United States Patent

Thompson

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[54] **CROQUET WICKET ASSEMBLY**

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[51] **Int. Cl.**.....**A63d 1/00**

[58] **Field of Search**..273/56, 102 AP, 127 D, 181 A, 273/181 J

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[57] **ABSTRACT**

A croquet wicket assembly including a wicket frame which is formed of heavy rod stock, is of right angle configuration, i.e., U-shaped and is provided with a removable snap-on plastic flag which is attached to and suspended with stable equilibrium from the horizontal bridge portion of the frame so that it projects into the path of such croquet balls as may pass through the wicket frame for displacement thereby in order to verify such passage. Numerical indicia on the opposite faces of the flag identify the procedural order of wicket use when the wicket assembly is employed in conjunction with a full complement of similar croquet wickets. The vertical dimension of the flag and its positional relationship with respect to the horizontal bridge portion of the wicket frame are such that the mid-point of such dimension lies in a horizontal plane which is spaced from the ground a distance approximately equal to the diameter of a croquet ball.

1 Claim, 4 Drawing Figures

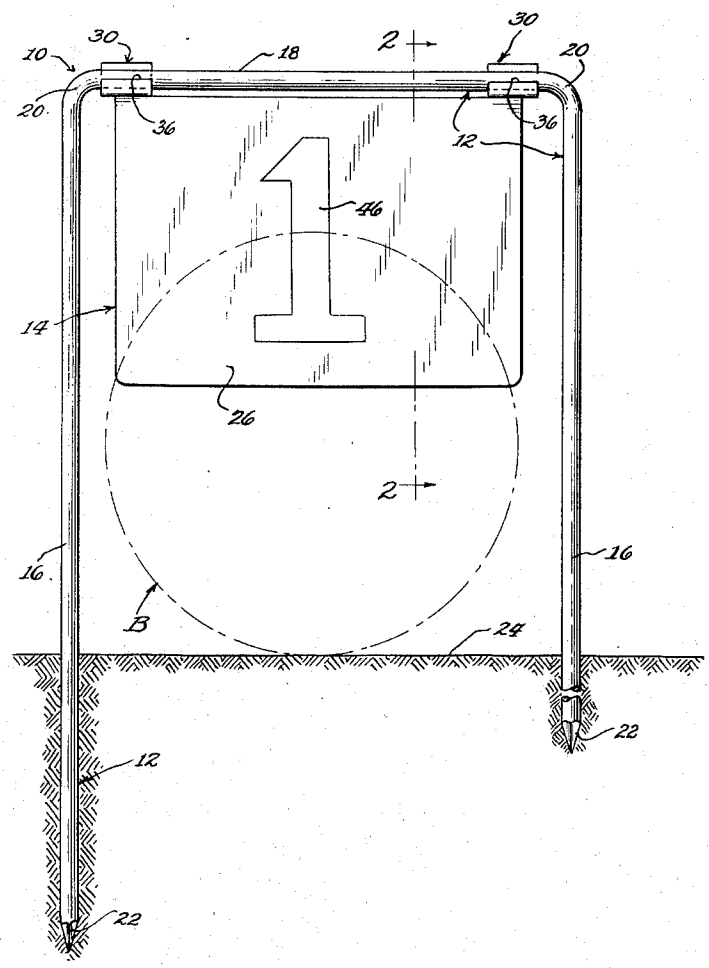


Fig. 1.

