United States Patent [19]

Morrison

[11] **3,883,139**

[45] **May 13, 1975**

[54] **BASEBALL TYPE GAME APPARATUS**

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[73] Assignee: **Marvin Glass & Associates,** Chicago, Ill.

[22] Filed: **Nov. 28, 1973**

[21] Appl. No.: **419,805**

[52] **U.S. Cl.** **273/89**

[51] **Int. Cl.** **A63f 7/06**

[58] **Field of Search** 273/88, 89, 90

[56] **References Cited**

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Primary Examiner—Richard C. Pinkham
Assistant Examiner—Harry G. Strappello
Attorney, Agent, or Firm—Coffee & Sweeney

[57] **ABSTRACT**

A game apparatus simulating the game of baseball, incorporating a playing surface simulating a baseball field including a diamond, a swingable bat mounted at a home plate position, a device for pitching a rollingly supportable simulated baseball toward the bat, figures simulating baseball players which are movable around the diamond, and a device simulating a glove or mitt for use by the players in catching a batted ball by capturing it rolling over the playing surface. The game further includes a safe/out indicator at each base and at home plate which will indicate whether a figure is safe or out at that particular base when an opposing player picks up the simulated baseball and places it in a hole provided near the base. The outfield area is inclined and has a plurality of baffles providing a tortuous path of travel of the ball rolling down the outfield area.

