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Hayko

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[54] **TIC-TAC-TOE APPARATUS WITH POCKETS HAVING REBOUNDING SURFACES**

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[52] **U.S. Cl.** ..... **273/95 R,** 273/105 R, 273/130 B

[51] **Int. Cl.** **A63b 71/02**

[58] **Field of Search** ..... 273/95 R, 102 R, 273/102.1 C, 105 R, 130 B

[56] **References Cited**

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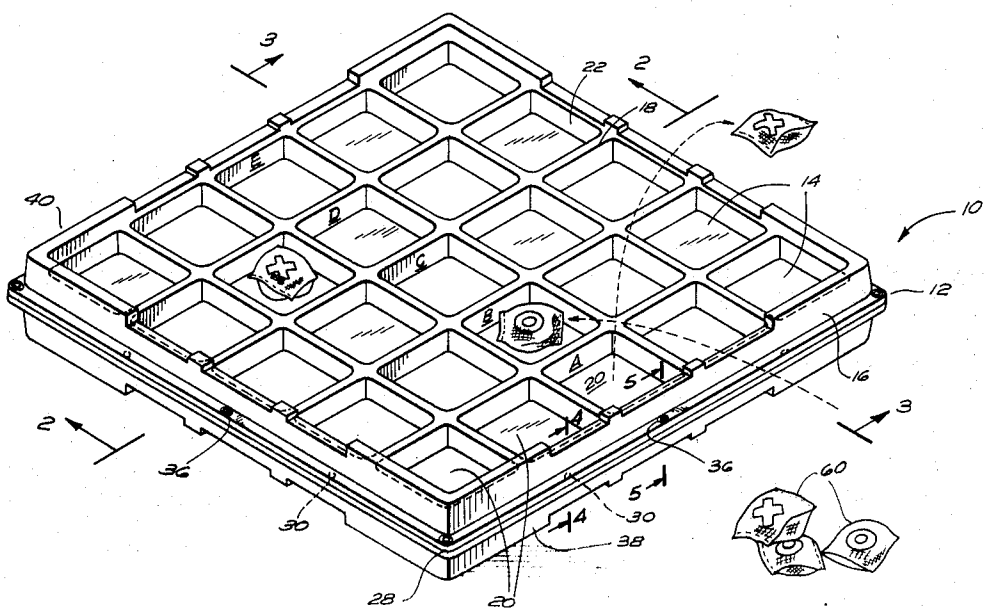
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Assistant Examiner—Marvin Siskind
Attorney—Lewis H. Eslinger et al.

[57] **ABSTRACT**

A game for playing a variation of tic-tac-toe includes a frame having a plurality of openings therein arranged in a number of parallel rows. A plurality of parallely extending strips of resilient material are mounted in a frame adjacent these openings, with each strip being associated with an individual row of openings and spanning the openings in that row. A plurality of individual projectile means are provided for selective projection at and into any one of the openings formed in the frame for support by the resilient strip associated therewith. When a projectile is thrown with sufficient force into one of the openings, it causes the strip onto which it is projected to flex and expel any other projectile supported thereon, in another of that strip's associated openings, out of the play area or into another frame opening.