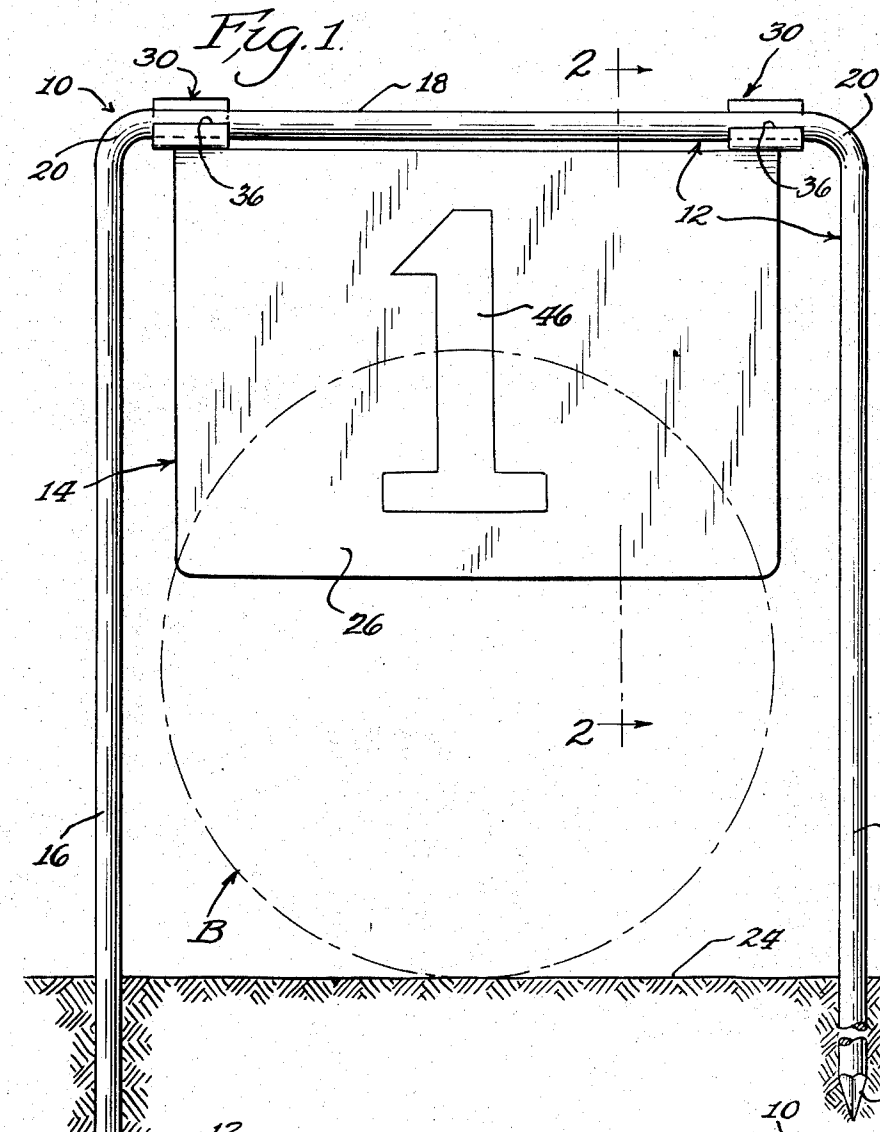


Fig. 2.

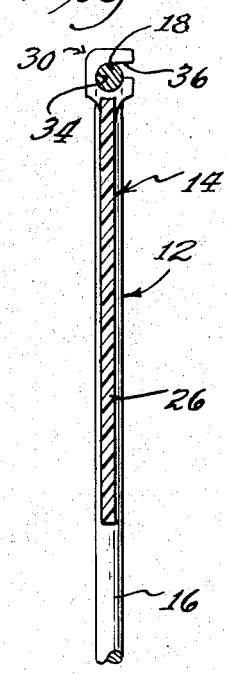


Fig. 3.

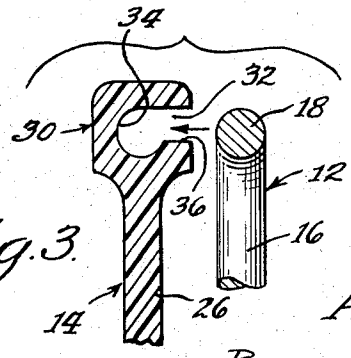
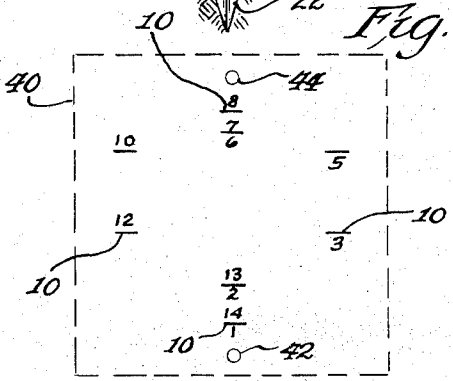


Fig. 4.