15 Claims, 11 Drawing Figures

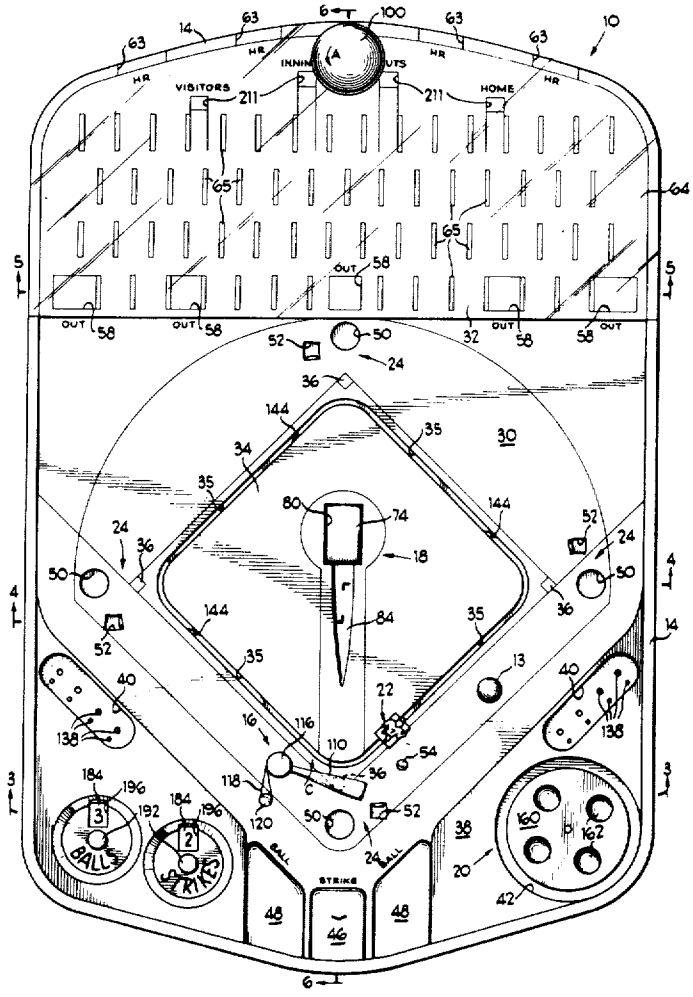


Fig 1

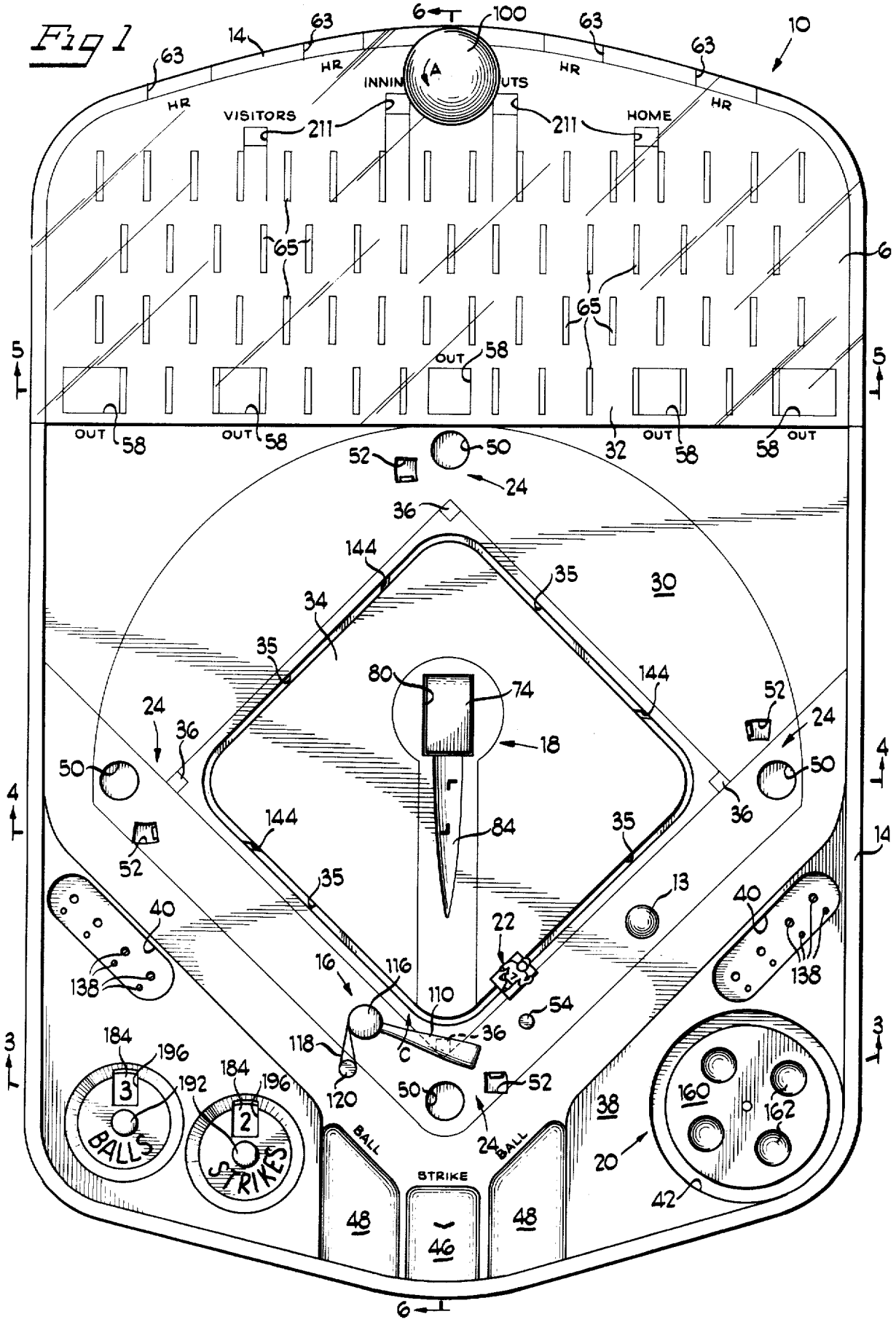

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Fig 2

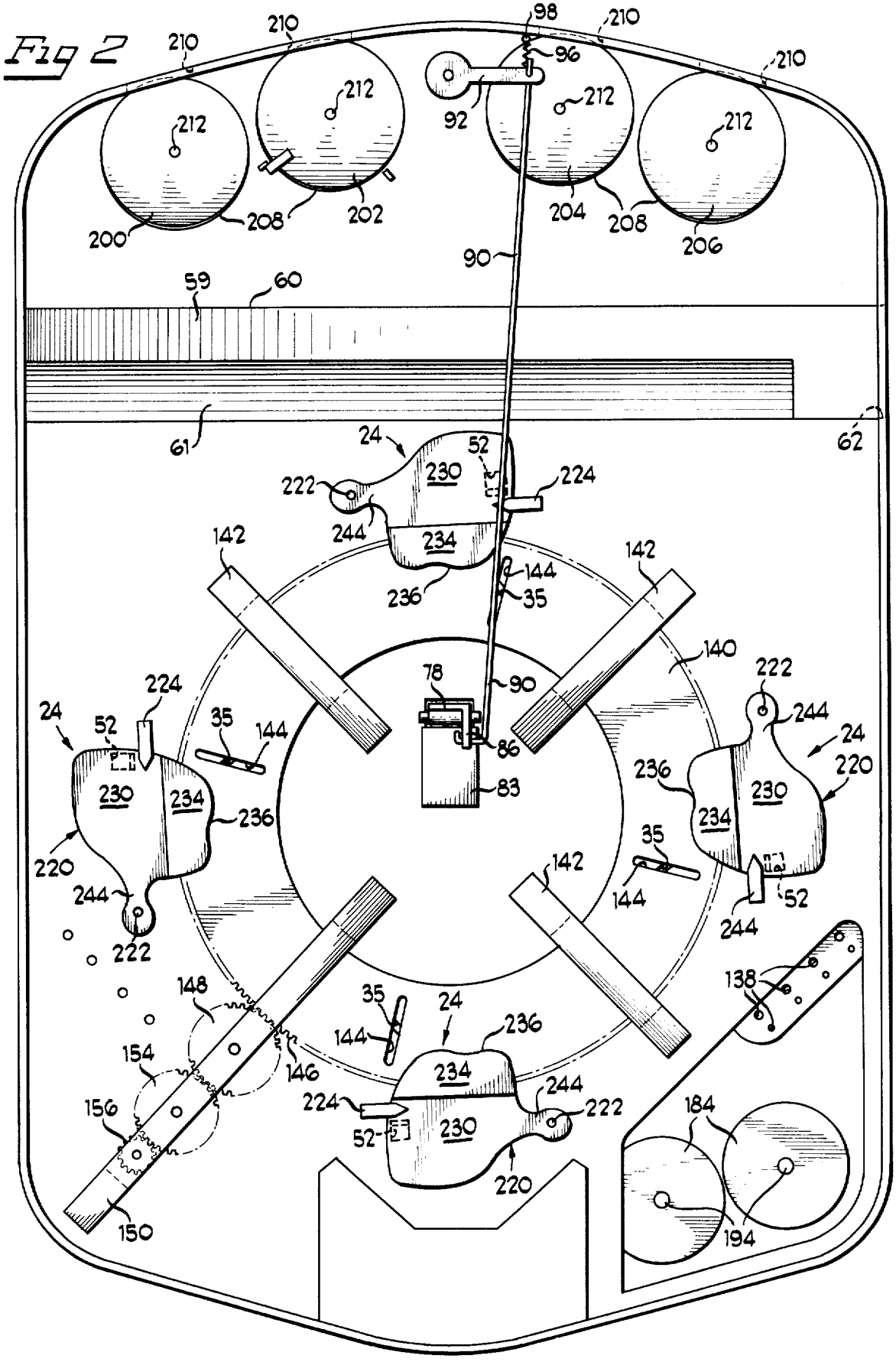

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Fig 3

