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Reiner

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[54] **TETHERED BALL POKER GAME**

[76] Inventor: **Lawrence L. Reiner,** 1 Hickory Ln., Woodbury, N.Y. 11797

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[51] **Int. Cl.** **A63d 13/00;** A63f 7/10

[58] **Field of Search** ..... 273/119 A, 119 R, 123 A, 273/123 R, 129, 38, 118 R, 102 B; 35/19 R

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Primary Examiner—Richard C. Pinkham
Assistant Examiner—Joseph R. Taylor
Attorney, Agent, or Firm—Amster & Rothstein

[57] **ABSTRACT**

A game of skill which is an improvement upon the variety of impact-transfer device games. A playing area contains a field of ball-capturing scoring depressions. An impact-transfer device, mounted for 360° adjustment about the playing area, includes a swingably mounted striker ball for propelling a succession of playing balls onto the playing area from desired locations about the playing area. A pivotable, relatively stationary impact-transfer object may be included in the impact-transfer device. The game may be set up to play poker, bingo, tic tac toe, anagrams or any one of a variety of games of skill.

11 Claims, 5 Drawing Figures

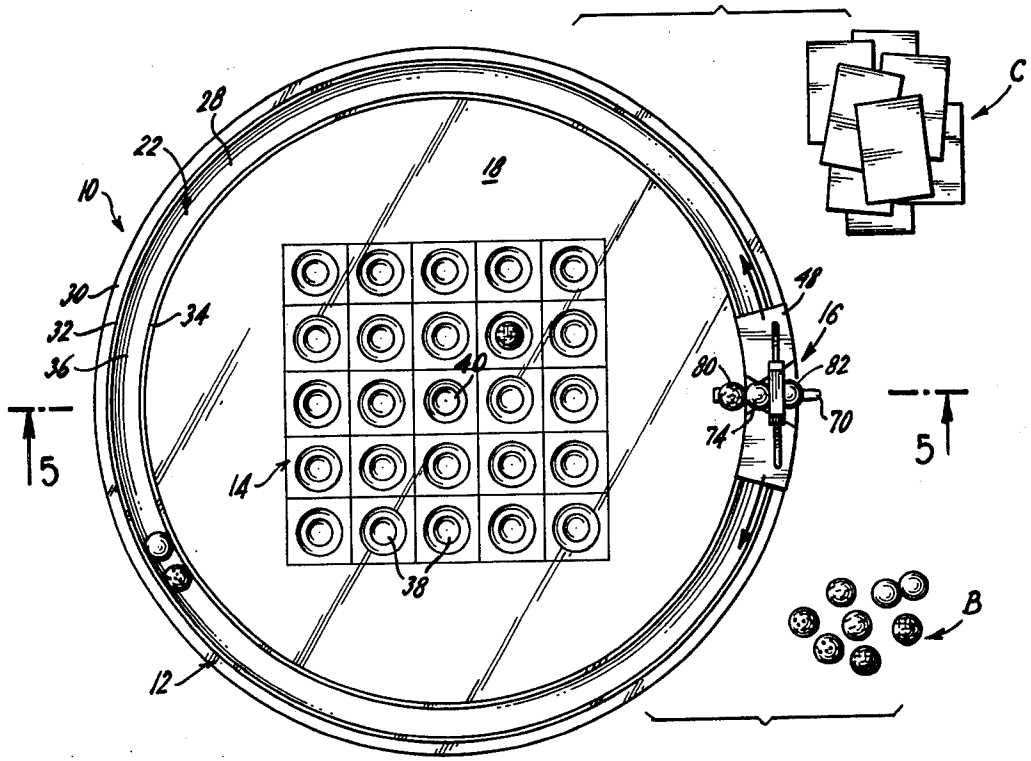


FIG. 1.