20 Claims, 8 Drawing Figures



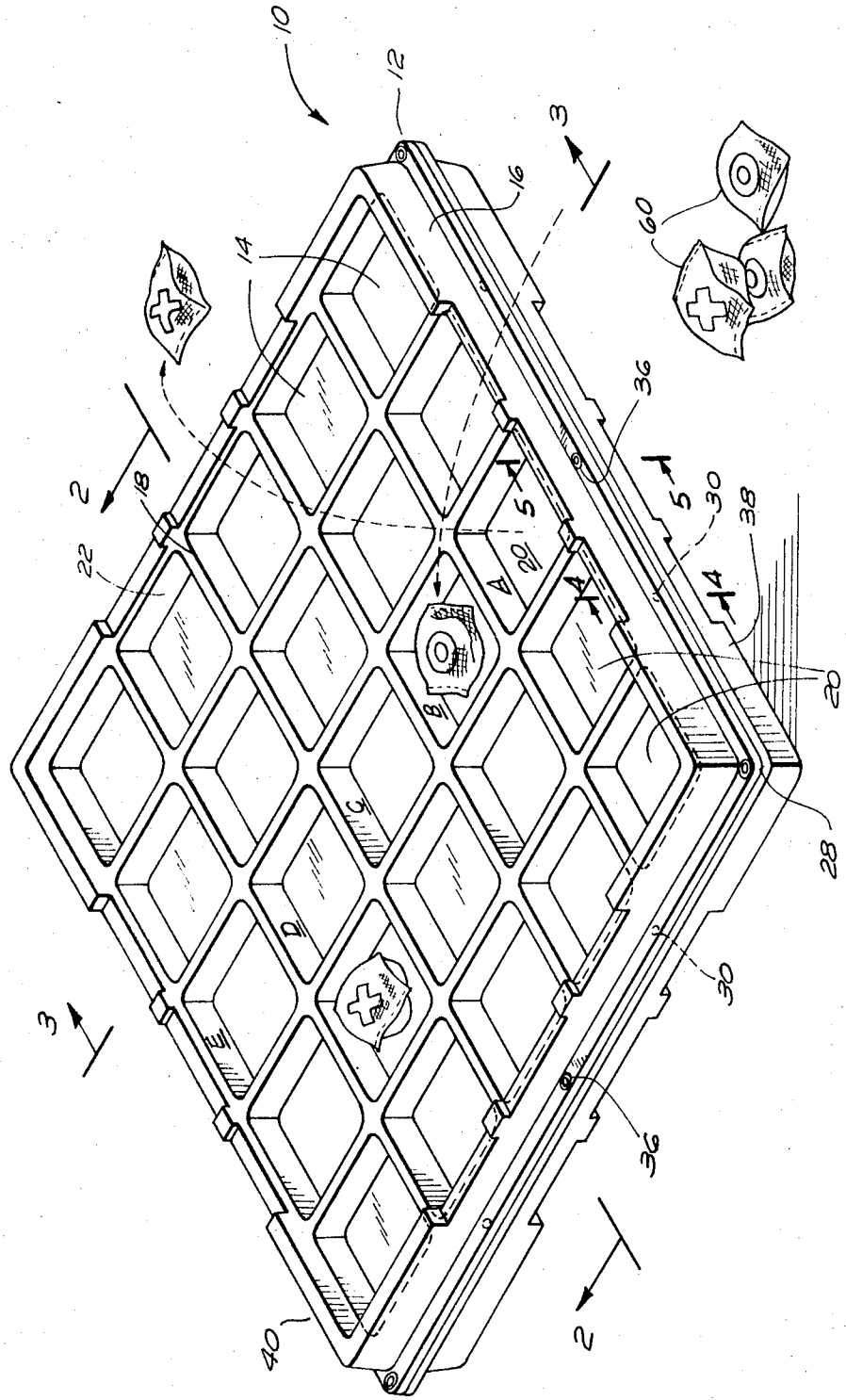


FIG. 1

FIG. 2

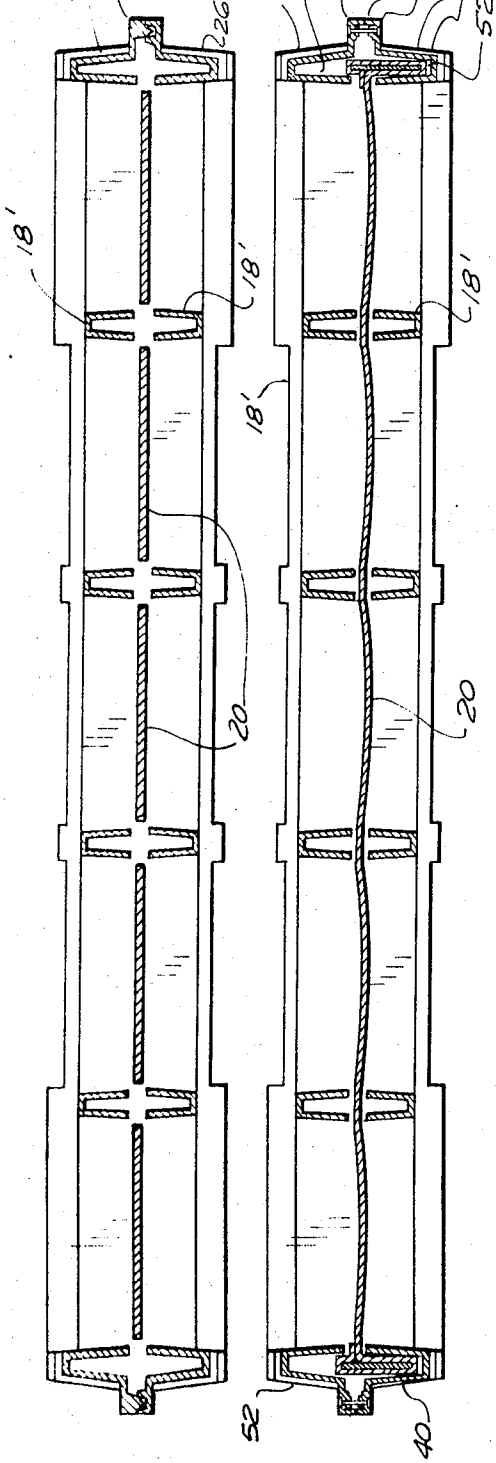


FIG. 3

FIG. 6

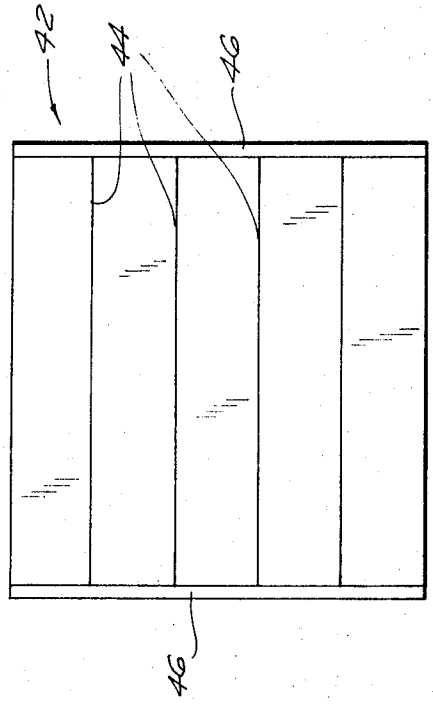


FIG. 5

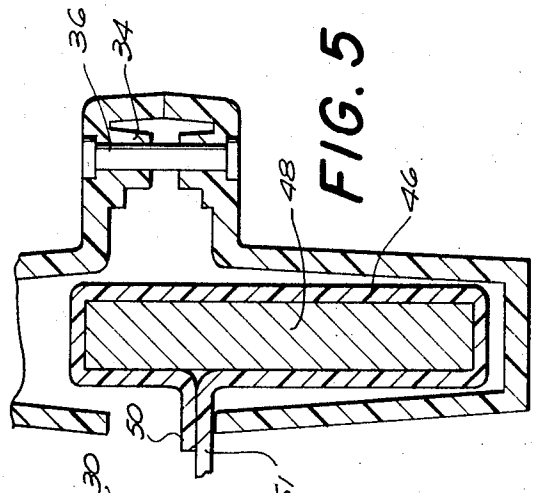


FIG. 4

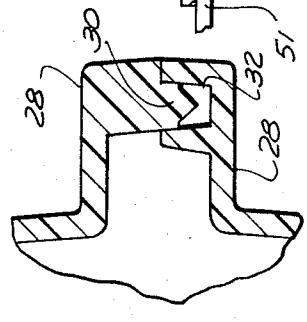


FIG. 7

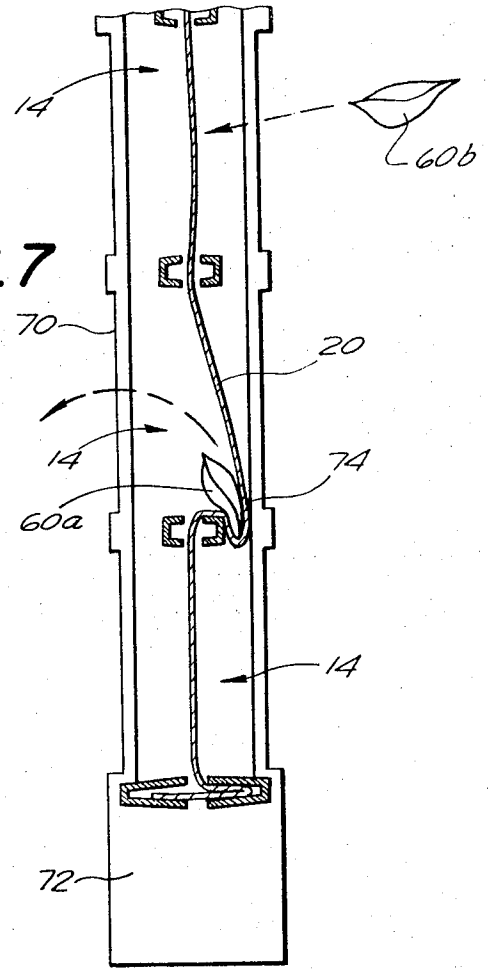
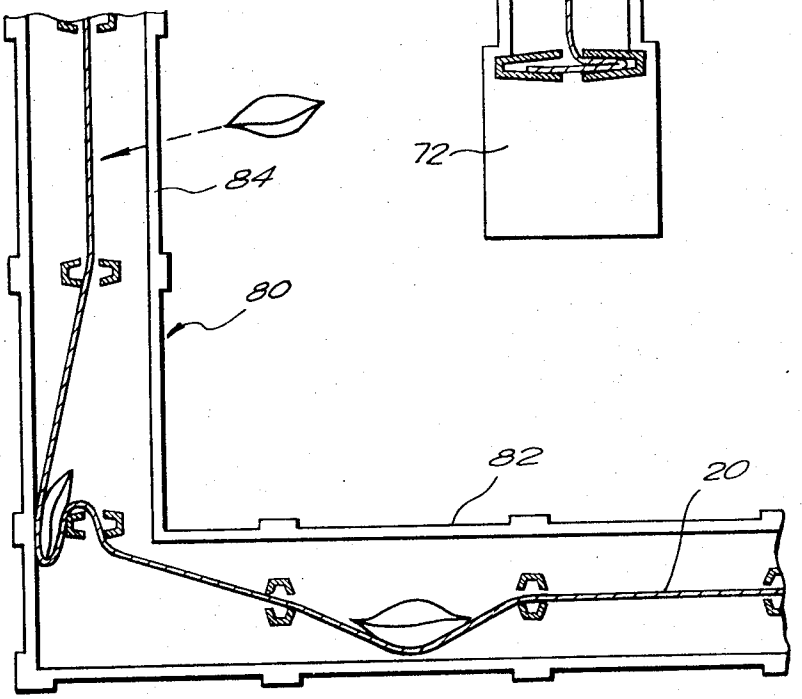


FIG. 8



TIC-TAC-TOE APPARATUS WITH POCKETS HAVING REBOUNDING SURFACES

The present invention relates generally to a game and more particularly to a game apparatus for use in playing a variation of tic-tac-toe, or the like.

As is well known in the play of the game tic-tac-toe, two opposing players alternatively place ciphers, such as X's and O's, in boxes formed on a playing surface, with the first player obtaining a complete column, row or diagonal marked with his cipher being the winner. In the original game of tic-tac-toe, and in