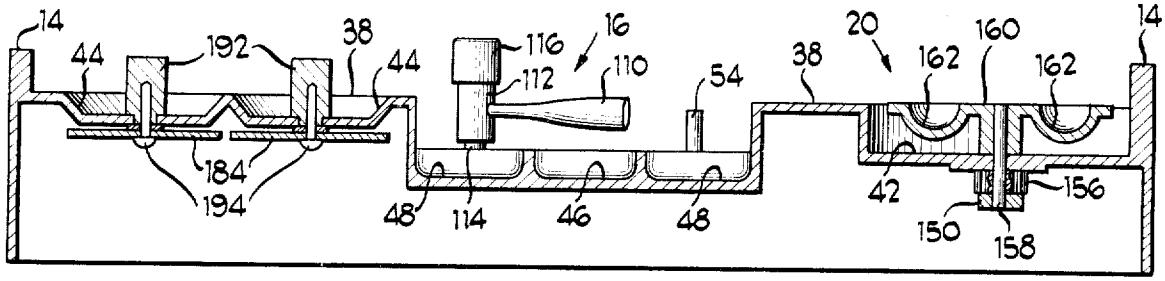


Fig 11

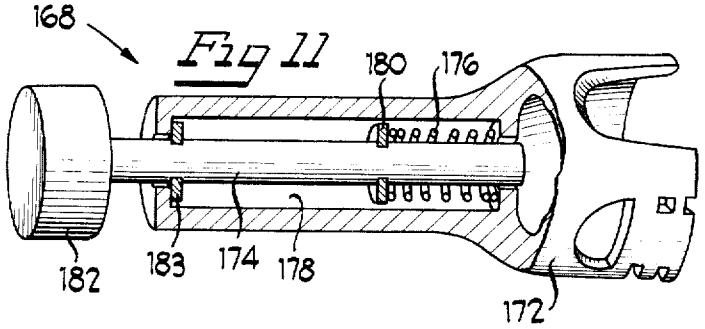


Fig 4

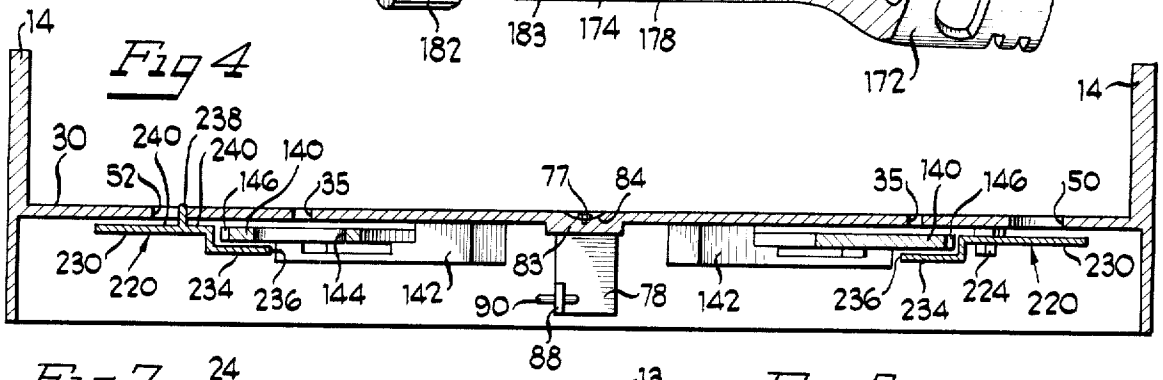


Fig 7

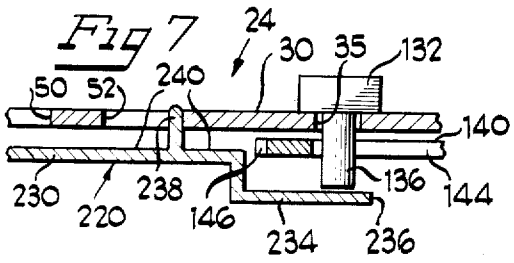


Fig 8

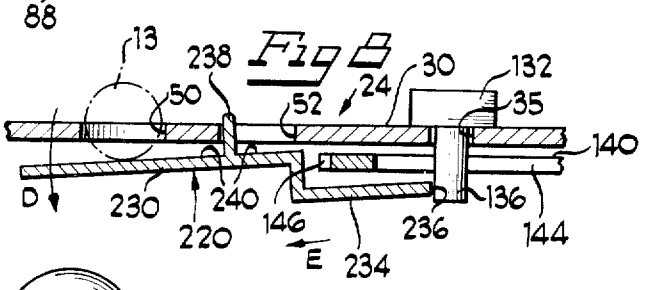
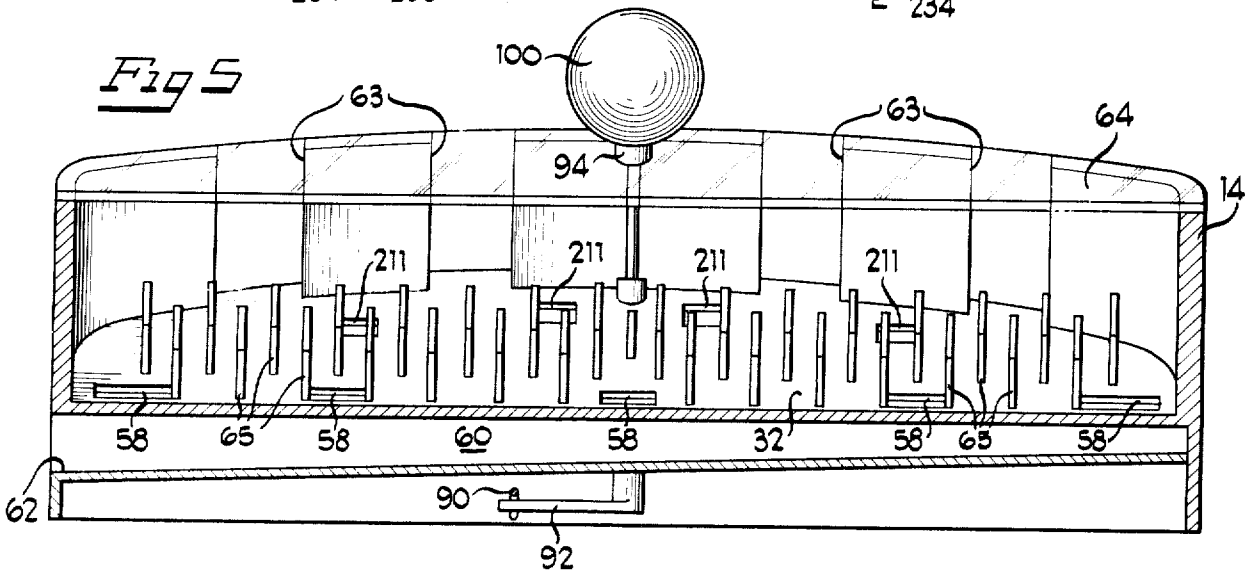


