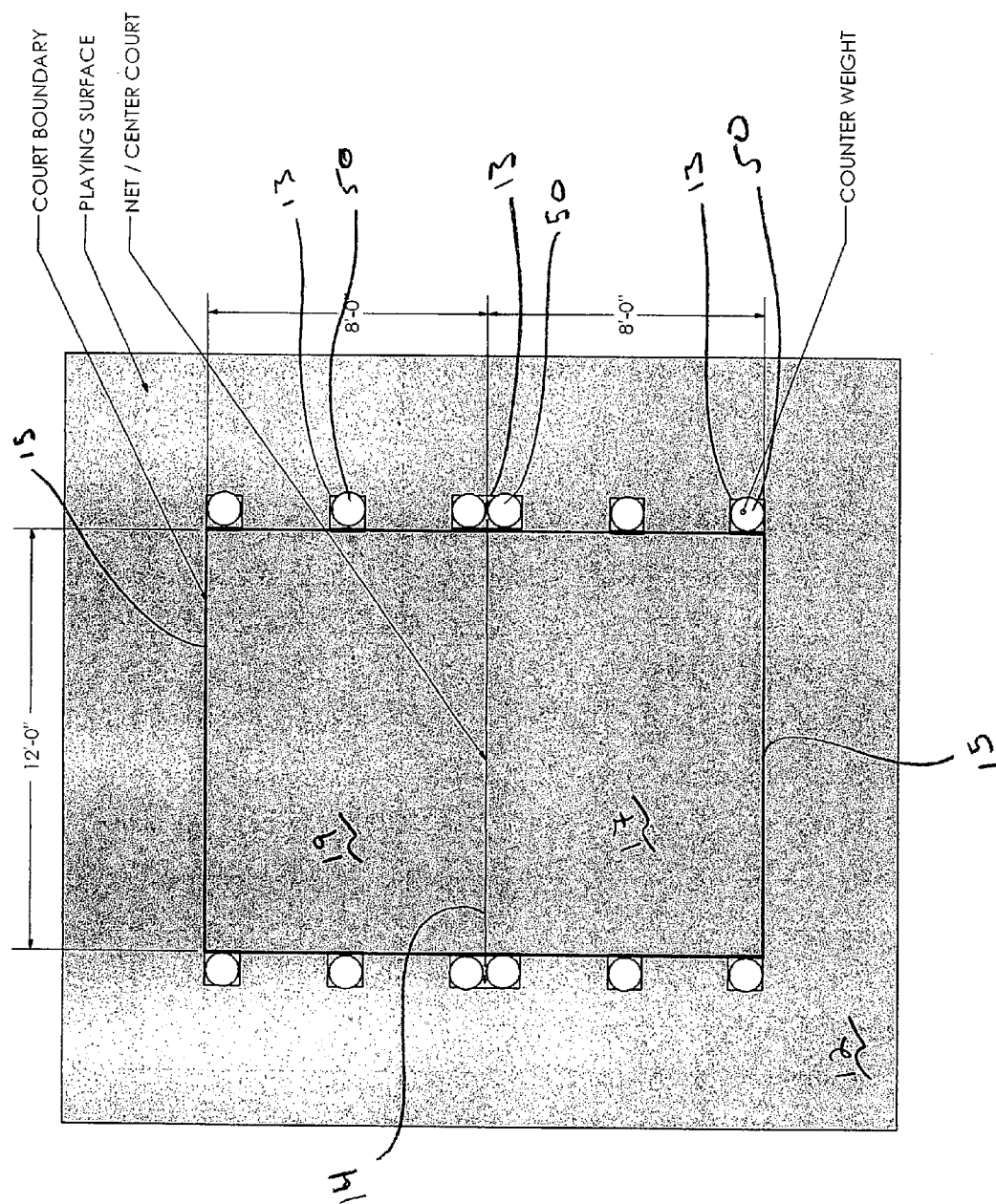