games which have been provided for variations thereof, it is normally possible to block placement of an opponent's cipher in a row, column or diagonal by the prior placement of the player's own cipher in the proper position. However, it is not possible either to remove the opponent's cipher once the cipher is placed in position or to thereafter replace the removed cipher with the player's own. Thus, the game is limited solely to one of strategy with a limited number of possible moves permitted to the players.

By the present invention a variation of the game of tic-tac-toe is provided in which the game becomes one of athletic skill as well as one of strategy. This is achieved by the provision of a game apparatus wherein the player's respective ciphers are manually projected onto a playing surface, with the game apparatus being capable of expelling previously placed projectiles when a subsequent projectile is properly tossed into the playing area.

According to one aspect of the present invention a game apparatus for playing a variation of tic-tac-toe has a playing area formed by a substantially square frame having a peripheral side wall and a plurality of ribs extending between opposed sides of the peripheral wall in order to define a plurality of parallel rows of openings in the frame. The number of openings in the frame may be varied as desired, and preferably are formed in a network of three or more rows of three or more openings each. In any case, individual strips of resilient material are operatively connected to the frame at their opposite ends, with each of the resilient strips respectively extending along each of the rows of openings. In this manner the strips span the openings in their respective rows and cooperate with the adjacent frame ribs to define individual projectile receiving pockets at each of said openings.