Fig 5



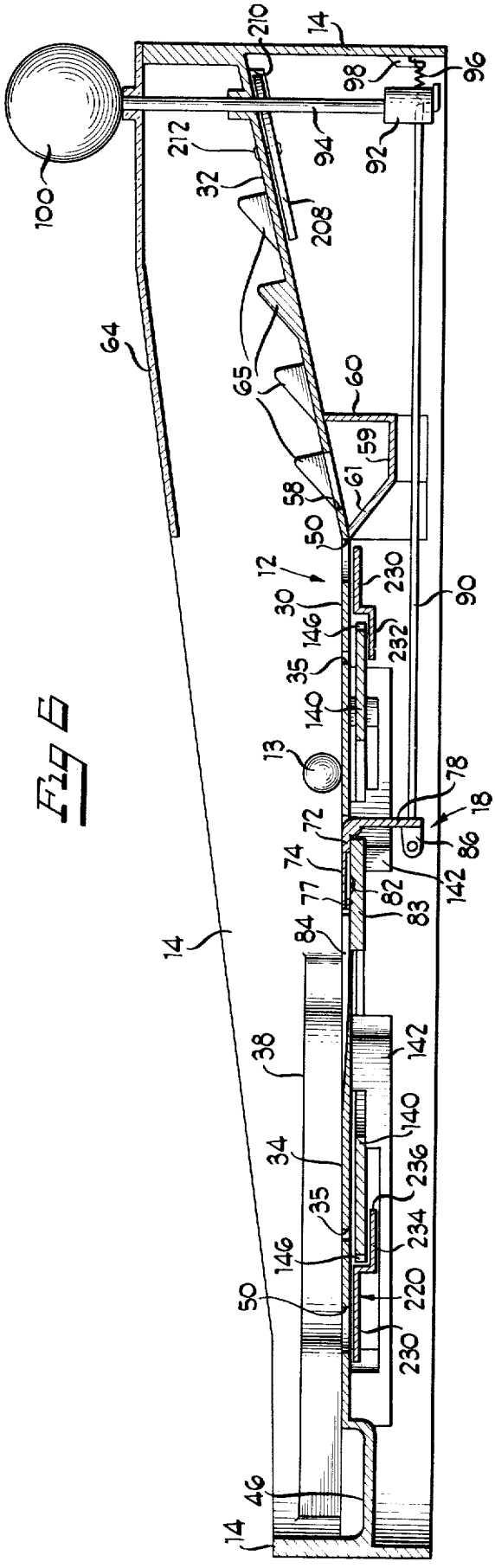


Fig 8

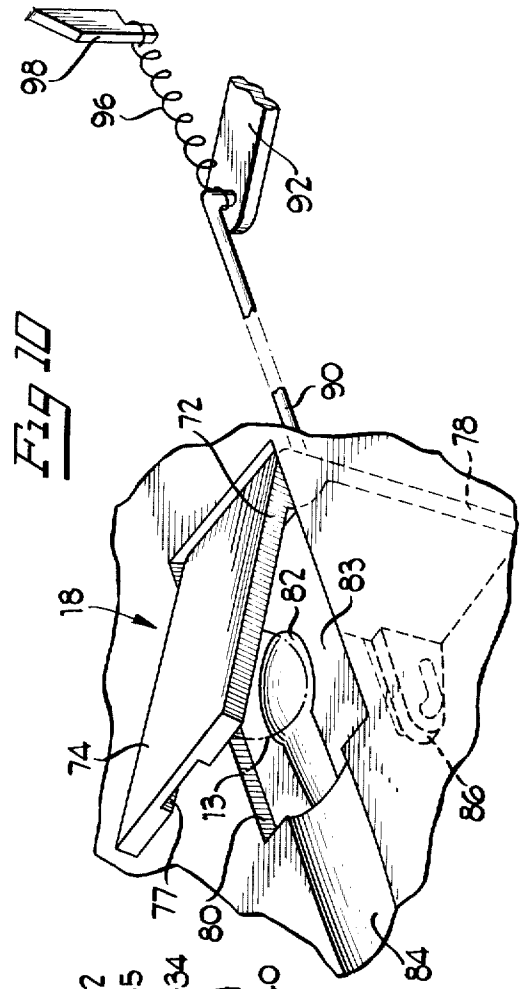


Fig 10

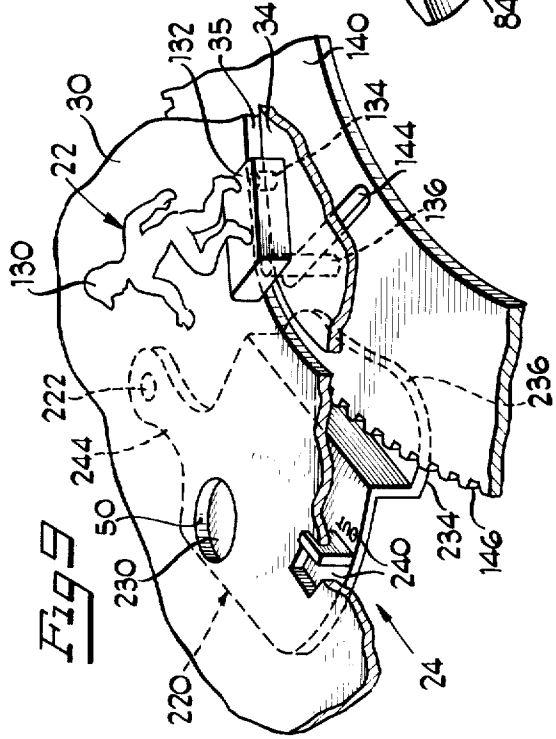


Fig 9

BASEBALL TYPE GAME APPARATUS

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

This invention relates to game devices and more particularly to a simulated baseball game.