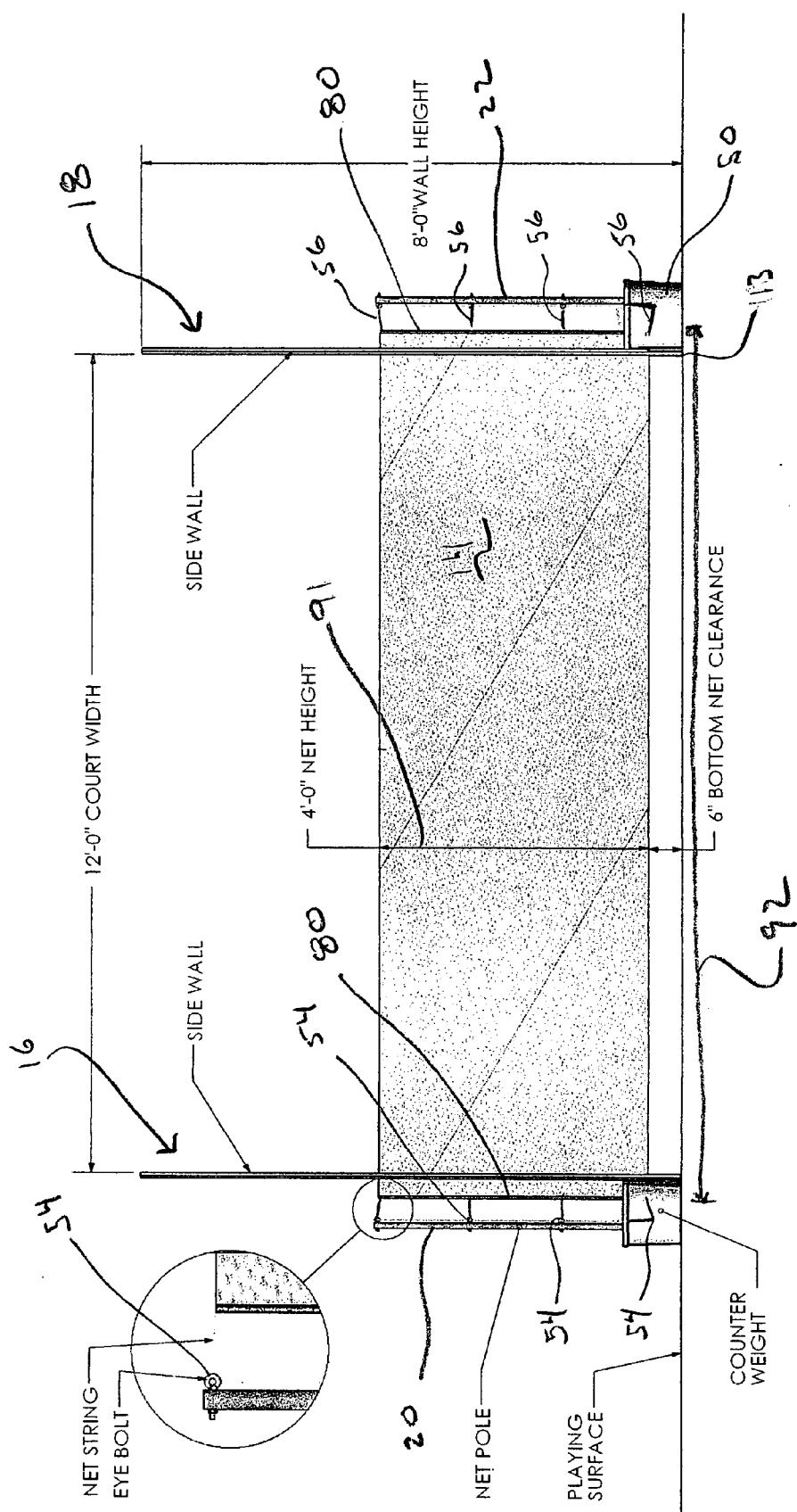