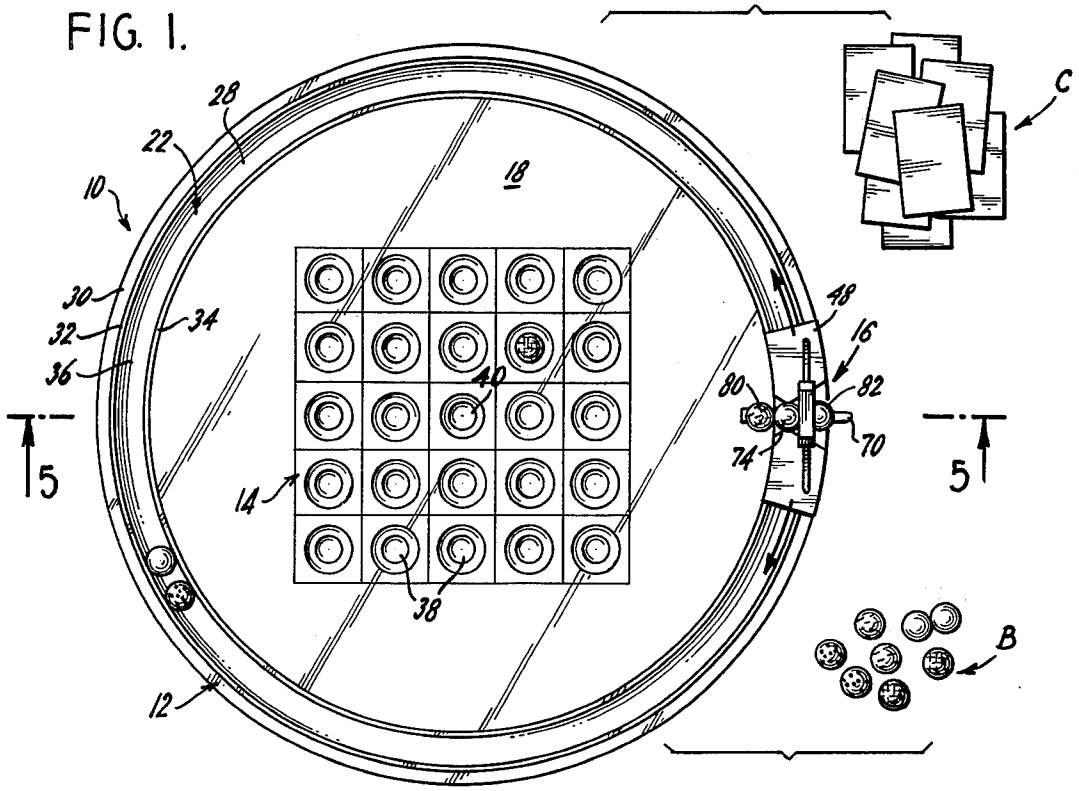


FIG. 2.

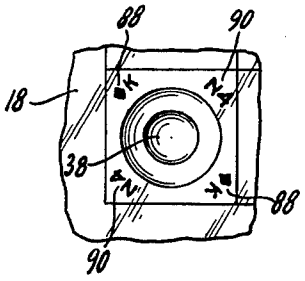


FIG. 3.

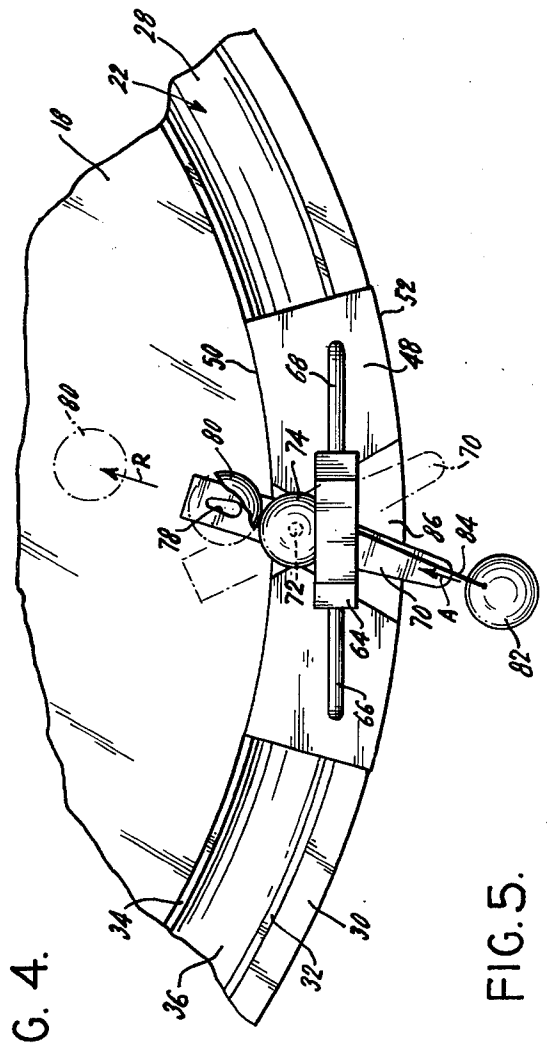


FIG. 4.