2. Brief Description of the Prior Art

Prior amusement games have been provided which simulate the game of baseball. Typically, such games include a playing surface on which a simulated baseball is rollingly supported. The playing surface has a baseball diamond thereon and batting means mounted near home plate to hit the ball. The game also includes pitching means to launch the ball toward the batting means, figures simulating baseball players which are mountable on the diamond, and means to propel the figures around the diamond.

Some of the above described games also have a safe/out means for determining whether a batted ball results in a "hit" or an "out". An example of a safe/out indicator is disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 3,328,031.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The principal object of the present invention is to provide a new and improved safe/out means and associated for use in the above described baseball game.

The best mode currently contemplated for carrying out the invention generally includes an indicator associated with each base wherein each indicator is adapted to be engaged by the ball after the ball is hit by an offensive player and retrieved by a defensive player. The indicator includes a sign having indicia thereon indicating that the offensive player is out when a figure moving around the base path reaches a given base after the ball is placed in engagement with the indicator.

The game includes means dividing the playing surface into an accessible area wherein a ball may be retrieved by a player and an inaccessible area wherein a ball cannot be retrieved by a player. Means is associated with the inaccessible area for moving said ball onto the accessible area after it has been in the inaccessible area.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a top plan view of the game apparatus of the invention;

FIG. 2 is a bottom plan view of the game apparatus of the invention;

FIG. 3 is a vertical section taken generally along the line 3—3 of FIG. 1;

FIG. 4 is a vertical section taken generally along the line 4—4 of FIG. 1;

FIG. 5 is a vertical section taken generally along the line 5—5 of FIG. 1;

FIG. 6 is a vertical section taken generally along the line 6—6 of FIG. 1;

FIG. 7 is a vertical section, on an enlarged scale, of one of the indicating means illustrating its position when a figure has arrived at a base safely;

FIG. 8 is a vertical section, on an enlarged scale, of one of the indicating means illustrating its position when a figure has not arrived at the base safely;

FIG. 9 is a fragmented, partially broken away, perspective view of one of the indicating means in relation to one of the figures;

FIG. 10 is a perspective view of the pitching device employed in the baseball game of the present invention; and

FIG. 11 is a fragmented, perspective view, on an enlarged scale, of a ball catching element.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

As best seen in FIGS. 1 and 6, the game apparatus of the present invention, generally designated **10**, includes a playing surface, generally designated **12**, defining a baseball field forming the top of a housing. The playing surface **12** is mounted on a generally rectangular frame wall **14** which circumscribes the playing surface **12** on which a simulated baseball **13** is rollingly supported.

The game apparatus also includes batting means, generally designated **16**, for hitting ball **13** over surface **12** and pitching means, generally designated **18**, for propelling ball **13** toward the batting means **16**. Propelling means, generally designated **20**, is provided to move figures, generally designated **22**, over the playing surface to simulate baseball players running on the base path. After a ball **13** is hit, the figures **22** are moved along the base path in an effort to have a figure reach a base before the defensive player is able to field the ball and move the ball to the base before the moving figure. A safe/out indicator, generally designated **24**, is provided to determine whether a figure is safe or out.

The playing surface includes a generally horizontal surface **30** defining a baseball infield area and an upwardly directed inclined surface **32** defining a baseball outfield area. A simulated baseball diamond **34** is formed by a continuous four-sided slot **35** in the infield surface **30** and defines the base path about the infield. A base **36** is printed on the infield **30** adjacent each corner of the diamond **34**. Raised portions **38** are provided in the lower right and lefthand corners of the surface **12** adjacent the infield **30**, as shown in FIG. **1**. Recessed dugouts **40** are provided in each of the raised areas **38**. An additional circular recess **42** (FIGS. **1** and **3**) is provided in the righthand raised portion **38**. Two circular truncated tapered recesses **44** (FIGS. **1** and **3**) are provided in the lefthand raised portion **38**.

The pitching means **18** is located generally in the center of the baseball diamond **34** and the batting means **16** is mounted adjacent the home plate of the diamond **34**. A generally rectangular recess **46** is provided directly behind the home plate **36** for receiving a ball **13** therein. Two similar recesses **48** are provided, one on either side of the recess **46**. Indicia signifying a "strike" is printed adjacent recess **46** while indicia signifying a "ball" is printed adjacent both recesses **48**.

A circular opening **50** and a generally square window opening **52** are located adjacent each base **36**. Opening **50** and a window **52** form a part of indicator **24** as will become apparent hereinafter.

A small upwardly directed peg **54** near home plate indicates the starting position of the figure **22**.

The outfield **32** is defined by a generally flat canted surface extending upwardly and away from the infield **30**. The outfield **32** contains a plurality of square holes **58** which indicate that an out has been scored when a ball **13** drops therein and into the housing. A ball falling in one of the holes **58** will be returned by a ramp **59** mounted under surface **12** within the housing. Ramp **59** is secured between a vertical wall **60** and an obtuse wall **61**. The ramp **59** will direct ball **13** through an aperture

62 (FIG. 2) formed in wall 14. A plurality of vertical home run slots 63 are provided in the wall 14 at the end of the outfield 32. A player whose hit ball passes through one of the slots 63 is awarded a home run.