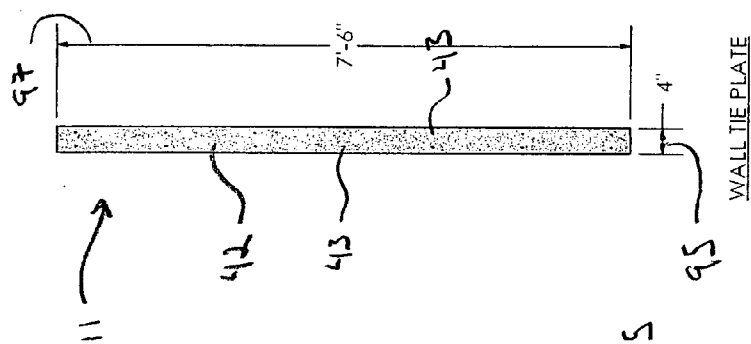
Fig. 1



2
First



M	10
1	1

WALL TIE PLATE

4-5-2

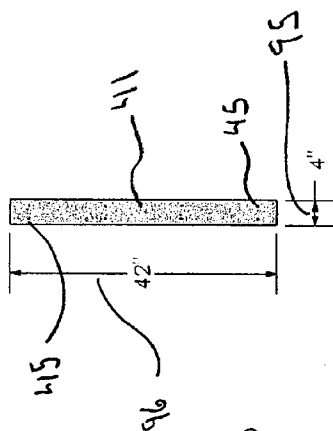
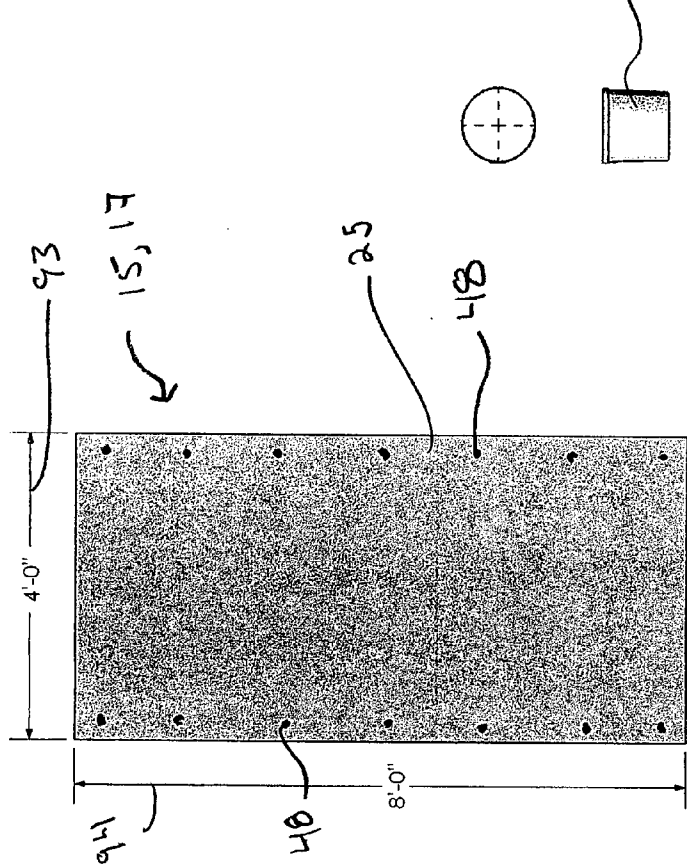
WALL TIE PLATE