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CROQUET WICKET ASSEMBLY

The improved wicket assembly comprising the present invention is designed for use primarily as a croquet wicket where, in setting up a game of lawn croquet, it may be used in conjunction with similar wicket assemblies in any of the nine wicket locations which are ordinarily associated with such game. The invention is, however, not limited to such use and a wicket assembly embodying the principles of the present invention is capable of being employed, with or without modification as required, in connection with various games of skill in which a ball is required to pass through one or more wickets. Irrespective of the particular use to which the present wicket assembly may be put, the essential features thereof are at all times preserved.

The invention is specifically concerned with a croquet wicket assembly having associated therewith novel signalling means for verifying the passage of a croquet ball through the wicket frame. According to the invention, the wicket frame is of right angle construction (inverted U-shape configuration) and the signalling means is in the form of a removable flat snap-on plastic flag which is hingedly connected to and depends from the horizontal bight portion of the frame and projects into the wicket frame opening so that it normally lies in the general plane of the wicket frame. The height of the wicket frame and the vertical dimension of the flag is such that a ball passing through the opening in the wicket frame displaces the flag out of the plane of the frame, thereby giving a visual indication that the wicket has properly been traversed. After the ball has cleared the wicket, the flag swings back to its normal position within the wicket frame opening.

The hinged joint between the flag and the horizontal bight portion of the wicket frame constitutes the aforementioned removable snap-on connection. Removability of the flag from the wicket frame affords the advantage that when the requisite number of wicket assemblies to constitute a full wicket complement for a game of croquet are dismantled for storage purposes (for example in the packaging box therefor) the wicket frames may be stacked or tied together and the flags similarly stacked and nested within the stack or group of frames. Such removability of the flag from the wicket frame affords the further advantage of baring the corners of the wicket for impact purposes so that the frame may be driven into the ground by vertical mallet blows during installation of the wicket assembly on the playing field without damaging the aforementioned signalling flag, the latter being capable of assembly on the wicket frame after the latter has thus been operatively driven into the ground.

A further feature of the present invention resides in the provision of a means for indicating the sequential order of wicket play for a regulation game of croquet, such means being in the form of numerical indicia which are variously provided on the opposite sides of the wicket-associated flags, the indicia placement being such that a player is at all times apprized of the proper wicket to be played whether he or she is an outgoing player or an incoming player.

The provision of a wicket assembly in which the wicket frame is rugged and durable and will not bend when struck by a croquet ball, one in which the frame is rustproof, and one which is attractive in its appearance and pleasing in its design are further desirable features which have been borne in mind in the production and development of the present invention.

The invention consists in the several novel features which are hereinafter described and are more particularly defined by the claims at the conclusion hereof.

In the accompanying single sheet of drawings forming a part of this application, one illustrative embodiment of the invention is shown.

In these drawings:

FIG. **1** is a front elevational view of a wicket assembly embodying the principles of the present invention and showing the same operatively mounted in the ground;

FIG. **2** is a vertical transverse sectional view taken on the line **2—2** of FIG. **1**;

FIG. **3** is an enlarged fragmentary exploded sectional view illustrating one of the snap-on hinge connections which are employed for removably securing the signal flag to the wicket frame; and

FIG. **4** is a diagrammatic view illustrating the nature of certain flag-indicia which are employed in connection with the invention.

Referring now to the drawings in detail, a croquet wicket assembly embodying the present invention is designated in its entirety by the reference numeral **10** and comprises two parts, namely, a wicket frame **12** and a vane-like signal flag **14**. The frame **12** of the wicket assembly **10** differs from conventional arched wicket frames in that it is of rectangular design and consists of a pair of vertical side legs **16** and, in addition, a connecting bridge portion **18** which extends horizontally between and is formed integrally with the upper ends of the side legs **16** and merges therewith at its ends by arcuate portions **20** of small radius of curvature. The lower ends of the legs **14** are preferably pointed as indicated at **22** in order to facilitate their forcible entry into the ground surface **24**. The frame is formed of heavy gauge rustproof cylindrical metal rod stock, preferably aluminum, so that it will withstand abuse and not bend when struck by a croquet ball during the playing of a game of croquet.