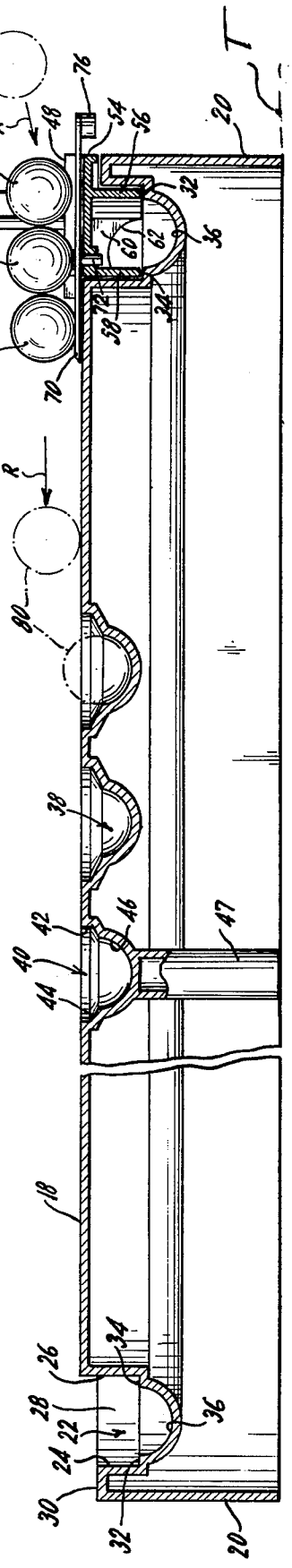


FIG. 5.

TETHERED BALL POKER GAME

The present invention relates generally to games of skill, and in particular to a tethered ball game in which a plurality of playing balls are projected onto a game board during the play of the game.

Various games of skill have been available for play by both children and adults in which one or more playing balls are propelled onto a game board or field, and depending upon the skill of the player, the game proceeds and is scored. Of recent times, a number of games have been placed on the market in which a tethered ball is employed either directly, or through a stationary impact-transfer ball, to propel the playing balls onto the playing field. For example, one such game involves the play of pool in which the playing field is in the form of a miniature pool table having pockets and the pool balls are struck, in accordance with the skill of the player, by the propelling of a cue ball onto the pool table from a fixed location at one side thereof by a cue ball launching mechanism including a tethered striker ball. Another example of a tethered ball game is a variation of skee ball in which a tethered ball-launching device is employed to propel scoring balls up a ramp toward a target consisting of a plurality of concentric ball capturing depressions.

Although the foregoing games have substantial play value and are interesting and intriguing both to children and adults, still further excitement could be generated by introducing further player controls which would determine the play of the game. As a new dimension or variable is added to the player's skill or control, further variants and modifications of such tethered ball games can be created which will have enhanced play value and substantial consumer interest.

It is an object of the present invention to provide an improved game of skill which provides a further dimension of skill and control to the player thereby facilitating the creation of various tethered ball games of enhanced play value.

I have found that a wide variety of new and/or improved tethered ball games can be created by mounting the tethered ball and the associated playing ball or balls for movement about the playing field to various locations determined by the player which permits the player to initially establish the direction of approach of the playing balls onto the playing field. Thus, by initially adjusting the tethered ball launching mechanism relative to the playing field for the particular scoring which the player desires to achieve, the player can then proceed from that adjusted position to launch a ball onto the playing field to score in accordance with the rules for play of the game.

Accordingly, it is a more particular object of the present invention to provide a game of skill in which the impact-transfer device which propels playing balls onto the playing surface is adjusted on a 360° basis about the playing surface such that playing balls may be launched from any direction onto the playing surface. Advantageously, this ball launching mechanism may be used to play a wide variety of ball games including for example, but without limitation, versions of poker, bingo, word games and the like.

In accordance with an illustrative embodiment demonstrating objects and features of the present invention, there is provided a game which comprises a game board having a playing surface adapted to receive a plurality of playing balls. An impact-transfer device is movably mounted on the playing surface and is adjustable to various locations about the playing surface. Provision is made on the impact-transferring device for supporting one or more playing balls in impact-transfer relation to the impact-transfer device which preferably includes a tethered striker ball. Thus, after adjustment of the impact-transfer device, the same may be operated to propel playing balls onto the playing surface from locations determined in the first instance by the adjustment of the impact-transfer device in relation to the playing surface.