Fig 5A



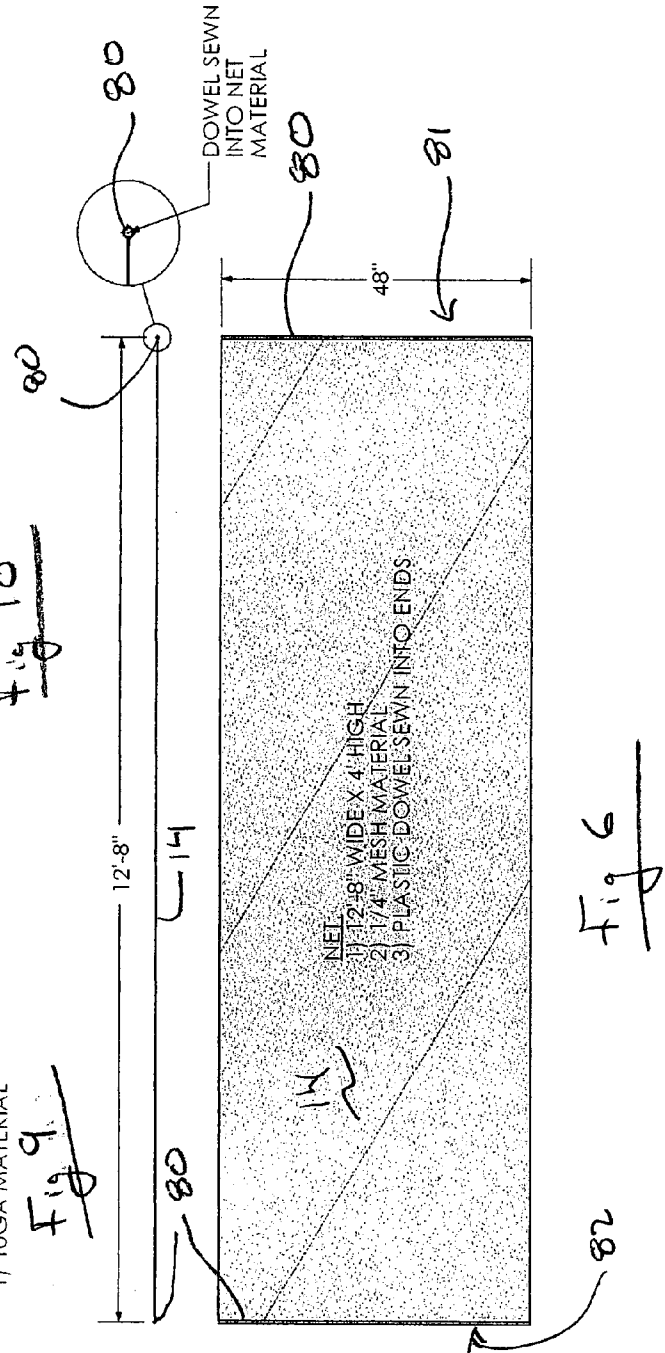
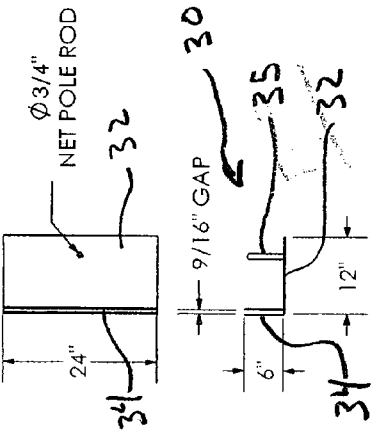
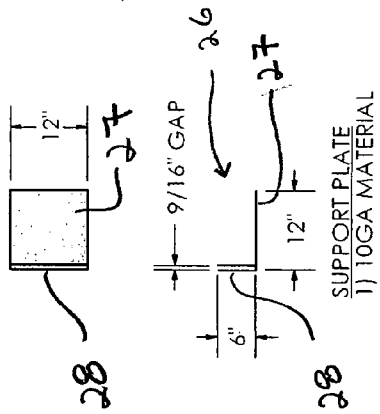
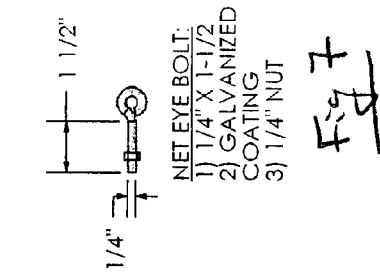
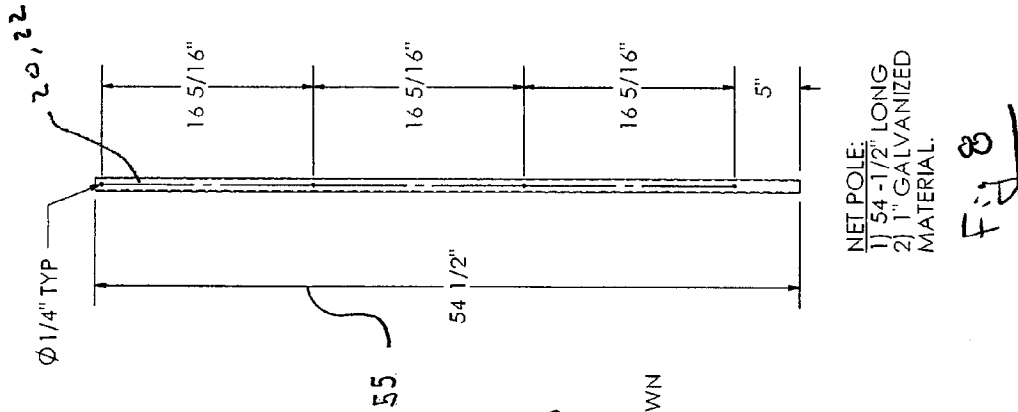
COUNTER WEIGHT

- 1) 3-5 GAL
CAPACITY
2) SAND OR WATER
FILLED

11



NET STRING:
1)BRAIDED NYLON



FOOTBAG GAME APPARATUS

TECHNICAL FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates to footbag or hackbag games and, more particularly, to footbag or hackbag games adapted to be played on a court having a net and opposing pair of side walls.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] Various games based on footbags have evolved over the years since 1972, the year in which the first footbag (a/k/a hackysack or hackbag) is believed to have been introduced in Oregon City, Oreg., by John Stalberger and Mike Marshall. Two of the more common games are referred to as circle kick and footbag net. According to www.wikipedia.org, for example, circle kick is the most common game played with a footbag. Players stand in a circle and keep the footbag moving around the circle, without the footbag touching the ground or a player's hands. Variations in circle kick arise through different means and manner in scoring or the number of permissible kicks during the time that each player possesses the footbag. In footbag net, players (either alone or with a partner) move a footbag back and forth across a five-foot-high net. Also according to www.wikipedia.org, footbag net combines elements of tennis, badminton and volleyball. Specifically, the court dimensions and layout are similar to those of badminton; the scoring is similar to that used in volleyball, where a player must be serving to score; and serves must be cross-court diagonal, as in tennis. Similar to circle kick, variations in footbag net arise through different means and manner in scoring or the number of permissible kicks during the time that each player (or team) possesses the footbag.