A plurality of individual projectile means, such as for example, fabric bags having pellet-like material contained therein are provided for projection at and into any one of the pockets in the play area for support by the resilient strip associated with the selected pocket. The projectile bags are each individually marked with distinct ciphers such as X's and O's, or are differently colored, and the game proceeds in the manner of a conventional game of tic-tac-toe. However, because of the provision of the resilient strips at the base of the projectile receiving pockets, the game can be played offensively as well as defensively. That is, when a projectile is tossed into one of the pockets, the strip upon which it lands flexes and, if the projectile has been tossed with sufficient force, the flexing of the strip will cause it to expel any other projectile supported on the same strip in another of the pockets associated therewith. Accordingly, it is possible for the player's to position their ciphers or projectiles in selected locations while simultaneously ejecting ciphers or projectiles of their opponent from the playing area, or causing an opponent's projectile or even one's own to be moved into another pocket on the playing area. Of course, where a player's own projectiles are in a row and another of his projectiles is to be tossed therein, this is done with a minimum amount of force to limit the flexing of the base strip so that the previously placed projectiles or ciphers will not be expelled from the apparatus.

Accordingly, it is seen that the variation of tic-tac-toe provided by the invention is one of athletic skill in which careful control of the placement of the projectiles or ciphers in the game is required as well as the usual game strategy.

Therefore, it is an object of the present invention to provide a game which is a variant of the game of tic-tac-toe.

Another object of the invention is to provide a game for playing a variant of the game tic-tac-toe wherein athletic skill as well as game strategy is required.

Yet another object of the invention is to provide a game for playing a variation of the game of tic-tac-toe wherein opposing players may play in an offensive as well as defensive manner to cancel or change positions of an opponent's previously placed cipher.

The above, and other objects, features and advantages of this invention, will be apparent in the following detailed description of an illustrative embodiment thereof which is to be read in connection with the accompanying drawings, wherein:

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a game apparatus, constructed in accordance with the present invention, for playing a variation of tic-tac-toe;

FIG. 2 is a sectional view taken along line 2—2 of FIG. 1;

FIG. 3 is a sectional view taken along line 3—3 of FIG. 1;

FIG. 4 is an enlarged partial sectional view taken along line 4—4 of FIG. 1;

FIG. 5 is an enlarged sectional view similar to FIG. 3, taken along line 5—5 of FIG. 1;

FIG. 6 is a plan view of the resilient strips utilized in accordance with an embodiment of the invention;

FIG. 7 is a schematic sectional view of a game constructed in accordance with another embodiment of the present invention; and

FIG. 8 is a schematic sectional view of yet another embodiment of the invention.

Referring now to the drawing in detail and initially to FIG. 1 thereof, it will be seen that a game **10**, for playing a variation of the game of tic-tac-toe and constructed in accordance with the invention, includes a frame **12** having a plurality of openings **14** formed therein. In the preferred embodiment of the invention frame **12** has a peripheral side wall **16** which, when viewed in plan, forms a square play area. A plurality of spaced parallel ribs **18** extend between the opposed sides of the square peripheral wall **16** to define the individual rows of openings **14**. These ribs cooperate with loosely stretched strips **20** formed of a resilient material, as more fully described hereinafter, to define the projectile receiving pockets **22**.

As seen in FIGS. **2** and **3**, frame **12** is formed from two substantially identical molded plastic frame members or sections **24, 26** respectively. These frame sections respectively define one-half of the peripheral wall **16** and each include rib sections **18'** which form the

completed ribs **18** when sections **24** and **26** are assembled.

Sections **24** and **26** are connected in mirror image relation to each other about their peripheries in any convenient manner, with strips **20** extending between rib sections **18'** to form the bases of pockets **22.**

Because of the mirror image construction of frame **12,** pockets **22** are formed on both sides of the game structure and thus the game to be played with the apparatus can be played on whichever side of the frame is positioned to face upwardly.

In one embodiment of the present invention, the frame sections **24, 26** are provided with laterally extending complementary flange members **28** by which the frame sections are operatively interconnected. These flanges may have cooperating pins and apertures or recesses formed therein in order to provide accurate registration of the peripheral side walls of frame sections **24, 26** and of the rib sections **18'.** For example, as seen in FIGS. **1** and **4,** one of the flanges **28** is provided with a series of spaced tapered pins **30** along the periphery of the game while the opposed flange **28** is provided with complementary spaced recesses **32.**

In order to maintain frame sections **24, 26** in a fixed relationship to each other, and to maintain the resilient strips **20** in a fixed position, flanges **28** are also provided with aligned openings **34,** as seen in FIG. **5,** through which a rivet or connecting pin **36** can be inserted to permanently interconnect the two frame members and form the completed game structure. It is noted that the locating pins **30** and the interconnecting pins **36** can be located throughout the periphery of the game apparatus, as defined by flange **28,** with the number of such connecting points varying with the side of the game board being manufactured.

