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(54) **GOAL POST AND PLAYING FIELD GAME
PIECES**

Related U.S. Application Data

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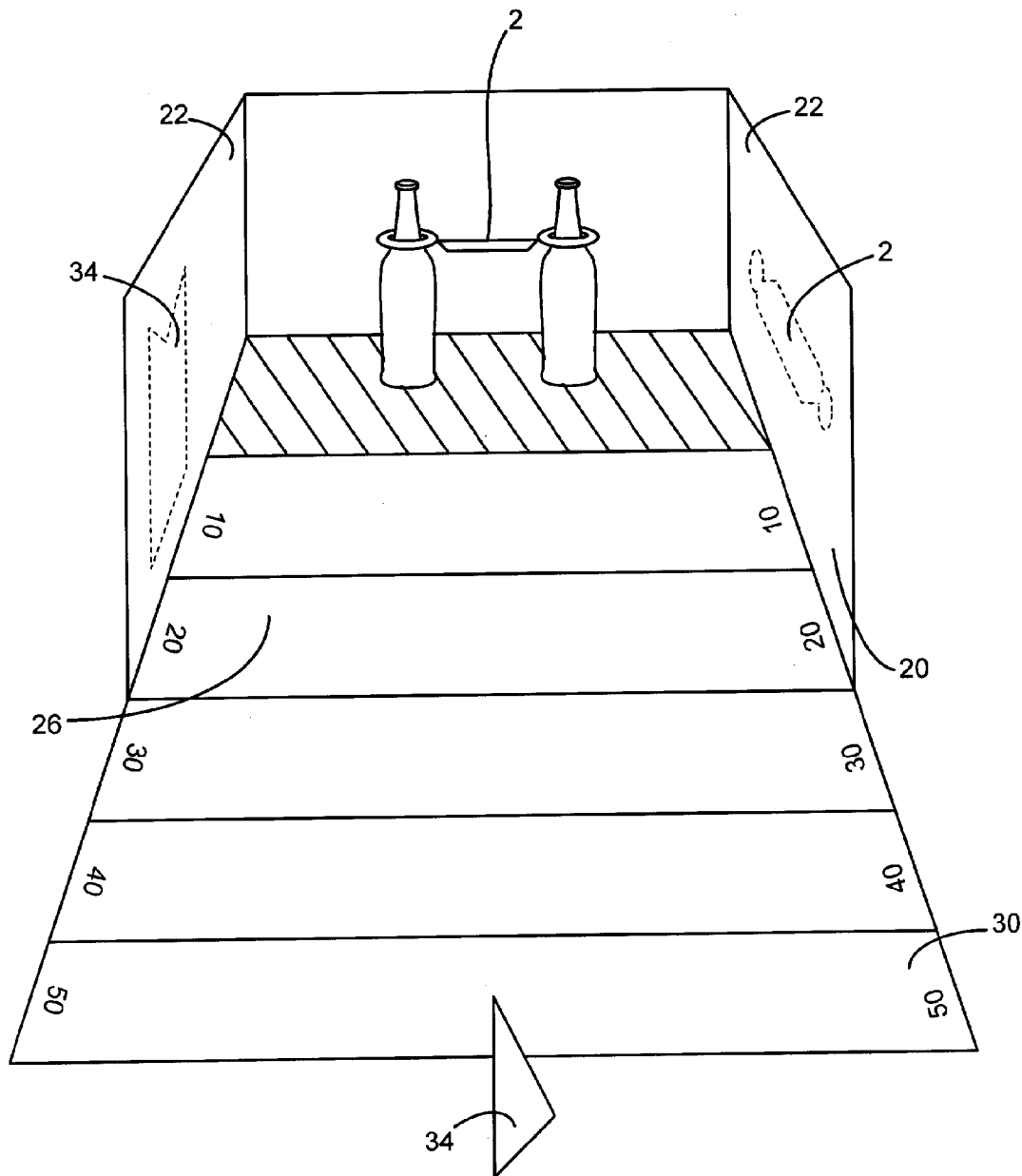
(52) **U.S. Cl. 273/108; 273/108.1**

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A goal crossbar and playing field derived from product packaging for use in playing "paper football" and similar games. The goal crossbar may be suspended between two drink containers forming a stand alone "H" style goal.

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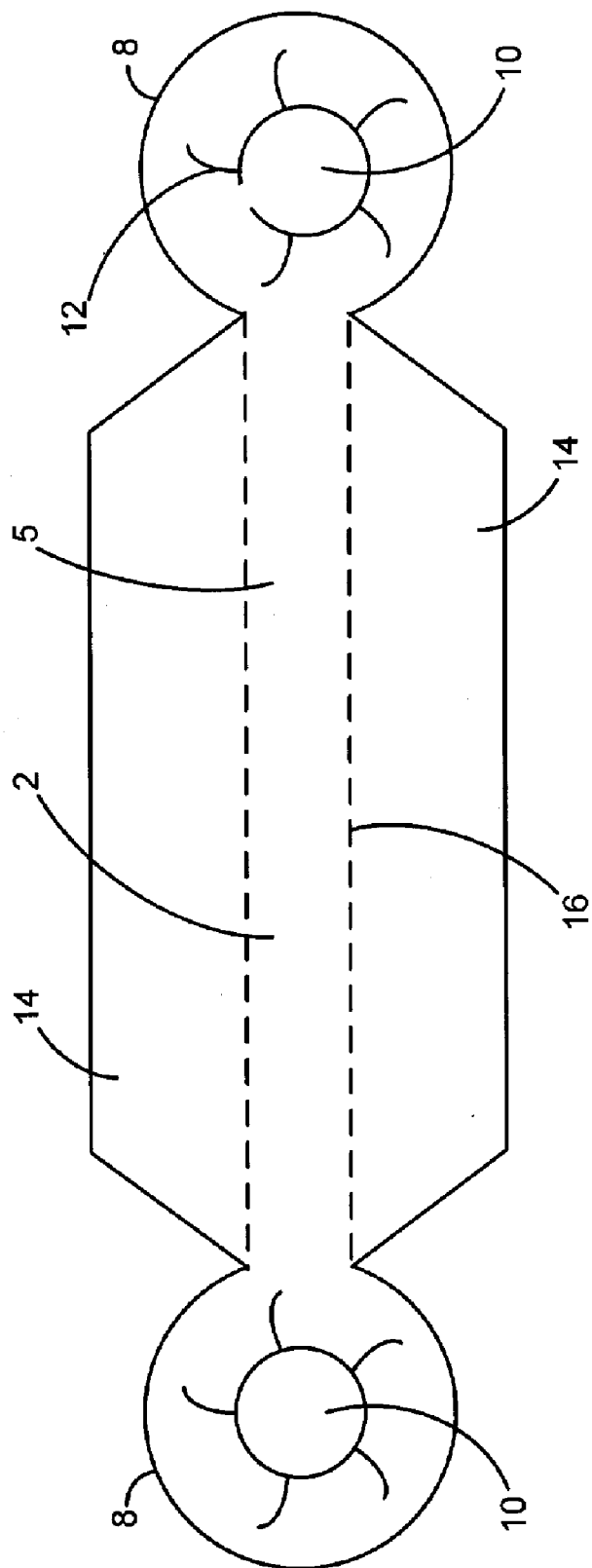