[0003] One embodiment of footbag net is disclosed by U.S. Pat. No. 5,692,980 (Trotman). Specifically, Trotman discloses a set of rules and an apparatus. The apparatus includes a court boundary marker and a net dividing the court into two team zones. The net includes pairs of support poles and inflatable conical-shaped bases for receiving the support poles and maintaining them in a vertical orientation for tensioning and supporting the net. Similar embodiments are disclosed in various footbag informational websites, such as, for example, www.efootbag.com and www.footbag.org. While the game of footbag net appears well recognized among the footbag playing community, enhancements or improvements to both the game and apparatuses for playing the game appear non-existent or limited. The disclosure herein, however, provides an enhancement and improvement to the game of footbag net, and results in a game and apparatus that requires a higher level of skill and stamina to play than the more traditional games of footbag net and circle kick, or games of similar import.

[0004] More specifically, the disclosure herein provides an apparatus that enables division of a substantially flat playing surface into at least two playing zones separated by a net and having side walls positioned substantially perpendicular to both the net and playing surface. The opposing side walls provide reaction surfaces that players may use to outwit players on the opposing team. More specifically, the footbag may be directed at and angled off one of the first and second side walls into the court of the opposing team. This mode of play is in contrast to the more conventional style of play that

requires the footbag be maintained inside an imaginary boundary running perpendicular to both the net and playing surface.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0005] An apparatus for playing a game of footbag is disclosed. In one embodiment, the apparatus includes a playing surface that is essentially rectangular in shape. A net divides the playing surface into a pair of open ended playing zones. Opposing first and second side walls are positioned adjacent first and second ends of the net, and provide a pair of reaction surfaces that players may use in getting the footbag from one playing zone to the other. The net, together with the first and second sidewalls, divides the playing surface into first and second square or rectangular playing zones. A court boundary provides the rear-most ends of the first and second playing zones. The net is supported in substantially vertical position by a first support post and a second support post. The first and second support posts, together with the first and second sidewalls, are held in place by a series of support brackets and counterweights that are spaced along opposing first and second sides of the court.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0006] FIG. 1 illustrates a perspective view of one embodiment of the court apparatus of the present invention;
[0007] FIG. 2 illustrates an overhead view of one embodiment of the court apparatus of the present invention;
[0008] FIG. 3 illustrates a side view of one embodiment of the net and supporting structure of the present invention;
[0009] FIG. 4 illustrates a frontal view of a side-wall panel of the present invention;
[0010] FIG. 5A illustrates a frontal view of a first tie plate of the present invention;
[0011] FIG. 5B illustrates a frontal view of a second tie plate of the present invention;
[0012] FIG. 6 illustrates a further view of one embodiment of the net and supporting structure of the present invention;
[0013] FIG. 7 illustrates a side view of an eye-bolt fastener of the present invention;
[0014] FIG. 8 illustrates a side view of a net support post of the present invention;
[0015] FIG. 9 illustrates side and overhead views of one embodiment of a first support bracket of the present invention;
[0016] FIG. 10 illustrates side and overhead views of one embodiment of a second support bracket of the present invention; and
[0017] FIG. 11 illustrates side and overhead views of one embodiment of a counterweight of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0018] Generally, the present invention relates to an enhanced and improved apparatus and method for playing footbag and related games. Referring to FIGS. 1 through 3, for example, one embodiment of the invention includes a footbag net and court apparatus 10. The footbag net and court apparatus 10 includes a playing surface 12, a net 14, a first side wall 16, and a second sidewall 18. The net 14, together with the first and second sidewalls 16, 18 divides the playing surface 12 into first and second playing zones 17, 19. A court boundary 15 provides the rear-most ends of the first and second playing zones 17, 19. The net 14 is supported in

substantially vertical position by a first support post **20** and a second support post **22**. The first and second support posts **20**, **22**, together with the first and second sidewalls **16**, **18**, are held in place by a series of support brackets **13** and counterweights **50** that are spaced along opposing first and second sides **21**, **23** of the court. Further details of various embodiments of the above identified components of the present invention, together with various methods of assembly and play, are now provided herein.

[0019] Referring still to FIG. **1**, the first and second sidewalls **16**, **18** are positioned substantially vertically at the opposing first and second sides **21**, **23** of the court. In one embodiment, both the first and second sidewalls **16**, **18** include four side-wall panels **25**. Although the side-wall panels **25** are contemplated as being sized variously to suit particular modes of play—e.g., a suitable panel size for children might be relatively smaller than for adults—in a preferred embodiment, the side-panels **25** are approximately four feet wide by eight feet high in planar dimension and about one-half inch thick. The side-wall panels **25** are preferably constructed using Plexiglas, which is transparent for sight, but other materials—e.g., plywood—are equally suitable.