The above brief description as well as further objects, features and advantages of the present invention will be more fully understood by reference to the following detailed description of the presently preferred but nonetheless illustrative embodiment in accordance with the present invention, when taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, wherein:

FIG. **1** is a plan view of a representative form of the present invention, with a group of cards and playing balls being shown therein for illustrative purposes;

FIG. **2** is an enlarged fragmentary plan view of one of the ball-capturing scoring depressions in the playing field shown completely in FIG. **1**, with several illustrative game-playing indicia shown thereon, particularly for the play of either poker or bingo;

FIG. **3** is a fragmentary elevational view, with parts broken away and shown in section, taken from the right of FIG. **1**, showing details of the adjustable ball launching mechanism incorporated in the present game;

FIG. **4** is an enlarged fragmentary plan view of the ball launching mechanism with the full lines showing one position of adjustment for the ball launching mechanism with the tethered striker ball approaching a stationary impact-transfer ball and with the dotted lines showing a position for a playing ball as such ball might be propelled onto the playing field and with the further dotted lines showing a further position of adjustment of the aiming device incorporated in such ball launching mechanism; and,

FIG. **5** is a fragmentary sectional view, on an enlarged scale, taken substantially along the line **5—5** in FIG. **1** and looking in the direction of the arrows, showing further details of the game board and ball launching mechanism, with the dotted line showing the path of approach of the tethered striker ball and with the further dotted line showing a typical ball entering the playing field.

Referring now specifically to the drawing and first to FIG. **1**, there is shown an illustrative game embodying features of the present invention, generally designated by the reference numeral **10**, which includes a game board **12** including a playing field **14** and an adjustable ball launching mechanism **16** for launching one or more playing balls, for example from the group of balls B, onto the playing field **14**. In this illustrative form of the invention, which is particularly designed for the play of poker, the additional accessories include a stack or deck of cards C, the purpose of which will be explained hereinafter.

The constructional details of the game board **12** are seen best in FIGS. **1**, **3** and **5**. The game board **12**, which may be a one piece plastic molding, includes a flat circular top wall **18** which is supported by a depending cylindrical supporting wall **20** which is adapted to rest on a table top T or the like. Extending about the

top wall **18** inwardly of the depending supporting wall **20** is an endless trough or guideway, generally designated **22,** which serves a number of functions including initially storing playing balls when not in use, capturing playing balls as they are propelled across the playing surface and miss scoring depressions and mounting the adjustable ball launching mechanism **16.** The construction of the trough **22** and cooperating mounting parts on the ball launching mechanism **16** is such that these several functions can be achieved, yet the balls B are free to occupy any portion of the trough and the ball launching mechanism **16** is free to move to any position of angular adjustment relative to the playing field **14.** Specifically, the trough **22** includes spaced upstanding curved guide walls **24, 26,** which are concentric and extend around the entire circumference of the game board **12** to define a guideway **28** which serves to mount the ball launching mechanism, as will be described. At its upper end circumferentially extending wall **24** is joined to the supporting wall **20** by a marginal flange **30.** At its upper end circumferentially extending wall **26** adjoins the top wall **18** of the game board. At their lower ends, walls **24, 26** are integrally formed with inwardly directed flanges **32, 34** which support a trough body **36** which is semi-spherical in cross-section and extends about the entire circumference of the game board. As will become apparent as the description proceeds, flanges **32, 34** recess the walls **24, 26** of the guideway radially inwardly and outwardly relative to the trough body **36** a distance sufficient to accommodate the depending mounting shoes of the ball launching mechanism, to be subsequently described.

The playing field **14** comprises a regularly spaced field of ball capturing scoring depressions **38.** In the preferred embodiment illustrated, the playing field is shown as a square of five columns of five rows each located substantially centrally within the top wall **18** providing for a total of twenty-five depressions **38.** As the depressions **38** are all substantially alike, only the representative depression **40** at the center of the field will be described. Depression **40** includes a generally vertical mouth defining lip **42** joining the top wall **18** at its upper end and having a radially and inwardly extending conical flange **44** at its lower end. The radially inward end of the flange **44** adjoins the top of a generally hemispherical pocket **46** at its periphery. The radius of the pocket **46** closely approximates the radius of the playing balls B in order to snugly receive any of the playing balls which enter the depressions, having been captured by the lip **42** which has a radius substantially greater than the radius of the playing balls. The center of curvature of the pocket **46** appears without and above the pocket thereby facilitating removal of any captured playing balls B from the depressions. Any balls which are received are held with their centers without and above the pocket's center thereby rendering them easily removable. A rigid hollow cylindrical supporting leg **47** is formed at the lowest end of the central pocket **46** and extends downward to the level of the bottom of the wall **20** to aid in supporting the top wall **18.**