As mentioned, loosely stretched resilient strips **20** are provided for independent flexing movement, and in one embodiment, these strips may be separately formed and connected, in any convenient manner, to the opposite sides **38, 40** of the peripheral wall **16,** with each strip extending respectively below an associated row of openings **14.** In the preferred embodiment of the invention the strips **20** are initially formed from a single sheet **42** of resilient material, as seen in FIG. **6,** which sheet is slit along parallel lines **44** that are spaced at distances equal to the distances between the parallel ribs **18.** However, slits **44** do not extend to the edges of the sheet **42,** but rather they only extend up to opposed marginal portions **46** thereof which marginal portions serve to operatively interconnect each of the separate strips **20** while permitting the strips to flex independently of one another. Margins **46** can then be utilized to conveniently and simultaneously connect all of the strips **20** to the frame. In addition sheet **42** has a length which is slightly longer than the distance between sides **38** and **40** of frame **12** so that strips **20** are loosely stretched between these sides when secured therein in the manner illustrated in FIG. **3,** whereby the strips **20** sag slightly between ribs **18,** for reasons more fully described hereinafter.

In the illustrative embodiment of the invention, as seen in FIGS. **3** and **5,** marginal portions **46** of sheet **42** are wrapped around relatively rigid reinforcing bars or strips **48,** formed of wood, plastic or the like. The free edges **50** of the marginal portions of sheet **42** are heat sealed or otherwise connected at their free edges to the ends **51** of strips **20** thereby to firmly secure strips **20** to reinforcing strips **48.** Of course, strips **48** may also be rigidly secured to margin **46** of sheet **42** in any other convenient manner, such as for example, by an adhesive or by utilizing a pin or stable structure.

In the illustrative embodiment of the invention peripheral wall **16** of frame **12** is a double wall structure defining a cavity or pocket **52** along sides **38, 40** of frame sections **24, 26.** These pockets are dimensioned so as to receive the marginal portions **46** of sheet **42** and the reinforcing bars **48** about which it is wrapped, in the manner illustrated in FIGS. **3** and **4.** By this arrangement strips **20** are rigidly secured to frame **12** and cannot be pulled therefrom.

By the described construction of the game apparatus, it is seen that a playing surface is provided in which there is an array of parallely extending columns and rows and two diagonals of openings arranged in a manner similar to that of a conventional game of tic-tac-toe playing area. The number of openings **14** is provided in the game can be varied as desired during the manufacturing process so that a network of three or more rows of three or more openings can be provided. In addition, it is noted that the game's frame need not be square, but rather, it is contemplated that a rectangular or even irregularly shaped game board or frame may be provided for further variations upon the game of tic-tac-toe.

With the illustrative embodiment of the game apparatus there is provided a plurality of projectiles **60** which may comprise a plurality of cloth, fabric, or plastic bags or the like which are stitched or otherwise closed and contain a pellet-like material such as metal shot, or beans. The bags are sized to contain an adequate amount of material so that they can be readily tossed into pockets **22** formed in frame **12.** Preferably, bags **60** are supplied in two or more sets, with each set having a distinguishing characteristice. For example, each set may have different colors or may be provided with different ciphers printed or stitched thereon. In the illustrative embodiment of the invention the ciphers X and O are utilized in accordance with the conventional game of tic-tac-toe.

In the play of the game each of two or more game players are positioned about the frame **12** in any desired relationship. The pockets **22** of the game are initially emptied and the players alternatively toss or cast projectiles **60** into the pockets, in accordance with their game strategy, in order to fill a row, column or diagonal of openings **22.**