[0020] Referring now to FIGS. **1**, **4** and **5A** and **B**, a means of fastening the side-wall panels **25** to one another is illustrated. Specifically, in one embodiment, the side-wall panels **25** are fastened together using a series of tie plates **41**, **42**. In a preferred embodiment, the tie plates **41**, **42** are sized in length to cover the length of the intersection (or lengthwise joint) between adjoining side-wall panels **25**. Referring to FIG. **1**, for example, two side-wall panels **15**, **17** are illustrated as being fastened together at a lengthwise joint **31** using a tie plate **11**. Referring specifically to FIGS. **4** and **5B**, one means of fastening the side-wall panels **15**, **17** is provided. Specifically, and by way of example, the tie plate **11** includes a strip of metal or Plexiglas having a series of holes **43** drilled through its thickness from one face to another along two lengthwise sides. In corresponding fashion, holes **48** are drilled and positioned at opposing sides of the side-wall panels **15**, **17** from one face to another along adjoining lengthwise sides. In one embodiment, the holes **48** drilled through the side-wall panels **15**, **17** are countersunk to receive flathead screws or bolts therein and thereby maintain a smooth playing surface along the lengthwise joint **31**. The lengthwise joint **31** is assembled first by positioning the two side-wall panels **15**, **17** adjacent one another. The tie plate **11** is then positioned adjacent the intersection of the adjacent side-wall panels **15**, **17** on the side of the side wall **16** opposite the playing zone **17**. When properly positioned, the holes **43** in the tie plate **11** will align with the holes **48** in the two side-wall panels **15**, **17**. Flathead screws or bolts are then inserted through the holes **43**, **48** and securely tightened using a threaded nut.

[0021] The foregoing description applies equally to similar lengthwise joints—e.g., lengthwise joints **67**, **68**, **69** fastening, respectively, pairs of side-wall panels **61**, **62** and **63**, **64** and **65**, **66**. A modified tie plate **41** may, however, be used at the lengthwise joints appearing above the net **14**—e.g., lengthwise joints **70**, **71** fastening, respectively, side-wall panels **17**, **61** and **64**, **65**. The modified—i.e., shortened—version of the tie-plate **41** accounts for the shortened length of the lengthwise joints **70**, **71** due to the presence of the net **14** beneath the respective tie-plates **41**. Similar to the lengthwise joints discussed above—e.g., lengthwise joint **31**—the modified (or shortened) tie plate **41** includes a strip of metal or Plexiglas having a series of holes **45** drilled through its thick-

ness from one face to another along two lengthwise sides. The lengthwise joint—e.g., lengthwise joint **70**—is assembled first by positioning the two side-wall panels **17**, **61** adjacent one another. The tie plate **41** is then positioned adjacent the intersection of the adjacent side-wall panels **17**, **61** on the side of the side wall **16** opposite the playing zones **17**, **19**. When properly positioned, the holes **45** in the tie plate **41** will align with the holes **48** in the two side-wall panels **17**, **61**. Flathead screws or bolts are then inserted through the holes **45**, **48** and securely tightened using a threaded nut. Alternatives to the tie plates **41**, **42** above described include, for example, a plurality of relatively short tie panels (say, each being one foot long) that are spaced—either together or apart from one another—along the intersections of the various side-wall panels and secured using screws as above described.

[0022] As stated above, a net **14** divides the playing surface **12** into first and second playing zones **17**, **19**. The net may be constructed using various embodiments that are known to those having skill in the art of the game footbag net. Examples include the apparatuses described or disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 5,692,980 (Trotman) and the websites www.efootbag.com and www.footbag.org, the disclosures of which are incorporated herein by reference. A preferred embodiment of a net apparatus for the present invention is, however, described and disclosed below. Referring now particularly to FIGS. **1**, **3** and **6**, the net **14** is illustrated being held in position by the first and second support posts **20**, **22**. In a preferred embodiment, however, the net **14** is comprised of one-quarter inch mesh material—e.g., nylon—having plastic dowels **80** sewn into the net **14** at each of the ends **81**, **82**. As illustrated in FIGS. **3**, **7** and **8**, a series of eye-bolts **54** are spaced along the length **55** of each support post **20**, **22**. A net string **56** of braided nylon is threaded or secured to each eye-bolt **54** at one end and attached to the dowel **80** at the other end. The net **14** is tensioned appropriately by the spacing of the support posts **20**, **22** apart from one another.