FIG. 1

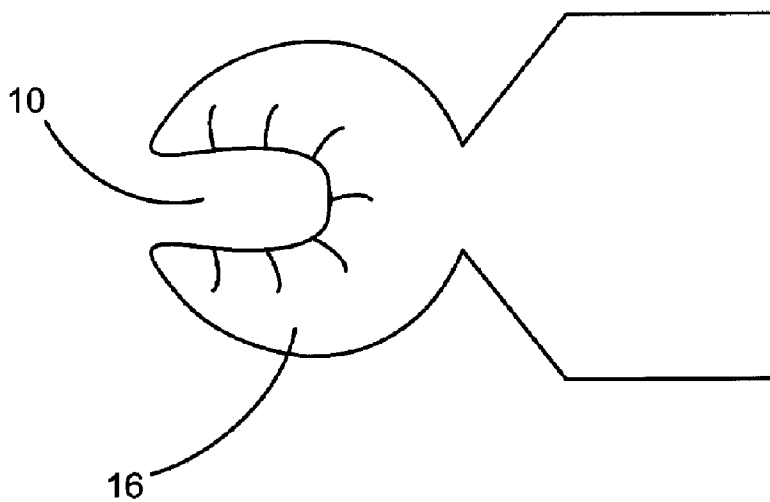


FIG. 2A

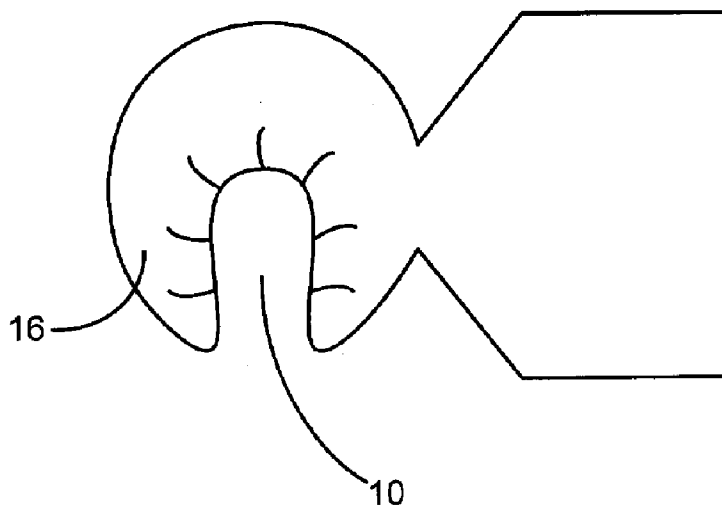


FIG. 2B

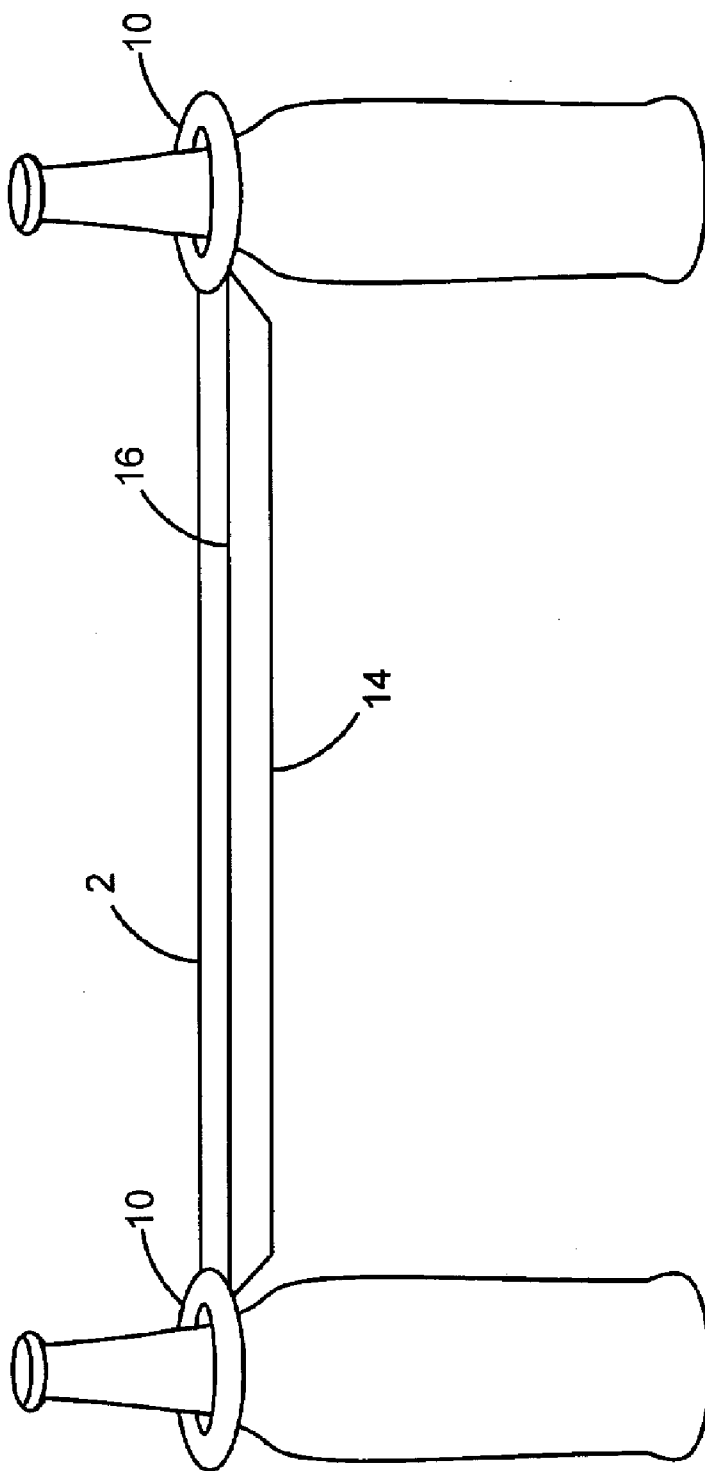


FIG. 3

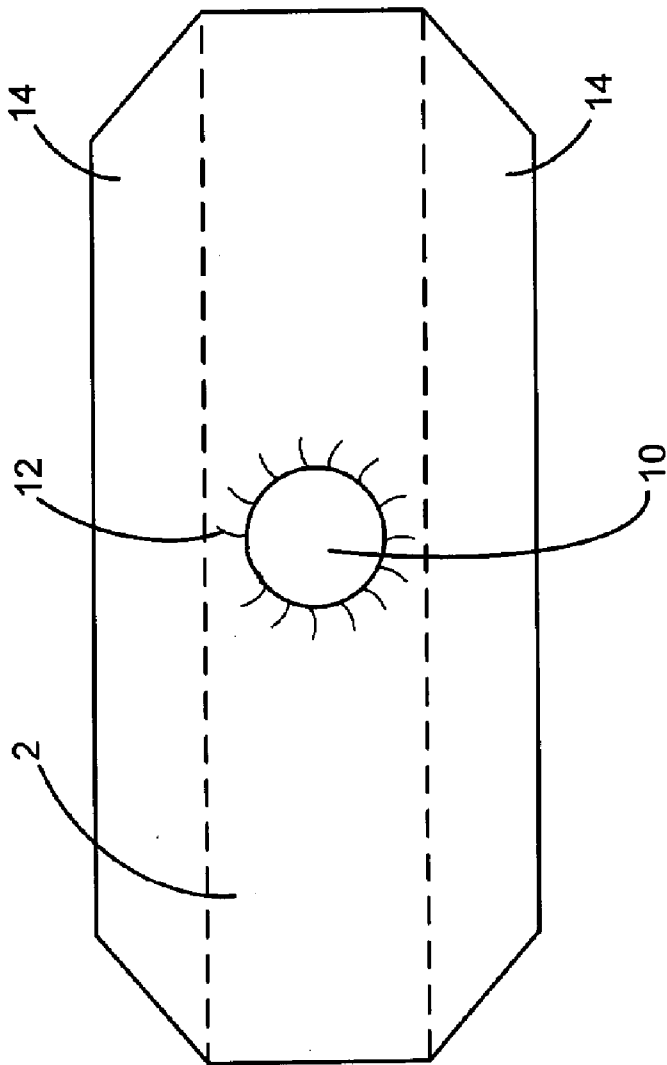


FIG. 4

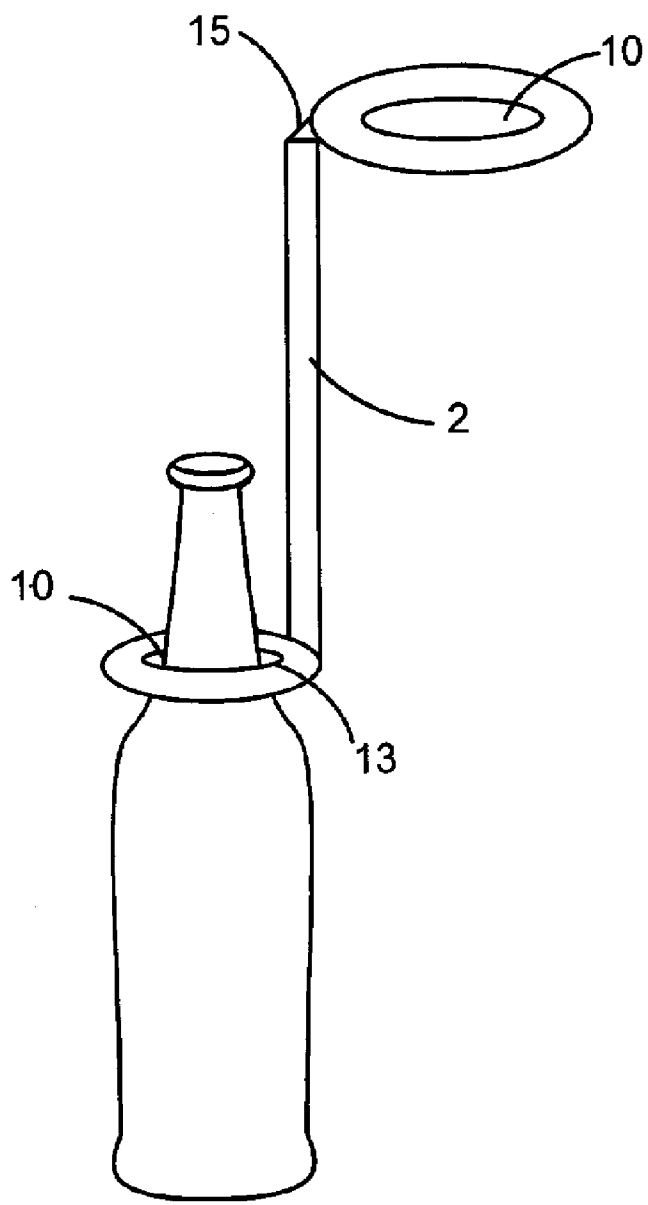


FIG. 5

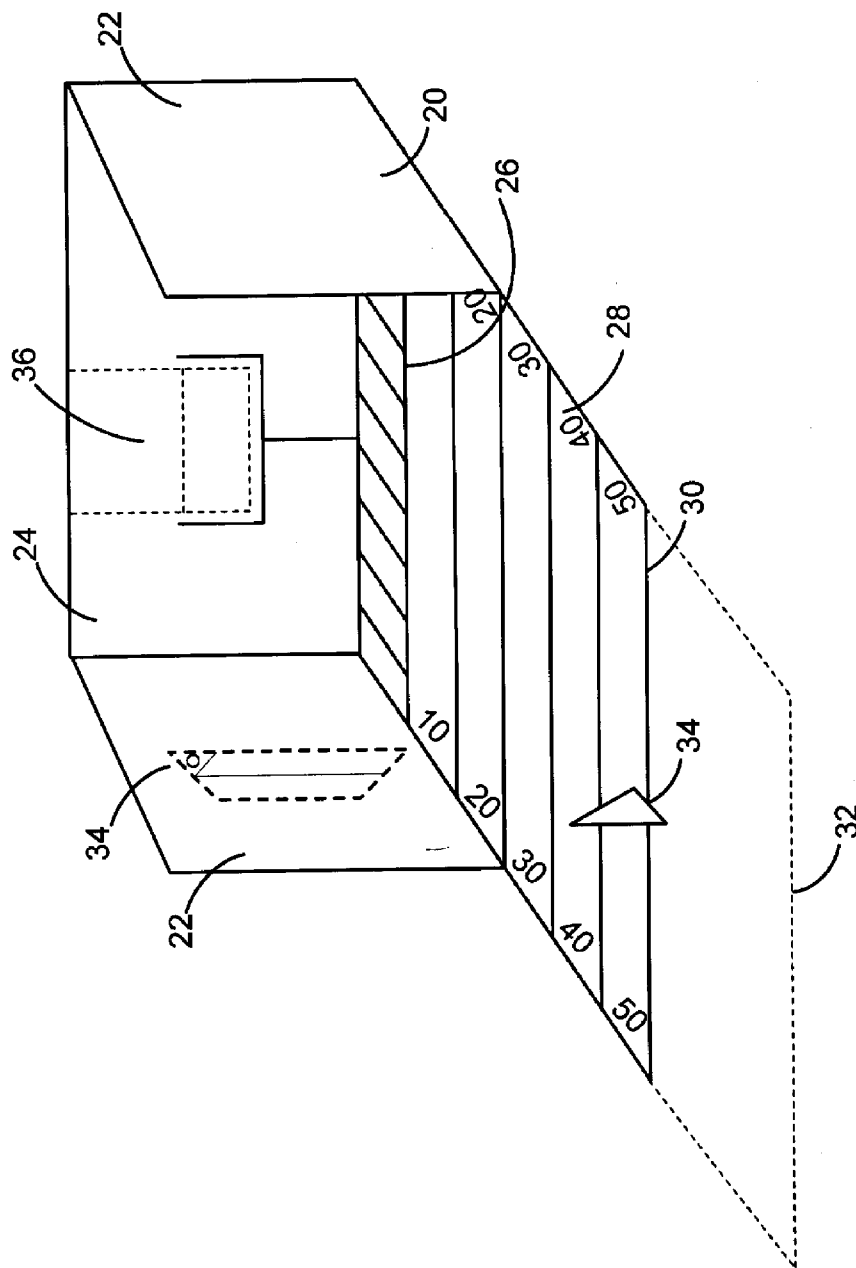


FIG. 6

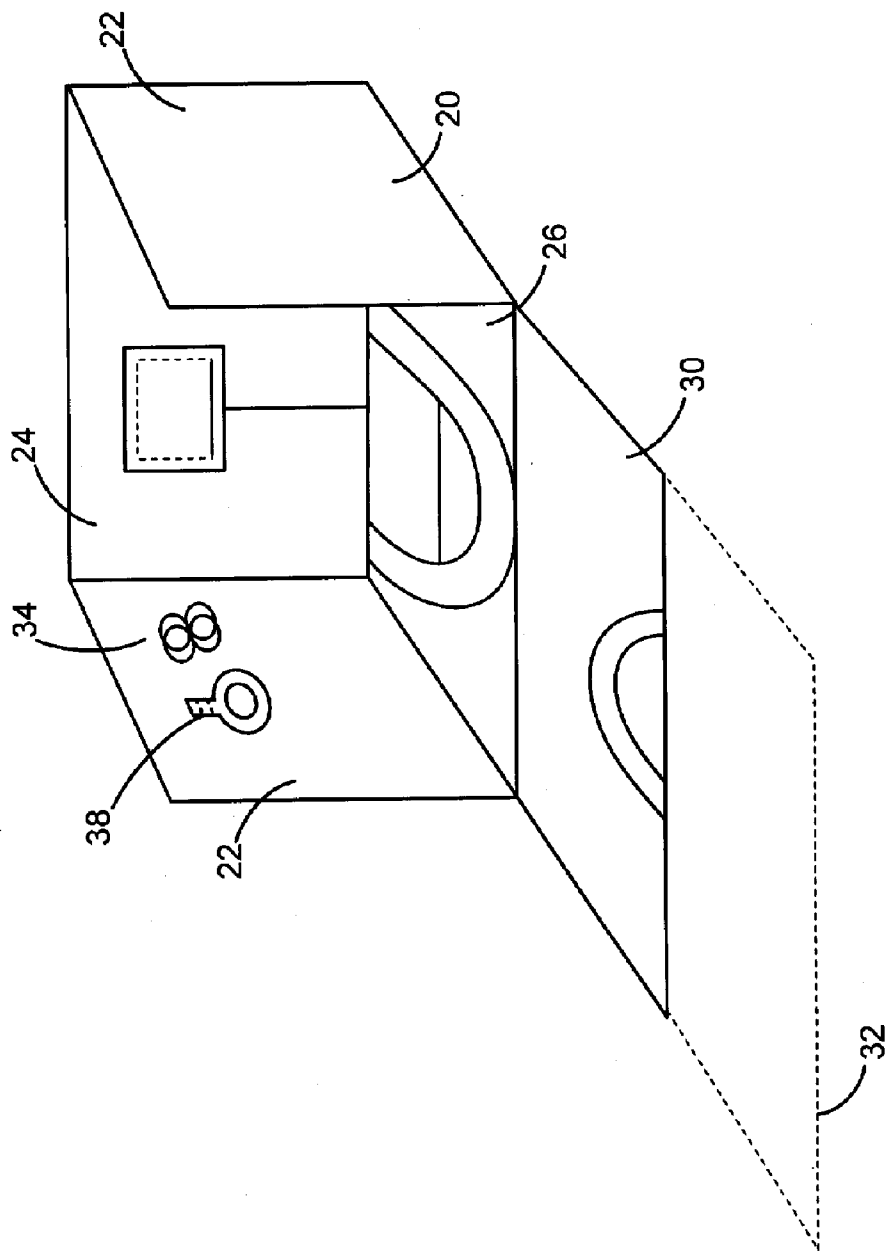


FIG. 7

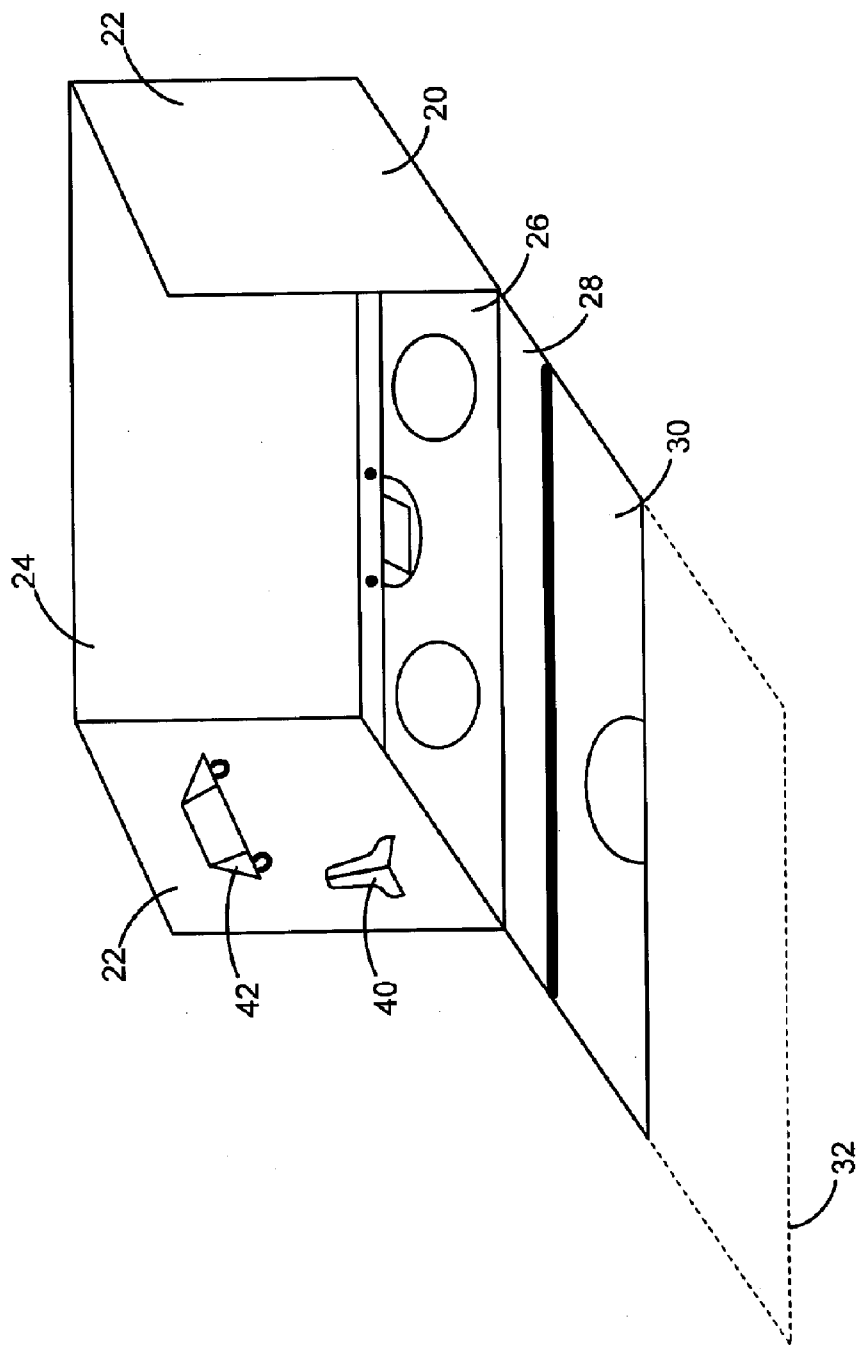


FIG. 8

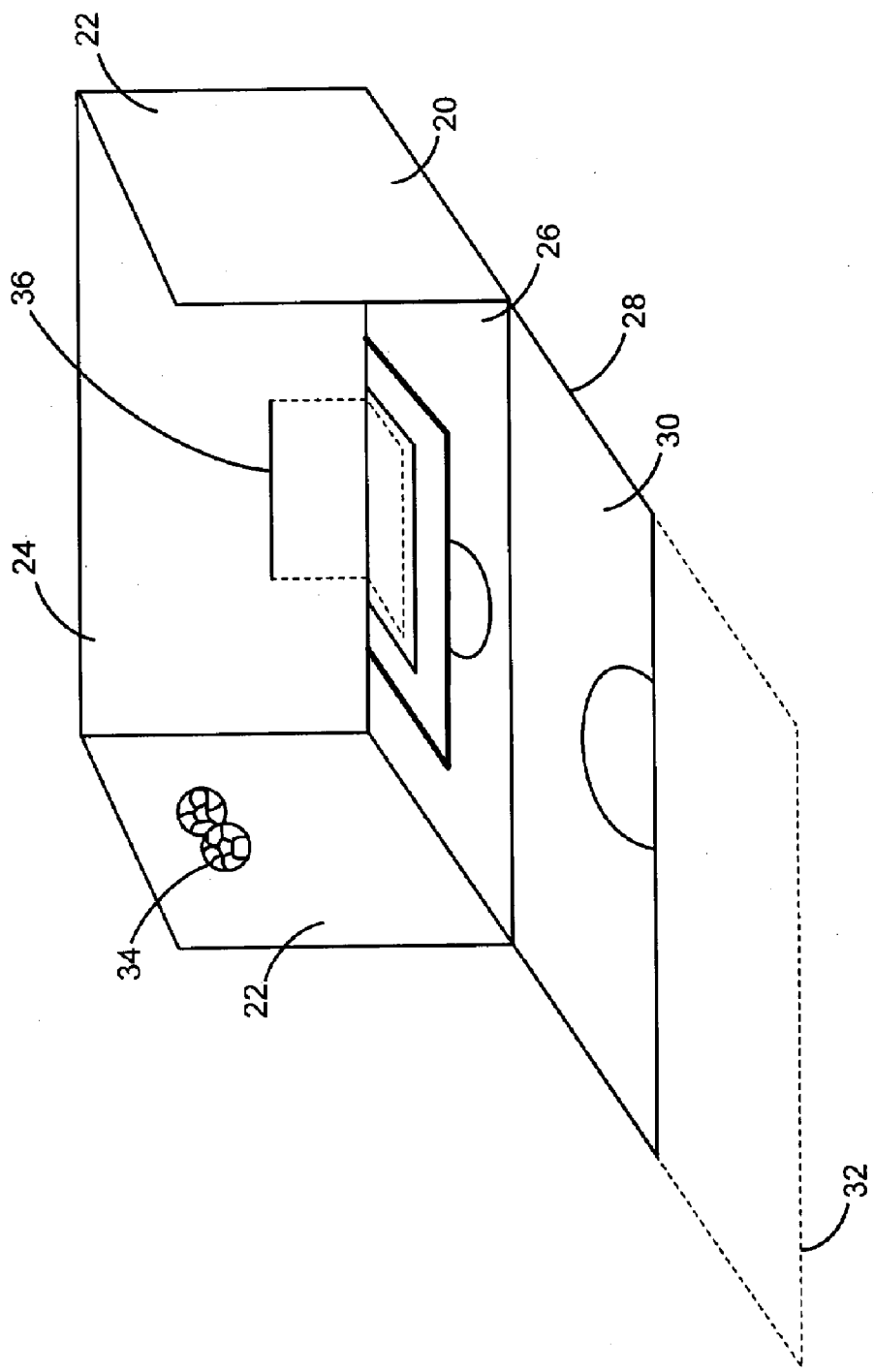


FIG. 9

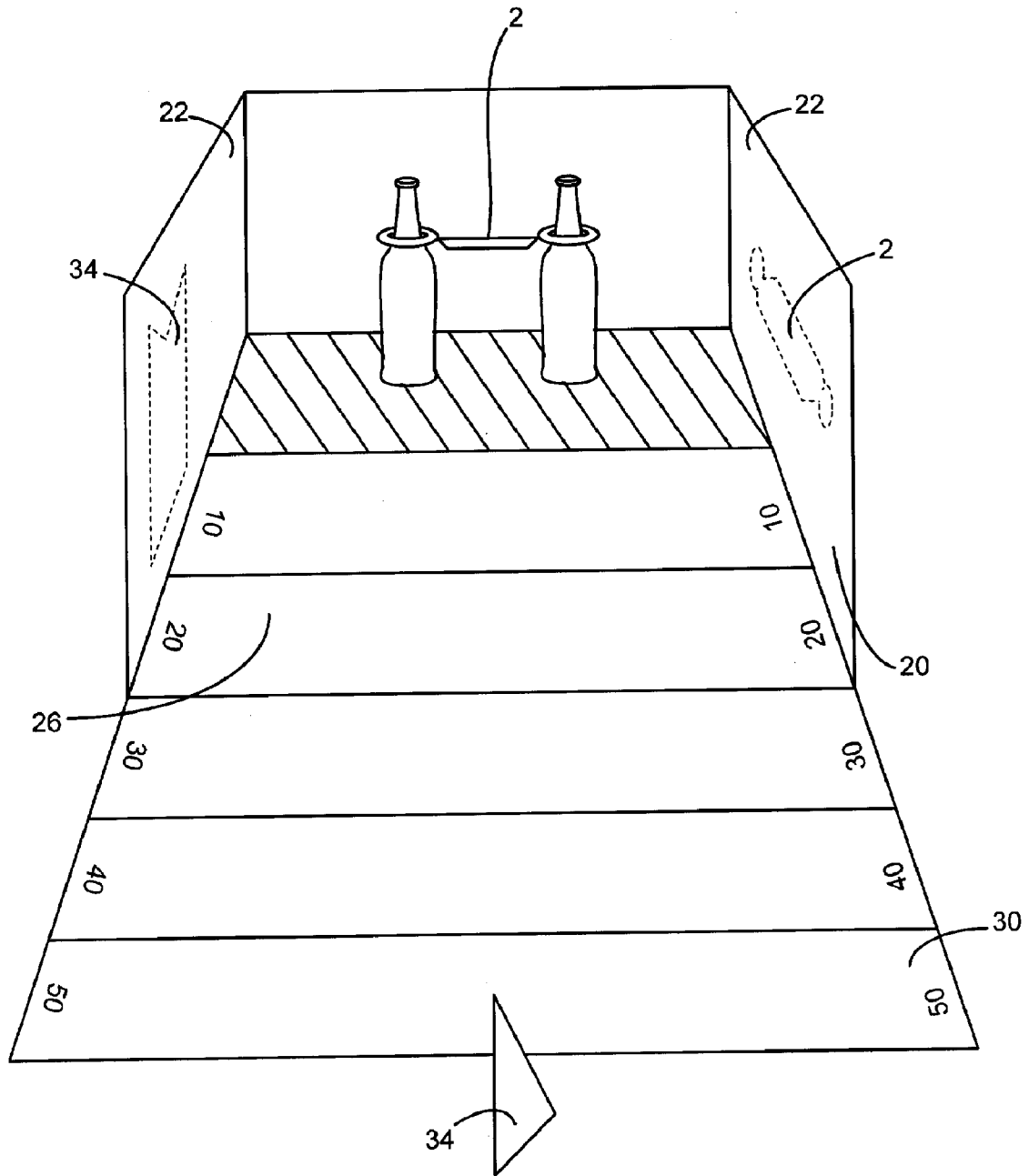


FIG. 10