If desired, the wicket frame **12** of the wicket assembly **10** may be used per se as a croquet wicket but, according to the present invention, it is contemplated that the signal flag **14** will be used therewith, the flag serving the dual function of rendering a visible signal when a croquet ball passes through the opening which is established by the above-the-ground or exposed portion of the frame **12** and the surface of the ground into which the frame is driven, and also of identifying the particular wicket being played. Accordingly, the vane-like signal flag **14** is in the form of a molded plastic sheet of a suitable thermoplastic resin, the sheet being relatively thick so as to lend sufficient weight thereto that it will resist wind deflection. The flag includes a generally rectangular flat body portion **26** having a horizontal dimension which is but slightly less than the distance between the two arcuate portions **20** of the wicket frame **12**, and a vertical dimension which is such that when the flag is pivotally suspended from the bridge portion **18** of the wicket frame as shown in FIGS. **1** and **2**, it lies wholly within the rectangular confines of the frame. The vertical distance between the

lower edge of the flag and the ground is somewhat less than the diameter of a conventional croquet ball (such as is shown in dotted lines at B) which is used in connection with the wicket assembly **10**.

The means for pivotally suspending the flag within the wicket opening is in the form of a pair of snap-on connections in the form of integral enlargements **30** which are provided at the upper corner regions of the flag body **26**. Each enlargement has formed therein a laterally facing groove **32** (see FIG. 3) which defines a semi-cylindrical socket **34**, the diameter of which is slightly larger than the diameter of the aluminum rod stock from which the wicket frame **12** is formed. The socket **34** of each snap-on connection opens laterally by way of a narrow throat portion **36** of a width slightly less than the diameter of said rod stock.

The flag **14** is installed on the horizontal bridge portion **18** of the wicket frame **12** by forcing the throat portions **36** of the snap-on connections against the bridge portion **18** as indicated by the arrow in FIG. 3, whereupon the throat sides will spread apart and allow the bridge portion **18** to snap into position within the two sockets **34** of the enlargements **30**. When the flag **14** has been installed on the bridge portion in this manner, the fact that the diameter of the socket **34** is slightly larger than that of the bridge portion **18** of the wicket frame **12** will allow the flag to hang freely within the wicket frame opening as previously described for displacement by passage of a croquet ball such as the ball B through the wicket frame opening in either direction.

It is to be noted that as shown in FIG. **1**, when the wicket frame **12** is properly installed on the ground **24**, the mid-point of the vertical dimension of the flag **14** lies in a horizontal plane which is disposed above the ground a distance substantially equal to the diameter of the croquet ball B, and that the lower edge of the flag lies in a horizontal plane which substantially bisects the exposed portions of the vertical side legs **16** of the wicket frame **12**. By such an arrangement optimum functioning of the flag for signalling purposes is attained. For example, if the vertical extent of the flag is excessive, or if it hangs too close to the ground, appreciable resistance to passage of the croquet ball through the wicket frame opening is offered. If the vertical extent of the flag is not adequate, only a small displacement thereof will take place as the ball passes through the wicket frame opening and flag movement may not be noticed by the players.

It is contemplated according to the present invention that for a regulation game of croquet, there shall be provided the usual number of wicket assemblies **10**, i.e., nine such assemblies, with the various assemblies being positioned roughly according to the schematic diagram of FIG. **4**. In such figure of the drawings the playing field is indicated by the rectangle **40** and the various wicket assemblies define the playing path to be pursued in proceeding from the proximate home stake **42** to the outlying stake **44** and from thence back to the home stake **42** as is customarily in connection with a regulation game of croquet. In order to indicate the procedural order of playing the game, the flag **14** of each wicket assembly **10** is provided with either one numerical indicium on one face thereof or with two numerical indicia, one on each side thereof. Such a numerical indicium is indicated at **46** in FIG. **1** of the drawings and is preferably in the form of an integral embossment having a coating of paint of a color that is different from the color of the flag.