[0023] In a preferred embodiment, the first and second side walls **16**, **18** and the first and second support posts **20**, **22** are held in upright position by a series of support brackets **13** and counterweights **50** that are spaced along opposing first and second sides **21**, **23** of the court. More specifically, a series of first support brackets **26** support adjoining side-wall panels **25** at each intersection not adjacent the net **14**—i.e., lengthwise joints **31**, **67**, **68**, **69**—and at the rearmost court boundaries **15**. In similar fashion, a pair of second support brackets **30** support adjoining side-wall panels **25** at the intersections adjacent the net **14**—i.e., lengthwise joints **70**, **71**—and also support the two support posts **20**, **22** positioned adjacent the net **14**. One embodiment of the first **26** and second **30** support brackets is illustrated, respectively, in FIGS. **9** and **10**. Specifically, the first support brackets **26** include a base plate **27** and a pair of upwardly extending side plates **28**. The base plate **27** of each outer support bracket **26** is about twelve inches square and configured to lay on the playing surface **12** (or on the ground in the event a playing surface **12** is not used). The pair of upwardly extending side plates **28** are spaced apart a distance sufficient for the side-wall panel **25** to snugly slide into removable engagement between the side plates **28**. Where the side-wall panels **25** are one-half inch thick, the spacing between side plates **28** is preferably about nine-sixteenths inch. In one embodiment, the outer support brackets **26** are constructed using steel, but other materials—e.g., aluminum, Plexiglas or plywood—are equally suitable. If desired, one or more holes may be drilled through the side

plates **28** and sidewall panels **25** to receive a bolt (not illustrated) that may itself be secured with a nut to more-tightly secure the side-wall panels **25** to corresponding outer support bracket **26**.

[0024] The second support brackets **30** share many of the features of the first support brackets **26** just described. For example, the second support bracket **30** includes a base plate **32** and a pair of upwardly extending side plates **34**. The base plate **32** for the second support bracket **30** is preferably about twelve by twenty-four inches in shape, or about twice the length of the just described first support brackets **26**. In similar fashion, the side plates **34** are also about twenty-four inches long, extend upwardly about six inches and are spaced to snugly receive the side wall panels **25**. In addition, the second support brackets **30** include a rod member **35** that is sized and configured to receive and maintain in upright position a corresponding one of the first and second support posts **20**, **22**. In one embodiment, the rod member **35** is about six inches in length and has a diameter about three-quarter inch, which corresponds to an inside diameter of the first and second support posts **20**, **22** also being about three-quarter inch. Both the first and second support brackets **26**, **30** are weighed down by a series of counterweights **50** (see, for example, FIGS. 1 and 11). Each counterweight **50** is, preferably, a plastic bucket of three to five gallon capacity being filled with sand, stones or water.

[0025] As one having skill in the art will appreciate, several embodiments of the foregoing components exhibiting varying dimensions and materials of construction are possible. In one embodiment, however, the following dimensions and materials of construction are preferred and considered to work well with each other. The playing surface **12** is about twenty-four feet square and constructed of plastic sheet or polyurethane material. The playing surface may, however, consist of nothing more than grass or sand or some other suitable playing surface—indoor or outdoor—that is suitable for vigorous exercise, including jumping and fast side-to-side movements. The net **14** is about four feet in height **91** and about thirteen feet in length **92** and constructed using quarter inch mesh nylon material. The side-wall panels **25** are about four feet in width **93** and about eight feet in height **94** and are constructed using one-half inch Plexiglas. The tie plates **41**, **42** are about four inches in width **95**, and, respectively, about forty-two inches and about ninety inches in length **96**, **97**, and are constructed from one-half inch Plexiglas. The first and second support brackets **26**, **30** are dimensioned as described above and constructed from a mild steel or aluminum material having a thickness of about three-eighth inch. The first and second support posts **20**, **22** are about fifty-five inches and constructed from galvanized one inch tube. The base of the support posts **20**, **22** are hollow (as well as the entire support posts may be) having inside diameter about three-quarter inch to coincide with the same outside diameter for the support rod **35**. The counter weights **50** are plastic five-gallon pails filled with sand, rocks or water.

[0026] The steps of assembling the footbag net and court apparatus **10** are equally as varied as the dimensions and materials of construction that may be used for the various components that comprise the apparatus **10**. Nevertheless, preferred steps are to lay out the playing surface **12**, either on the ground or on some other suitable surface, or to simply mark a suitable playing region if no playing surface **12** is required or otherwise used. The net **14** and related assembly components—e.g., the pair of second support brackets **30** and

counterweights **50**—are then set up, with the net being properly tensioned. Pairs of side-panels **25** are then joined at the intersections—e.g., lengthwise joints **11**, **67**, **68**, **69**—using the tie plates **42** and related hardware (nuts and bolts). The series of first support brackets **26** and counterweights **50** are then positioned along the opposing first and second sides **21**, **23** of the court. The fastened pairs of side-wall panel assemblies are then removably secured with the series of upwardly extending side plates **28**, **34** that are included with the first and second support brackets **26**, **30**. Finally, the assembled pairs of side-wall panels are fastened at the remaining two intersections adjacent the net—i.e., lengthwise joints **70**, **71**. The assembled apparatus **10** exhibits a pair of opposing side walls **16**, **18** that enable additional playing surfaces for additional complexity in playing footbag-based games. If desired, the first and second opposing side walls **16**, **18** may be secured further using a series of guy wires (or rope) **99** extending from one or more points of the side walls **16**, **18** to the ground or other suitable points of attachment.