FIGS. **3, 4 & 5** best show the constructional details of the ball launching mechanism **16** which includes an elongated horizontal base wall **48** which is generally arcuate and has an inner edge **50** on a radius of curvature approximately equal to that of the top wall **18** and an outer edge **52** on a radius of curvature approximately equal to that of the supporting wall **20.** The radial extent of the base wall **48** is such that its inner edge **50** is supported by the radially outermost end of the top wall **18** when the ball launching mechanism **16** is in place about the game board **12.** A depending wall **54** is formed at the outer edge **52** of the base wall **48** and overlies the marginal flange **30** which is connected to the supporting wall **20.** Arcuate depending mounting shoes **56** and **58** are spaced radially beneath the base wall **48,** have radii of curvature compatible with guide walls **24** and **26,** and a vertical extent which permits their support by flanges **32** and **34** thus providing guidance and lateral stability for location of the launching mechanism **16** about the playing field **14.** A pair of depending end walls **60** are spaced circumferentially apart beneath the launching mechanism **16** and adjoin the lower end of the base wall **48,** the radially outermost end of the shoe **58** and the radially innermost end of the shoe **56.** The end walls **60** provide rigidity and define an arc **62** with a radius of curvature somewhat greater than the radius of any of the playing balls B and approximately equal to the radius of curvature of the trough body **36** to facilitate the movement of the launching mechanism **16** within the trough **22** despite the presence therein of one or more playing balls as discussed previously.

A hanger **64** is attached to the upper end of a pair of metal frame legs **66, 68** which diverge downwardly and are removably inserted into the base wall **48.** A relatively thin, narrow aiming pointer **70** is pivotally secured to the base wall **48** by a pin **72** which extends downwardly through the pointer, into the base wall **48** and upwardly above the pointer where an impact-transfer ball **74** is held relatively stationary thereby with respect to the ball launching mechanism **16.** A depending finger piece **76** forms the radially outermost portion of the pointer **70** and is used to pivot the pointer about the pin **72** to adjust the pointer with respect to the playing field **14** once the launching mechanism has been positioned at the desired location about the playing field. A seat **78** is formed in the radially inward upper side of the pointer **70,** has a center which is located a distance from the center of the pin **72** approximately equal to the diameter of the playing balls B, and has generally upwardly extending side walls (see FIG. **4**) which diverge from one another in the direction of the impact-transfer ball **74.** The ramp-like construction of the seat **78** urges a typical playing ball **80** of the group of playing balls B into impact-transfer relation with the impact-transfer ball **74** when the playing ball **80** is placed upon the seat **78** for operation of the ball launcher **16.**

A striker ball **82** is tethered to the hanger **64** by means of a cord **84** fixedly attached to both the hanger and the striker ball and of a length adjustable to position the striker ball **82** colinearly with respect to the impact-transfer ball **74** and successive playing balls B. The base wall **48** of the launching mechanism **16** includes a recess **86** (see FIG. **3**) within its uppermost side of a shape to permit adjustment of the pointer **70** to various angled positions (for example as indicated by dotted lines in FIG. **4**) while simultaneously permitting the physical mounting of the pointer relatively close to the top wall **18.** This mounting assures a relatively smooth entry of a played ball onto the playing field **14** and prevents any substantial bounce.

In a typical use, the apparatus described can be set up to play a variation of the card game of poker. A type of high card is poker is possible using only the playing card values **7, 8, 9, 10,** Jack, Queen, King and Ace of each of the four suits (hearts, diamonds, clubs & spades). Some of the playing card values or indicia are associated with the depressions **38** and the remaining values or indicia from the selected card distribution are associated with the playing cards C.