The entire infield area 30 is completely accessible to a defensive player in order that he may catch a ball 13 with a ball catching device (FIG. 11) whenever a ball is on the infield area 30. The outfield area 32 is made inaccessible to the defensive player by means of a clear plastic shield 64 (FIG. 5). This shield 64 requires that the defensive player must wait until the ball rolls back down onto the infield portion 30 before he can get to it. This delay gives the offensive player more time to move his figure 22 about the baseball diamond. In order to increase this time delay period, the outfield 32 includes impeding means in the form of a plurality of upstanding ribs or baffles 65 which define tortuous path means and which deflect the ball 13 as it rolls both up and down the outfield area. These impeding means 65 also decreases the likelihood of a ball travelling through one of the openings 63 for a home run.

The pitching device 18 is provided for propelling the ball 13 towards the home plate 36. The pitching means 18, as best seen illustrated in FIG. 10, includes a pivotally mounted right angled pitching element 72. Pitching element 72 comprises a portion 74 on infield 30 and a portion 78 below infield 30. A generally rectangular recess 80 is provided in the infield such that the portion 74 will be flush with the surface of the infield 30 in a normal "after pitch" position as shown in FIG. 1. An additional semispherical detent 82 is provided in a plate 83 forming the bottom of the recess 80 for holding the baseball 13 prior to propelling it to home plate 36 in a "before pitch" position as shown in FIG. 10. A progressively shallower groove or guideway 84 is formed in the infield 30 and extends from the detent 82 towards home plate 36 to aid in directing the travel of the ball 13. When portion 74 is moved from a before-pitch to an after-pitch position, a ball 13 received in detent 82 is pinched and projected toward home plate. Portion 74 has an underside cutout portion 77 for directing the ball.

Looking at FIGS. 6 and 10, portion 78 of the member 72 includes a tab 86 which is pivotally connected to a connecting rod 90. The other end of the rod 90 is pivotally mounted to a crank arm 92 which is mounted on a vertical shaft 94 (FIG. 6). The vertical shaft 94 is rotatably mounted in the housing and extends upwardly above the outfield 32. A spherical handle 100 is secured to the top of the vertical shaft 94. A spring 96 attached to the crank arm 92 and a hook 98 on the frame wall 14 biases the pitching device 18 towards its after-pitch position.

In order to pitch a ball 13 towards home plate, a player places the ball on the semi-spherical detent 82 after the portion 74 is raised to the before-pitch position by manually rotating the handle 100, in a counterclockwise direction as shown by arrow A in FIG. 1. As the handle 100 is rotated in a clockwise direction opposite that of arrow A, the ball 13 will be pinched toward home plate 36.

Looking at FIGS. 1 and 3, the batting means 16 includes a hand manipulatable bat 110 which is mounted at an end on a collar 112. The collar 112 fits over upstanding stud 114 which is integrally molded with the playing surface 12 such that the collar 112 is freely rotatable. A finger wheel 116 is provided on top of the collar 112 for hand rotation. Resilient means in the form of a small rubberband 118 is provided to bias the bat such that it will rotate in a counterclockwise direction as shown by arrow C in FIG. 1. A small upstanding pin 120 is provided on the playing surface 12 to secure the other end of the resilient means 118. By rotating wheel 116 in the direction opposite arrow C and then releasing it, sufficient force will be generated to hit a pitched ball 13 from home plate 36 toward the outfield 32.

Figures 22 (FIGS. 1 and 9) are provided to simulate baseball players running around the diamond 34. Each figure 22 includes the form of a running baseball player 130 which is mounted on a base 132. The base 132 of each player 22 is provided with two downwardly extending pins 134 and 136. When not in use the pins 134 and 136 on the figures 22 are adapted to engage a plurality of pairs of holes 138 in the dugouts 40.

The game apparatus 10 includes the propelling means 20 for moving the figures 22 around the simulated baseball diamond. More particularly, the propelling means 20 includes an annular disc or turntable 140 (FIGS. 2, 4, 6 and 9) supported beneath the baseball diamond by a plurality of ribs 142 (FIGS. 2 and 4). Ribs 142 also support the inside area of the diamond.

The annular disc 140 contains four equidistant, radially directed slots 144 (FIG. 2) each of which will, at all times, intersect the base line slot 35 of the diamond 34, as best seen in FIG. 2. Looking at FIG. 2, the periphery of the annular disc 140 includes a continuous series of gear teeth 146 for meshing engagement with a smaller gear 148 rotatably mounted on an extended rib 150. The gear 148 is in meshing engagement with another similar gear 154 rotatably mounted on the rib 150 which is finally in engagement with a smaller gear 156 which is also rotatably mounted on the rib 150.

Looking at FIG. 3, the gear 156 is mounted on a shaft 158 which extends through the recessed surface 42 and is secured to a hand wheel 160 rotatably mounted within the recess 42. Hand wheel 160 is provided in the form of a circular disc including four finger detents 162 designed for engagement with a player's fingers for rotation.

As best seen in FIG. 9, the playing figures 22 are positionable in the base line slot 35 for engagement with the propelling means for movement about the diamond. More particularly, the pin 136 on the base 132 of the figure, is a follower pin which is adapted to extend through the base line slot 35 and be received in a slot 144 on the annular disc 140. Since the pin 136 lies at the points of intersection of the base line slot 35 and the slots 144, the pins 136, as they are advanced, also shift laterally or radially within the slots 144 in the course of travel to follow the path of the base line slot 35. Thus, as the annular disc 140 is caused to rotate, the follower pin 136 received by the slots 144 cause the associated figures to travel along the endless slot 35. Pin 134 is shorter than pin 136 and is received in slot 35 and serves to prevent rotation of the figure 22 about the follower pin 136.