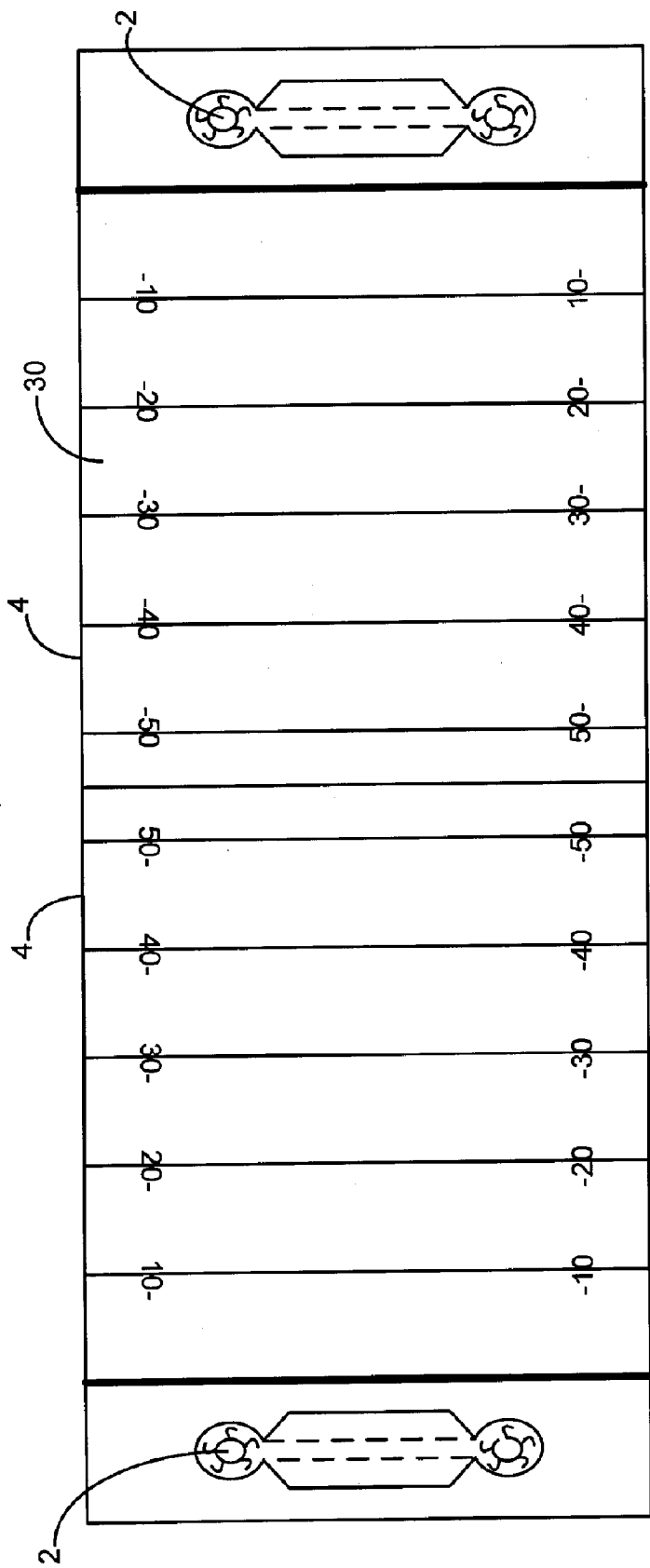


FIG. 11

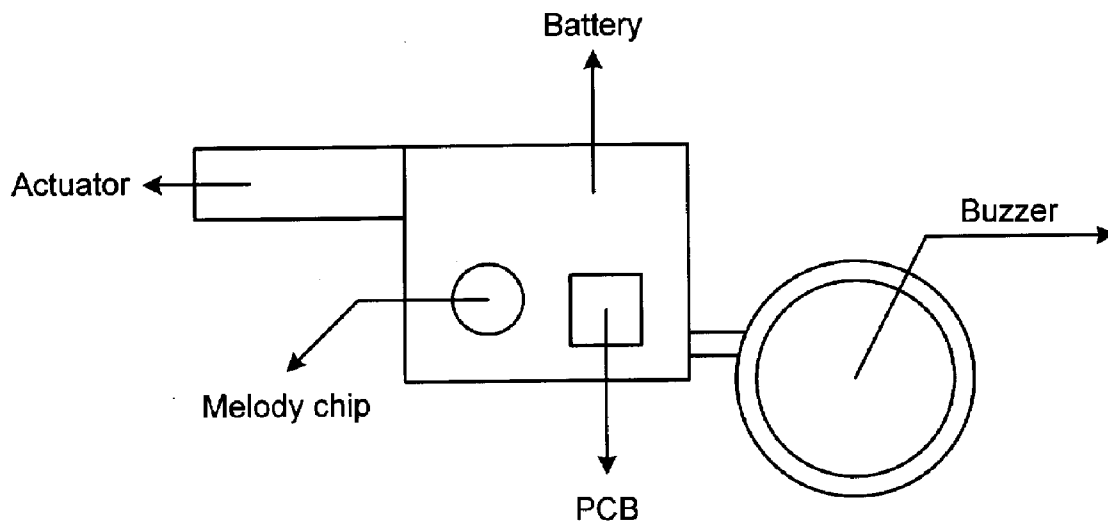


FIG. 12

GOAL POST AND PLAYING FIELD GAME PIECES**CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS**

[0001] This application claims priority to Provisional Application Ser. No. 60/520,218 titled "GOAL POST SYSTEM AND METHOD" filed Nov. 14, 2003, the entire contents of which is hereby incorporated by reference.

FIELD OF INVENTION

[0002] The present invention relates to sports game pieces, and more particularly, to toy goals, game balls and playing fields derived from product packaging.

BACKGROUND OF INVENTION

[0003] People often simulate sporting events or other activities with game boards or fabricated props to replicate the activity or the components and equipment used with the activity. The replication of a football game, for example, may include a green board with painted lines to simulate the yardage markers and plastic "H" or "Y" shaped configurations to simulate the goalposts. The game may include a vibration device to move numerous plastic player pieces along the field. Game board type replicas of sporting events typically include numerous pieces and a relatively large game board. As such, consumers often have difficulty transporting the game and often loose critical pieces of the game.

[0004] As an alternative to formal board games, many consumers enjoy paper football games because the pieces and the playing field may be easily constructed or established from existing household materials. As such, instead of packing and transporting an existing game box, the game can simply be re-created at a new location. People have simulated the game of football by using a variety of objects including, for example, a condiment packet (e.g., a packet of sugar), a book of matches, or most notably, an ordinary sheet of paper folded into a triangular, planar shape and commonly referred to as a paper football. Any flat surface, usually a tabletop or a desktop, is suitable for a playing field. Improved games and game pieces, however, lack many of the realistic features of preprinted or commercially available games and game pieces.