The game is a variation of the conventional game of tic-tac-toe since the players may play defensively as well as offensively in the placement of their respective ciphered projectiles within the openings of the frame. For example, where a player has a projectile already positioned in an opening contained in one of the rows corresponding to a respective strip **20,** his opponent may cause that projectile to be ejected from the opening by properly tossing his own projectile into the same row. Thus, referring to FIG. **1** of the drawing, where a bag bearing the cipher X had previously been placed in the first pocket A, or any of the other pockets, of the central row of openings **22** (this row of pockets extending from wall **38** to wall **40** and having the base of each pocket formed by a common strip **20**) an opponent can, with sufficient force, toss or project his projectile, i.e., a bag bearing the cipher O, into any other of the pockets B, C, D or E in that row (for illustrative pur-

poses the bag O is shown in pocket B) to cause the resilient strip **20** forming the base of each of these pockets to flex. When the bag O is projected into pocket B with sufficient force the flexure of its associated strip **20** will be sufficient to expel the previously positioned bag contained within pocket A from the frame, or even into another pocket in the same or an adjacent row, e.g., pocket A in FIG. **1.** Of course, if a player's own bag had been in pocket A, or any of the other pockets, on his next throw he could toss his next bag into pocket B with a minimum of force so that strip **20** does not flex sufficiently to expel his previously positioned bag. This is possible since strips **20** are constructed to sag slightly between ribs **18** so that a light impact thereon by a projectile will not cause the strip to flex sufficiently or with enough force to expel a previously placed projectile. Moreover, a player can toss his own projectiles onto the playing surface with sufficient skill and strategy so as to cause one of his own previously placed projectiles to be expelled from its pocket (e.g., pocket A) into another pocket (e.g. pocket A') on the playing surface, thus providing further variations in the total game strategy and possible "surprise moves."

Thus, with sufficient skill a player can position his own projectiles within selected pockets in frame **12,** while at the same time causing his opponent's previously positioned projectiles to be expelled from the game area or into another pocket, or to cause his own previously placed projectile to be moved to another pocket. The game therefore proceeds in this manner until one of the players has completely filled a row, column or diagonal of openings **22** in frame **12** with projectiles bearing his own cipher or other distinguishing characteristic. The first player obtaining this goal is deemed the winner.

Referring now to FIG. **7,** there is illustrated a variation of the previously described embodiment wherein a frame **70,** constructed in a manner similar to that of frame **12,** is provided and has a base **72** for supporting the frame in a vertical configuration. In this embodiment the resilient strips **20** have a somewhat greater length than in the embodiment of FIG. **1** in order to form pockets **74** for supporting a projectile **60** tossed into an opening **14.** The strips are sufficiently slack to form a pocket simultaneously in each of the frame openings **14** associated with an individual strip, but are taut enough to permit expulsion of a projectile from a pocket when a subsequent projectile is tossed into another opening associated with the same strip.

By this construction the game of the present invention can be played in a vertical plane and from one or both sides thereof. Thus, for example, a first player may toss this projectiles **60***a*, from one side of the frame, against strips **20** so that the strips will form a pocket **74,** to support the projectile in a desired opening **14,** while a second player may toss his projectiles **60***b* from the opposite side of the frame to position it in a desired opening. As with the previously described embodiment, the players, by tossing their projectiles with sufficient force, can place their projectiles in the desired opening while simultaneously ejecting one of his opponent's projectiles supported on the same strip **20.**

In this embodiment of the invention base **72** may be weighted to maintain the frame in its vertical configuration during play and impact with the projectiles. Moreover, in a variation of the embodiment of FIG. **7,** base **72** may be contoured to support the frame at an angle to present only one of the frame sides to the players for play. Alternatively, an auxiliary support stand may be provided for this purpose.

In still another embodiment of the invention, as illustrated in FIG. **8,** a frame **80** may be provided having both horizontal and vertical sections **82, 84,** with support strips **20** extending through both of these sections. In this embodiment frame **80** and strip **20** may be formed in substantially the same manner as described above with respect to FIG. **1.** By this construction the players can play on one side of both sections **82** and **84,** tossing their projectiles **60** to eject or displace a previously placed projectile supported on the same strip **20** from either the vertical section or the horizontal frame section.

Accordingly, it is seen that the embodiments of the invention illustrated in FIGS. **7** and **8** each provide further variations on the game of tic-tac-toe by increasing the possible strategies that may be used while maintaining a requirement of some athletic skill to properly effect the selected strategy. In either case, play continues, as described above, until a row, column or diagonal of openings **14** is filled with projectiles bearing the cipher of one of the players.

Accordingly, it is seen that a relatively simply constructed game apparatus is provided for playing a variation of the game of tic-tac-toe which can be played both offensively and defensively. This game therefore provides a greater number of possible plays which can be made by the players during the course of a game, thereby increasing the interest and excitement generated during play of the game. Moreover, the final results of the game are based on both game strategy and upon physical or athletic skill in projecting the bags **60** into pockets **22** with the required amount of force in accordance with the game strategy selected.