A ball catching device, generally designated 168, is provided for catching the baseball 13 while on the infield 30. The device 168 includes a stem portion 170 and a flexible, concave ball holder portion 172 which will hold the ball 13 by frictional force when the device 168 is pushed down over the ball. A plunger 174 is provided to force the ball 13 out of the ball holding portion

172 after a play has been made. The plunger 174 is biased by a spring 176 which is coiled around the plunger 174 in an internal chamber 178 formed within the stem 170. The spring 176 acts against a ring 180 on the plunger 174 such that a force must be applied to a head portion 182 of the plunger 174 to force the ball 13 out of the ball holding portion 172. An additional ring 183 limits the outward travel of the plunger.

Two dials 184 are provided in the recessed areas 44 to keep track of the ball and strikes on a particular batter. More particularly, the dials 184, contain indicia thereon which indicate the number of balls and strikes. The dials 184 are mounted to a pair of finger wheels 192 which extend above the recesses 44 by means of screws 194. A pair of generally rectangular apertures 196 are provided for viewing the indicia on the dials 184 which indicate the balls and strikes, respectively, on a particular batter.

Four dials 200, 202, 204 and 206 are rotatably mounted beneath the outfield 32 to indicate the number of runs of the home team, number of outs in an inning, the number designating the particular inning, and the number of runs of the visiting team, respectively. Each of the dials 200 through 206 contain a serrated edge 208 which protrudes through slots 210 in the frame wall 14 such that they may be manually rotated. Each of the dials 200 through 206 contain indicia thereon which appears through corresponding square cutouts 211 in the outfield 32. The discs 200 through 206 are rotatably mounted by means of pins 212.

Each base 36 has associated therewith an indicator 24 which signifies whether a figure 22 moving around the base line slot 35, has arrived at a particular base 36 safely or not. More particularly, each indicator 24 (FIGS. 2, 7, 8 and 9) generally includes a slide plate 220 pivotally mounted on the underside of the infield 30 by means of a pin 222 and a support tab 224 attached to the underside of the infield 30 and spaced below the plate 220. During the play of the game, the indicator 24 will act as an "umpire" of the game and "decide" whether a player has arrived at the base 36 safely or whether he will be put out.

Looking at FIGS. 2, 7, 8 and 9, the plate 220 is seen to include a generally flat horizontal ball engaging portion 230 underlying the hole 50 and window 52 and a stepped generally flat horizontal figure engaging portion 234, underlying annular disc 140. The figure engaging portion 234 is defined by a cam surface 236 which is movable into contact against the pin 136 of a figure 22. An upwardly extending tab 238 extends from the top of the ball engaging portion 230 through windows 52. Adjacent the tab 238, on either side thereof, a sign area 240 is defined on the top surface of the ball engaging portion 230. The sign area on one side of the tab 238 has the word "out" provided thereon. The other side of the tab 238 has no indicia thereon.

The plate 220 is pivotable between a normal safe position as shown in FIG. 7 and an out position as shown in FIG. 8. In the safe position, no indicia on the sign area 240 is observable through the window 52. In the out position the out indicia on the sign area is observable through the window 52.

Starting with the safe position, when a downward force is applied on the ball engaging portion 230 through the hole 50, the plate pivots or rotates about a flexible narrow section 244 (FIG. 9) of the slide plate 220 in the direction of arrow D (FIG. 8) so that the figure engaging portion 234 cants upwardly toward the disc 140. When the plate 220 is thus canted, pin 136 of the figure 22 received in the slot 144 of the disc 140 will contact the cam surface 236 and rotate the plate 220 in the direction of arrow E as seen in FIG. 8. The plate 220 then assumes the out position as shown in FIG. 8. It should be noted that the pin 136 will contact cam surface 236 and move plate 220 to an out position regardless of the direction a figure approaches the indicator 24.

If no force is applied to the ball engaging portion 230, the plate 220 will remain in the safe position of FIG. 7. When in the safe position, the bottom of pin 136 of a figure 22 received in a slot 144 of the disc 140 will pass over the figure engaging portion 234. Thus, pin 136 will never contact cam surface 236 leaving the plate 220 in a safe position.

The game is played by two or more players representing opposing baseball teams. One player or team is designated as the home team and the other player or team is designated as the visiting team. The visiting team will usually be the first team to bat as that in the game of baseball. Therefore, the home team will be on the defensive, including pitching and fielding of the ball.

The game is started by placing the ball 13 in the pitching means 18 for propelling the ball toward the batter. A home team member will rotate the bat 110, by means of the finger wheel 116 in a clockwise, or cocked position for attempting to hit the ball. The bat 110 will rotate counterclockwise under the force of the resilient band 118 when the wheel 116 is released.

When a player does not swing, at a pitched ball, it will be determined a strike if the ball rolls into the recessed area 46 or a ball if the ball rolls into either of the recesses 48. A pitched ball will be called a strike if a batter releases the wheel 116 but fails to hit the ball regardless of which recess area the ball rolls into. The number of balls and strikes on a particular player is recorded on the dials 184.

If a batter successfully hits the ball, he will then proceed to move his figure 22 (which has been mounted through slot 35 and slot 144 at the starting point on the diamond) by rotating the hand wheel 160. This rotation causes the annular disc 140 to rotate and move figure 22 around the diamond. If the ball 13 rolls into one of the apertures 58 in the outfield it will be an automatic out, and the ball will be returned to the defensive team by the respective ramp 59. If, on the other hand, the batted ball 13 rolls up the outfield 32 and through one of the openings 63 it will be scored an automatic home run.

Finally, if neither of the above events occur, the batted ball will roll up the outfield surface 32 and then proceed to roll back down the outfield 32 ricocheting between the impeding means in the form of the upstanding ribs 65. The ball 13 at this time is inaccessible because of shield 64. The defensive team must wait until the ball becomes accessible and attempt to catch the ball as it rolls back onto the infield 30 by using the ball catching device 168. At the same time, the offensive team member is causing his figure 22 to move around the base line slot 35 by rotating the hand wheel 160.