[0005] Furthermore, various paper football playing rules have been adopted over the years. Generally, however, there are two players positioned at opposing ends of the playing surface, each defending an edge or goal line. Usually the winner of a coin toss kicks off, requiring that he/she use thumb and forefinger to "thump" the football from his/her goal line in a manner such that the football rotates, slides and comes to rest on the playing surface. Once the football is put into play, players take turns attempting to score a goal. A touchdown is typically scored when a "thump" results in the football breaking the plane of the opposing player's goal line without leaving the playing surface. Field goals and extra points are attempted by positioning the football upright, usually on one edge, in such a way that it may be propelled by the "thump". Traditionally, this game has required two players, one to act as the goal posts and the other to propel the ball. A successful attempt results in the football soaring over the crossbar and through goal posts simulated by the opposing player's hands. An unsuccessful attempt often results in one or both players searching on the floor for the stray game piece.

[0006] Paper football enthusiasts are continually searching for more realistic, unique and creative devices and methods for improving upon the pre-existing paper football game field and goal posts. As such, a need exists for an improved goal post and playing field for use with a paper football or other games.

SUMMARY OF INVENTION

[0007] The present invention provides major improvements with respect to paper football and similar games, particularly with respect to simulated goals and playing fields. The playing field, goal components and ball game pieces may be derived individually or in combination from various product packaging. For example, a football may be formed using a prepared sheet removed from packaging material to be folded into the desired triangular shape. The sheet may include a region that is printed and embossed to simulate the bumpy texture inherent of cowhide or pigskin football leather, football laces, and one or more team logos. Die cuts at the ends of fold lines facilitate easier folding of thicker sheets.

[0008] A goal may include a crossbar having openings at each end such that each opening may receive or rest on a beverage bottle to thereby form a stand alone football goal post. The goal crossbar may be comprised of cardboard, plastic or other suitable material.

[0009] A playing field and/or goal may similarly be integrated into or be separable from such packaging. For example, a drink pack carton may have a top and side surface pair hinged to recline flat with the bottom of the carton yielding a flat playing terrain with a partially enclosed end zone. This partial enclosure helps to catch stray shots and minimize searching for stray game pieces. Additionally, related event aspects or components such as goals, scoreboards, players, or stadium seating may also "pop-up" from or be printed on the interior of the remaining side walls. Goal components and game balls may be conveniently separable or arrangeable to form functional components for use with the playing field. For example, a hockey, soccer, or football goal or basketball hoop may hinge up or away from the backwall or floor of the partial enclosure to catch paper balls or pucks during play. Alternatively, goals may be removable from a side wall and attachable by means of tabs inserted through slits in the back wall or end zone. The football, goal, playing field or other components of the game may also include a sound generator to simulate event related sounds (e.g., football fans cheering, players hitting each other, referee whistles, fight songs, commercials, etc). Similarly, game components may include a light generator, such as for example an LED (light emitting diode) or LCD (liquid crystal display) score board.

[0010] Product packaging such as drink pack cartons may include printed regions comprising game pieces simulating playing fields and sporting event components. A simulated playing field may be constructed from existing packaging or beverage holders such as, for example, a cardboard six-pack carton. While the outside surface of the carton is typically printed with advertisements and trademarks related to the beverage, the bottom or inside surface of the carton may be printed with a playing field. The printing may be on the interior, exterior, or on a combination of both surfaces. Playing fields may be arranged from one, two, or more

cartons. For example, a single carton may include only a half court or half field, requiring combined product purchases to complete a game set. The game pieces may be configured to be removable from the bulk packaging material by perforation, scoring, cutout lines, etc. Preprinted game balls, playing fields and goals provide significant improvements, both in performance and realism of the simulated game pieces.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0011] A more complete understanding of the present invention may be derived by referring to the detailed description and claims when considered in connection with the Figures, where like reference numbers refer to similar elements throughout the Figures, and:

[0012] FIG. 1 is a top planar view of an exemplary goal cross-bar in accordance with the present invention.

[0013] FIGS. 2A and 2B are top views of additional exemplary goal cross-bar collars that conform to a bottle neck in accordance with the present invention.

[0014] FIG. 3 is a perspective view of an exemplary goal cross-bar in use in accordance with the present invention, showing stiffening webs folded downward 90 degrees.

[0015] FIG. 4 is a top view of an exemplary goal cross-bar in accordance with the present invention.

[0016] FIG. 5 is a perspective view of an exemplary goal in use with a bottle in accordance with the present invention.

[0017] FIG. 6 is a perspective view of an exemplary playing field derived from packaging in accordance with the present invention, including a punch out goal section and paper football.

[0018] FIG. 7 is a perspective view of another exemplary playing field.

[0019] FIG. 8 is a perspective view of another exemplary playing field including removable game pieces.

[0020] FIG. 9 is a perspective view of yet another exemplary playing field including a hinged punch-out goal back-stop.

[0021] FIG. 10 is an exemplary planar view of packaging showing the playing field, goal crossbar and game ball in use.

[0022] FIG. 11 is an exemplary planar view of two drink cartons, each having half of a playing field printed thereon, arranged together to form a complete playing field.

[0023] FIG. 12 is a top view of an exemplary sound chip.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0024] The goal post includes any device which may simulate a goal post. In one embodiment, the goal post may include a crossbar having openings or pockets at each end such that each opening or pocket may be placed over the top of a beverage bottle (or any other device or product) to thereby form a full "H" type football goal post. The crossbar may also include openings along the perimeter of each end, forming collars to receive or rest upon the neck of a bottle.

[0025] In an exemplary embodiment, and with respect to FIG. 1, crossbar 2 may be outlined for separation from packaging 4 by perforations, scoring, cutout lines 6 or the

like. Crossbar 2 includes first and second ends 8 and further includes openings 10. The openings may be pre-cut, perforated, scored or the like to allow the consumer to remove a center piece to form openings 10. Openings 10 may include extending tabs or internal slits 12 which help form a more secure fit around the bottle neck and allow the openings 10 to conform to various size bottle necks. While the invention may be described in association with bottles or beverages, the invention contemplates any product which may include its product packaging (e.g., ketchup containers, detergent containers, etc). Crossbar 2 may include stiffening webs 14 and scoring, perforations or markings 16 along the length of the crossbar to indicate a suggested folding line to fold stiffening webs 14 down below the remaining top surface 5, thereby providing more rigidity to crossbar 2. The top surface 5 of crossbar 2 may be a flat surface, but in other embodiments, this surface may be configured to form a pitched, arched or cylindrical or other surface. Crossbar 2 may be about 0.125 inches thick and about six inches long (from the center of each opening 10). Crossbar 2 may be comprised of cardboard, plastic, wood, metal or any other suitable material.

[0026] Another embodiment is shown with reference to FIG. 2, wherein ends 8 of crossbar 2 include openings 10 forming collars 16 configured to receive bottle necks. Openings 10 and/or collars 16 may be configured in any shape or thickness.