The specific application of indicia to the various flags **14** of the nine wicket assemblies are schematically illustrated in FIG. **4** wherein the numerals **1** through **7** face in the general direction of the home stake **42** and the numerals **8** through **14** face in the general direction of the outlying stake **44**. It will be observed that since the four most widely laterally spaced wicket assemblies **10** require only one passage of a ball therethrough, namely, during the third, fifth, tenth and twelfth wicket traverse, the flags **14** which are associated with these assemblies are numbered on one side only.

It will be appreciated that if desired the numerical indicia may be omitted from the flags **14** but when such indicia are employed the most effective setting up of a croquet game will be carried out by first driving the various wicket frames **12** in position in the ground, after which proper application of the flags thereto may be made in accordance with the numerical pattern which is represented by the disclosure of FIG. **4**.

It is to be noted that the overall horizontal span of the two hinge-forming enlargements **30** of the flag of the wicket assembly **10** is slightly less than the distance between the points where the arcuate portions **20** of the frame commence their curvature. Thus, when the flag **14** is installed on the wicket frame **12**, the former is centered, so to speak, within the wicket frame opening and cannot shift laterally in either direction more than a very slight distance and thus the vertical side edges of the flag will at all times clear the side legs **16** of the frame. Additionally, since the flag is unable to shift laterally, the arcuate portions **20** are accessible for impact blows during driving of the wicket frame into the ground.

Ordinarily, when during the playing of a game of croquet a player is in reasonably close proximity to a particular wicket through which he is obliged effectively to traverse, passage of the ball through a conventional distance from such wicket as, for example, when he is outside the actual playing field (there being no "out-of-bounds" limit in a conventional croquet game) a well aimed, or even accidental, passage of a ball through a proper wicket is not a rarity. Under such circumstances the fact that the ball actually passed through the wicket may be in doubt due to lack of sufficient visibility on the part of the player or his opponent. However, when wicket assembly of the present invention is used, displacement of the flag **14** thereof will render a clear indication of such passage of the ball through the wicket frame **12**, either at the actual time of passage or subsequently during residual swinging of the flag after the ball has passed through the wicket frame.

The invention is not to be limited to the exact arrangement of parts shown in the accompanying drawings or described in this specification as various changes in the details of construction may be resorted to without departing from the spirit or scope of the invention. Therefore, only insofar as the invention is particularly pointed out in the accompanying claim is the same to be limited.

Having thus described the invention what I claim as new and desire to secure by Letters Patent is:

1. In combination, a croquet wicket assembly and a cooperating croquet ball with a predetermined diameter, said wicket assembly comprising an inverted generally U-shaped wicket frame formed of relatively heavy gauge rod stock and having parallel side legs which are adapted to be driven into the ground, and at the upper ends of the side legs an interconnecting horizontal bridge portion which, in combination with said side legs and ground, establishes a generally rectangular wicket frame opening through which said croquet ball is adapted to pass, and a flat rectangular flag pivotally suspended from the bridge portion of the frame for swinging movement about the horizontal axis of said bridge portion, said flag being of generally rectangular configuration and formed of a resilient plastic material and having its upper edge disposed in close proximity to said bridge portion of the wicket frame, the vertical dimension of the flag and its positional relationship with respect to said bridge portion of the wicket frame being such that the mid-point of such dimension lies in a horizontal plane which is spaced from the ground a distance approximately equal to the diameter of the croquet ball, the lower edge of the flag being disposed above the ground a distance greater than the radius of the croquet ball, the pivotal connection between the bridge portion of the wicket frame and the flag consisting of a snap-on connection at each upper corner region of the rectangular flag, each snap-on connection comprising an integral enlargement which projects upwardly above the level of said upper edge of the flag and is formed with a laterally facing groove defining a bridge portion receiving socket which opens laterally by a narrow throat portion of a width slightly less than the thickness of the bridge portion, the side legs of the wicket frame being connected to the bridge portion by small arcuate portions whereby the flag is maintained centered between the two side legs of the wicket frame, the opposite sides of the flag being provided with different numerical indicia, one indicium being indicative of an outgoing croquet station and the other indicium being indicative of an incoming croquet station.

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