The defensive team member will, after capturing the ball place it in one of the apertures 50 depending on the position and movement of the figure or figures 22 around the diamond. If the defensive team member en-

gages the ball in the hole **50** before the figure **22** reaches the base and then the figure reaches the base, the indicator **24** will signal that the base runner is out. If, on the other hand, the base runner **22** reaches the base **36** before the defensive team member engages the ball **13** in the opening **50,** the player will be safe. It should be noted at this time that the indicator **24** will work in either direction. That is to say, that if a figure **22** reaches a base **36** before the ball has engaged opening **50** and then overruns that base after which ball **13** is engaged in the opening **50,** he will be "called" out.

Thus, it is seen that the indicator **24** acts as a mechanical umpire and automatically signals whether a particular figure **22,** who is traversing the diamond **34,** is safe or out, thus creating a more realistic and lifelike simulated baseball game.

The foregoing detailed description has been given for clearness of understanding only and no unnecessary limitations should be understood therefrom as some modifications will be obvious to those skilled in the art.

I claim:

1. In a baseball game including a simulated baseball, a playing surface on which the ball is rollingly supported having a simulated baseball diamond thereon, batting means mounted near home plate to hit the ball, pitching means to launch the ball toward the batting means, figures simulating baseball players which are mountable on the diamond, means to propel the figures around the diamond and safe/out means for determining whether a hit ball resulted in a hit or an out, the improvement in said safe/out means comprising:

indicating means associated with at least one of said bases including a ball engaging portion, a figure engaging portion which is adapted to engage said figure only when a ball engages said ball engaging portion, and a sign having indicia thereon indicating when a player is out, said sign being movable in response to said figure engaging said figure engaging portion between a normal safe position and an out position wherein said out indicia is displayed.

2. The device of claim **1** including means dividing said playing surface into an accessible area wherein a ball may be retrieved by a player and an inaccessible area wherein a ball cannot be retrieved by a player, and means associated with said inaccessible area for moving said ball onto said accessible area after it has been in the inaccessible area.

3. The device of claim **2** wherein said inaccessible area generally includes an outfield portion of said playing surface and said accessible area generally includes an infield portion of said playing surface whereby said ball, after being hit, moves from said accessible area to said in accessible area and back to said accessible area.

4. The device of claim **3** wherein said outfield portion is generally inclined downwardly toward the infield portion to provide said moving means as the ball moves thereover by gravity.

5. The device of claim **3** wherein said inaccessible area includes a shield mounted over said outfield portion preventing access to a ball thereunder.

6. The device of claim **3** including ball impeding means in said inaccessible area for increasing the length of time a ball is in said inaccessible area.

7. The device of claim **1** including a baseball catching device for selectively holding and releasing a baseball and bringing a held ball into engagement with said indicator.

8. In a baseball game including a simulated baseball, a playing surface on which the ball is rollingly supported having a simulated baseball diamond thereon, batting means mounted near home plate to hit the ball, pitching means to launch the ball toward the batting means, figures simulating baseball players which are mountable on the diamond, means to propel the figures around the diamond and safe/out means for determining whether a hit ball resulted in a hit or an out, the improvement in said safe/out means comprising:

an indicator associated with at least one of said bases, including a ball engaging portion, a figure engaging portion which is adapted to engage said figure only when a ball engages said ball engaging portion, and a sign having indicia thereon indicating when a player is out, said sign being movable, in response to said figure engaging said figure engaging portion, between a normal safe position and an out position wherein said out indicia is displayed;

said playing surface being divided into an accessible infield area wherein a ball may be retrieved by a player and an inaccessible canted outfield area wherein said ball cannot be retrieved, said outfield area including impeding means for increasing the length of time the ball is in the outfield and a shield mounted over said outfield so that a ball may move thereunder; and

a baseball catching device for selectively holding and releasing a baseball and bringing a held ball into engagement with said indicator.

9. The device of claim **8** wherein said diamond includes a diamond-shaped slot forming the base path for a figure and wherein said figure includes a downwardly depending pin positionable in said diamond-shaped slot and wherein said propelling means includes a rotatable disc mounted beneath the surface underlying said diamond-shaped slot, said disc having pin receiving means formed therein for receiving the bottom of the depending pin extending through said diamond-shaped slot so that the figure moves in said diamond-shaped slot in response to the rotation of said disc and manually operable means for rotating said disc.

10. The device of claim **9** wherein said figure engaging portion is mounted beneath said surface and includes a cam surface for engagement by said pin whereby said sign is moved from its safe to its out position.

11. The device of claim **8** wherein the impeding means comprises a plurality of upwardly protruding deflecting ribs.

12. In a baseball game including a simulated baseball, a playing surface on which the ball is rollingly supported having a simulated baseball diamond thereon, batting means mounted near home plate to hit the ball, pitching means to launch the ball toward the batting means, figures simulating baseball players which are mountable on the diamond, means to propel the figures around the diamond and safe/out means for determining whether a hit ball resulted in a hit or an out, the improvement comprising:

means dividing said playing surface into an accessible infield portion wherein a ball may be retrieved by a player and an inaccessible outfield portion wherein a ball cannot be retrieved by a player, and means associated with said inaccessible outfield portion for moving said ball onto said accessible infield portion after it has been in the inaccessible

outfield portion, whereby said ball, after being hit, moves from said accessible infield portion to said inaccessible outfield portion and back to said accessible infield portion.

13. The device of claim 12 wherein said outfield portion is generally inclined downwardly toward the infield portion to provide said moving means as the ball moves thereover by gravity.

14. The device of claim 12 wherein said inaccessible outfield portion includes a shield mounted thereover preventing access to a ball thereunder.

15. The device of claim 12 including ball impeding means in said inaccessible outfield portion for increasing the length of time a ball is in said inaccessible outfield portion.

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