Although illustrative embodiments of the present invention have been described herein with reference to the accompanying drawings, it is to be understood that the invention is not limited to that practice embodiment and that various changes and modifications may be effected therein by one skilled in the art without departing from the scope or spirit of this invention.

What is claimed is:

1. A game comprising a frame having a plurality of openings formed therein and arranged in a number of parallel rows, a plurality of parallely extending strips of resilient material mounted in said frame adjacent said openings, each of said strips being respectively associated with individual rows of said openings and spanning each of said openings in its associated row, and a plurality of individual projectile means for projection at and into any one of said openings for support by the resilient strip associated therewith, whereby a projectile means, when projected with sufficient force, causes the strip onto which it is projected to flex and expel any other projectile means supported thereon in another of its associated openings.

2. A game as defined in claim **1** wherein said frame comprises a peripheral wall defining an enclosed play area and a plurality of parallely extending ribs in said play area defining said openings.

3. A game as defined in claim **2** wherein said frame conforms in plan to a regular polygon.

4. A game as defined in claim **2** wherein said frame conforms in plan to a square and said ribs extend be-

tween both pairs of opposed sides of said square to define a uniform array of openings.

5. A game as defined in claim **4** wherein said ribs are positioned to define a network of five rows of five openings each.

6. A game as defined in claim **2** wherein said frame is formed of two substantially identical frame members respectively providing upper and lower portions of said peripheral wall and said ribs, said resilient strips being located between said upper and lower frame portions to span the openings in their associated rows.

7. A game as defined in claim **6** including means for rigidly interconnecting said upper and lower frame members to prevent relative movement therebetween.

8. A game as defined in claim **2** wherein said resilient strips are formed from a single sheet of resilient material slit along parallel lines extending between integral marginal sections at opposite sides of said sheet, said marginal sections being operatively connected to said frame to support said strips adjacent said openings and to permit them to flex on contact with a projectile means.

9. A game as defined in claim **2** wherein said resilient strips of material are independent and separately mounted in said frame at their opposite ends.

10. A game as defined in claim **2** wherein said projectile means comprise bags containing pellet-like material.

11. A game as defined in claim **10** wherein said bags are formed in at least two separate sets having distinguishable characteristics.

12. A game as defined in claim **2** wherein said frame includes a base adapted to support said frame in a generally vertical configuration and said strips are sufficiently slack to form pockets in said openings for supporting a projectile means tossed therein.

13. A game as defined in claim **2** wherein said frame has a pair of angularly related sections, with each of said rows of openings extending into both of said sections.

14. A game for playing a variation of tic-tac-toe comprising a substantially square frame having a peripheral side wall and a plurality of ribs extending between opposed sides of said peripheral walls to define a plurality of parallel rows of openings in said frame, individual strips of resilient material operatively connected to said frame at their opposite ends and respectively extending along each of said rows of openings, said strips spanning the openings in their respective rows and cooperating with adjacent frame ribs to define individual projectile receiving pockets at said openings, a plurality of individual projectile means for projection at and into any one of said pockets for support by the resilient strip associated therewith, whereby a projectile means, when projected with sufficient force, causes the strip associated with the pocket into which it is projected to flex and expel any other projectile means supported on the same strip in another of the pockets associated therewith.

15. A game as defined in claim **14** wherein said frame is formed of two substantially identical frame members operatively connected to each other in mirror image relation to respectively provide upper and lower portions of said peripheral wall and said ribs, said resilient strips being located between said upper and lower frame portions to span the openings in their associated rows and to define pockets with said ribs, on both sides of said frame.

16. A game as defined in claim **15** wherein said ribs are positioned to define a network of five rows of five openings each.

17. A game as defined in claim **16** wherein said frame members are formed as one-piece molded plastic structures.

18. A game as defined in claim **17** wherein said resilient strips are formed from a single sheet of resilient material slit along parallel lines extending between integral marginal sections at opposite sides of said sheet, said marginal sections being operatively connected to said frame to support said strips adjacent said openings and to permit them to flex on contact with a projectile means.

19. A game as defined in claim **18** wherein said projectile means comprise bags containing pellet-like material.

20. A game as defined in claim **19** wherein said bags are formed in at least two separate sets having distinguishable characteristics.

* * * * *