[0027] An alternative embodiment is shown in FIG. 4, wherein crossbar 2 includes stiffening webs 14 and single opening 10 having slits 12. This embodiment may readily be fitted with goal post verticals to form the traditional "Y" shaped goal post. The crossbar may include a single opening 10 or pocket in the center to accommodate a bottle.

[0028] A similar configuration may be used to form other sports or event components. For example, with reference to FIG. 5, basketball hoop 15 may be formed by placing crossbar 2 vertically and bending one of openings 10 inward and another enlarged opening 10 outward, such that one opening 10 is placed over the container forming base 13 and the other opening 10 serves as a hoop for a basketball game. Alternatively, crossbar 2 may include a net, bucket or other container type device.

[0029] Referring now to FIG. 6, packaging carton 20 includes sidewalls 22 and back wall 24 forming partially enclosed end zone 26. Carton front wall 28 reclines to form extended playing field 30. The carton top may optionally recline with front wall 28 to form a larger extended playing field 30. Goal 32 is removable or foldable from back wall 24 to receive propelled game piece balls 34. Goal 32 may be integral with back wall 24 or may be separable from one of side walls 22 and attachable to back wall 24. Any of the components or portions of the containers, packaging or products may be movable or detachable.

[0030] A simulated playing field may be constructed from any existing packaging or combination of packagings such as, for example, a beverage packaging, or more specifically, a cardboard six-pack carton. While the outside surface of packaging is typically printed with advertisements and trademarks related to the beverage, the bottom or inside surfaces of the holder may be printed with a playing field. In an alternative embodiment, the holder may include printing on the inside, outside, alternating sides for certain portions

or both sides. The playing field may include, for example, company trademarks, logos, slogans, etc. and any other related event scene or sports component image. The packaging may include any portion of a playing field, a certain type of playing field, a playing field of a certain team and/or the like, such that consumers have an incentive to purchase additional product in the packaging to obtain a full field or a collection of different playing fields.

[0031] The football or other components of the game may also include a sound generator to simulate event related sounds (e.g., football fans cheering, players hitting each other, referee whistles, fight songs, commercials, etc.), an example of which is set forth in FIG. 12.

[0032] Exemplary embodiments of playing fields are now described with reference to FIGS. 6-9. Drink carton 20 includes sidewalls 22, back wall 24, and front wall 28. Front wall 28, and optionally carton top 32 recline flat with the carton bottom, forming at least a portion of simulated playing field 30. Sides 22 and 24 partially enclose the end zone 26 of playing field 30. With particular reference to FIG. 6, at least one side wall 22 includes removable game pieces such as game ball 34 in the form of a paper football. A foldable or removable section in back wall 24 forms goal opening 36 through which paper football 34 may be propelled. With particular reference to FIG. 7, at least one side wall 22 includes removable game pieces such as game ball 34 and hoop 38. Hoop 38 may be attached, for example with complimentary slots and tabs, to a backboard printed on back wall 24. With particular reference to FIG. 8, at least one side wall 22 includes removable game pieces such as hockey stick 40 and goal 42. Goal 42 may include attachment tabs for insertion into slits in end zone 26. With particular reference to FIG. 9, at least one side wall 22 includes removable game pieces such as game ball 34. A foldable or removable section in back wall 24 forms goal opening 36 through which game ball 34 may be propelled. Alternatively, goal opening 36 may have a foldable backstop arranged from continuous back wall 24 and carton floor punch-out sections.

[0033] An exemplary embodiment is shown in use with reference to FIG. 10, wherein carton 20 is arranged to form partially enclosed end zone 26, with sidewalls 22 having removable game pieces such as game ball 34 and goal crossbar 2 being removed and configured for play with playing field 30. An embodiment of a completed playing field is described with reference to FIG. 11, wherein two packaging cartons 4, each having half of playing field 30 printed thereon, are arranged together to form a complete playing field 30. Each field has removable goal crossbars 2 for use in conjunction with bottles to form stand alone goal posts.

[0034] Any portion of the goal crossbar, any related playing field or related components to the system may include a sound making chip or any other sound generator to simulate event related sounds. The sounds may be activated at certain predetermined time intervals, random time intervals, during certain events (e.g., touchdowns, kickoffs, etc), upon manual activation, in response to voice commands or utterances, or upon the player hitting the football or chip with the player's finger or other device for kicking the football piece. The sounds from the chip may include, for example, football fans cheering, players hitting each other, referee whistles, fight

songs, commercials, statistics or any other desired sound or communication. The chip may include pre-existing sounds or voices (e.g., national anthem, voices of favorite players or announcers of favorite teams) or be configured to allow the players to program custom sounds or voices. As shown in FIG. 12, the exemplary sound chip may include a PCB, buzzer and melody chip and may be powered by a battery or any other suitable power source (e.g., solar, etc). Game components may similarly include a light generator, such as, for example, an LED or LCD score board.

[0035] In the foregoing specification, the invention has been described with reference to specific embodiments. However, it will be appreciated that various modifications and changes can be made without departing from the scope of the present invention. The specification and figures are to be regarded in an illustrative manner, rather than a restrictive one, and all such modifications are intended to be included within the scope of present invention. Benefits, other advantages, and solutions to problems have been described above with regard to specific embodiments. No element described herein is required for the practice of the invention unless expressly described as "essential" or "critical."

What is claimed is:

1. A game piece system comprising packaging having at least one pre-determined separable portion configured as at least one of a goal, goal post, goal post crossbar, scoreboard and playing field.

2. The packaging of claim 1 comprising at least one of cardboard, plastic, wood, and metal.

3. The packaging of claim 1 further comprising one of a sound generator and a light generator.

4. The packaging of claim 1 comprising the playing field wherein the playing field is arranged based on printing on portions of at least one of the interior and the exterior of the packaging.

5. The packaging of claim 1 comprising the goal, wherein the goal comprises:

a crossbar having a first end and a second end;

at least one of a slit, ring, collar and aperture located at least one of said first end and said second end and configured to mate with a portion of a container.

6. The packaging of claim 1 comprising the goal, wherein the goal is defined by at least one of perforations, scoring, cutout lines and fold lines configured to allow for separation from at least a portion of the packaging.

7. The packaging of claim 1 comprising the goal, wherein the goal further comprises: stiffening webs foldable along the longitudinal axis of said goal.

8. The packaging of claim 1 comprising the goal, wherein the goal comprises:

a substantially horizontal center section, the center section configured to mate with a portion of at least one beverage container.

9. The packaging of claim 1 comprising the goal, wherein the goal comprises:

a base section;

a vertical support section mating with said base section; and

a suspended section simulating at least one of a net, basket, hoop and goal post, said suspended section mating with said vertical support section.

10. The packaging of claim 1 wherein the removable portion incorporates at least one of a foldable tab, adhesive strip, magnet, fastener, tie, complimentary slits, interfering part, and mating part.

11. The packaging of claim 1 comprising the playing field, wherein the playing field comprises:

an extended playing field having a partially enclosed end zone; and

a goal attached to the end zone, the goal configured for use with a propelled game piece.

12. The packaging of claim 1 comprising the playing field, wherein the playing field includes a scoreboard comprising at least one of a light emitting diode, liquid crystal display, and changeable number display.

13. The packaging of claim 1 comprising the playing field, wherein the playing field comprises:

a first half field section derived from a first carton; and

a second half field section derived from a second carton, arrange-able with said first half field section to form a complete playing field.

* * * * *