Basic Rules of the Game

[0027] While rules of the game are varied, a preferred set of rules for use with the present invention follows:

[0028] Games—Games are played to eleven points, and a team must win two of three games to win a set and match.

[0029] Scoring—Points are scored by the serving team only when the footbag lands inbounds on the opposing team's court.

[0030] Play—The footbag can be played with any part of the body excluding hands and arms (as with soccer), and a footbag hitting an opponent's hands or an extended arm will result in a side out. The footbag cannot be trapped against a wall; rather, to maintain play, the footbag must make a clean bounce off the wall. The footbag may be hit an unlimited amount of times by any team player before being returned over the net to the opponent side. A player may also play the footbag off the net to gain control or pass the footbag to another team member, and a player may use their head to spike the footbag over the net. However, at no time may a player touch the net with any part of the body.

[0031] Serving—A server must remain behind the back baseline when serving the footbag over the net. A teammate of the server tosses with his or her hand the footbag to the server who must then serve the footbag over the net using his or her foot. The server may use a side wall in serving the footbag.

[0032] Footbag—The footbag(s) comes in a multitude of diameters, weights and fill materials and skin covers. Any such footbag may be used if agreed upon by both teams. A recommended footbag in production today is Manuel's Sandbag manufactured in Guatemala, U.S. Des. Pat. No. 386-230.

[0033] While certain embodiments and details have been included herein and in the attached invention disclosure for purposes of illustrating the invention, it will be apparent to those skilled in the art that various changes in the methods and apparatuses disclosed herein may be made without departing from the scope of the invention, which is defined in the appended claims.

What is claimed is:

1. An apparatus for playing team footbag on a playing surface defining a court boundary, comprising:
 - a net extending across the playing surface and dividing the court boundary into two playing zones;
 - a first side wall positioned substantially perpendicular to a first end of the net; and

a second side wall positioned substantially perpendicular to a second end of the net.

2. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the playing surface is selected from the group consisting of grass, sand, pavement and hardwood flooring.

3. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the court boundary is rectangular in shape, having opposing first and second sides.

4. The apparatus of claim 3, wherein the first side wall aligns with the opposing first side and wherein the second side wall aligns with the opposing second side.

5. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the first side wall includes a plurality of side panels.

6. The apparatus of claim 5, wherein each side panel of the plurality of side panels is a Plexiglas sheet.

7. The apparatus of claim 5, further comprising a plurality of tie plates sized and configured to interconnect the plurality of side panels into a rectangular side wall.

8. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the first side wall is positioned substantially vertical with respect to the playing surface.

9. The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a plurality of support brackets sized and configured to position the first side wall in substantially vertical orientation with respect to the playing surface.

10. The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a support post fastened to one end of the net.

11. The apparatus of claim 10, further comprising a support bracket having a rod member extending upwardly therefrom, the rod member being sized and configured to removably receive one end of the support post.

12. An apparatus for playing team footbag on a playing surface defining a rectangular court boundary, comprising:

a net extending across the playing surface and dividing the court boundary into two playing zones;

a first side wall positioned substantially perpendicular to a first end of the net, the first side wall further comprising a plurality of side-wall panels interconnected by a plurality of tie plates;

a second side wall positioned substantially perpendicular to a second end of the net, the second side wall further comprising a plurality of side-wall panels interconnected by a plurality of tie plates;

a first plurality of support brackets sized and configured to support the first side wall in substantially vertical orientation with respect to the playing surface; and

a second plurality of support brackets sized and configured to support the second side wall in substantially vertical orientation with respect to the playing surface.

13. The apparatus of claim 12, wherein each support bracket includes an outwardly extending base member having a counterweight positioned thereon.

14. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the first side wall is held in position by one or more guy wire assemblies.

15. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the first side wall has a base portion adjacent the playing surface, and wherein the base portion is held in position by a series of stake members secured to the playing surface.

16. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the net is formed in an elongated rectangular shape and aligned substantially vertically.

17. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the net is constructed of a web-like material sufficient to prevent passage of the footbag there through.

18. The apparatus of claim 1, further including a first footbag for play.

19. The apparatus of claim 19, further including a second footbag for simultaneous dual-footbag play.

20. The apparatus of claim 19, wherein the first footbag has a first color and the second footbag has a second color distinguishable from the first color.

* * * * *