As noted previously, in the illustrative embodiment described, 25 depressions appear within the top wall **18** to form the playing field **14.** A typical depression as seen in FIG. **2** might have indicia **88** representing the King of diamonds in association therewith. The values for the indicia are chosen from the ranking cards mentioned, with six of each of the four suits for a total of 24 different indicia. The central depression might carry indicia designating a Joker for use as any value of 7 through Ace in any suit when a player is able to occupy that central depression with a playing ball B. The remaining, corresponding playing card indicia from the group of 7 through Ace in the four suits not distributed about the depressions would be carried by the cards C with two cards of each suit. The balls B could be arranged with four sub-groups of three balls each with each sub-group carrying like markings of either color or pattern.

To initiate play, two of the Cards C are dealt in turn to each of the players and are maintained concealed from the other players throughout the game. Each player is supplied with a group of three like-designated playing balls B. A player is chosen to initiate play by any of a number of possible methods and the first player places one of his playing balls upon the seat **78** which, due to its ramp-like construction, brings it into impact-transfer relation with the impact-transfer ball **74.** The first player then moves the ball launcher **16** to a location about the playing field **14** by sliding it in the trough **22** until it reaches a location which he considers most favorable. The location of the particular depression **38** containing the indicia which he will aim for is the one he feels would complete the best poker "hand" when combined with the playing cards he has been dealt. (In order to assist the players in determining the ranking of the standard poker hands, a card containing such rankings might be supplied to each player to enable him to better determine which of the depressions he should aim for.)

Once the desired position about the playing surface has been reached, the pointer **70** is pivoted on the pin **72** and the playing ball **80,** in impact-transfer relation with the impact-transfer ball **74** is directed toward the desired depression. The striker ball **82** is moved radially outward from the game board **12** while maintaining the cord **84** taut in order to ensure a degree of predicability in contacting the impact-transfer ball **74.** The striker ball **82** is then either released or propelled forward as indicated by the directional arrow A (FIG. **5**). The striker ball **82** strikes the impact-transfer ball **74** which transfer the impact to the playing ball **80** in impact-transfer relation therewith. The ball **80** is propelled onto the playing field **14** toward the depressions **38** in the direction indicated by the arrow R. If the player is skillful in his play, the ball which is propelled onto the playing field will be captured by a mouth defining lip of the desired depression, be transferred by gravity and the radially inwardly extending flange of that depression to be snugly received by its pocket.

If a player is not skillful, the playing ball which is propelled onto the playing field may land in the wrong depression or overshoot the field and land in the trough **22.** Balls which overshoot the playing field do not add to the value of that player's "hand."

When each of the players in turn has had an opportunity to propel each of his three playing balls B onto the playing field, each player may select one or more of his played balls and elect to attempt to reach a more favorable scoring depression. Alternatively the player may decide to leave the playing balls in the position attained. Upon completion of this subsequent playing period, each player reveals his concealed playing cards C to all of the other players. The holder of the best "hand" is declared the winner.

In another illustrative example of the use of the apparatus of the present invention, the indicia about each of the despressions might represent values for use in playing bingo, as shown by the reference numerals **90** in FIG. **2.** In this illustrative embodiment, a larger number of playing balls B might be supplied and the cards C would contain rows and columns with the word bingo across the top and columns of numbers aligned beneath each of the letters. Each player in turn would then have an opportunity to propel a playing ball onto the playing surface in an attempt to have the ball occupy a depression carrying numerical and alphabetical indicia corresponding to those on his playing card. According to the usual rules obtaining in bingo, the first player to complete a row or column on his card would be declared the winner.

Naturally, any of a wide variety of board games, e.g., tic-tac-toe or word games may be played with the apparatus herein described being used as a selector.

As will be readily apparent to those skilled in the art, the invention may be used in other specific forms or games without departing from its spirit or essential characteristics. For example, the presently illustrated circular shape of the playing field and surrounding trough could be made generally oval. Also, the aiming pointer with the impact-transfer object may be removed and the striker ball used to propel a playing ball onto the playing surface by direct impact-transfer. The present embodiments are, therefore, to be considered as illustrative and not restrictive, the scope of the invention being indicated by the claims rather than by the foregoing description, and all changes which come within the meaning and range of equivalence of the claims are therefore intended to be embraced therein.

What is claimed is:

1. A game comprising a generally circular game board having a playing surface adapted to receive a plurality of playing balls, said playing surface having a field of playing-ball capturing depressions therein, an impact-transfer device including a striker ball and means for swingably mounting said striker ball relative to said impact-transfer device, means for movably mounting said impact-transfer device at various locations about the circumference of said circular playing surface and means for supporting one of said playing balls in impact-transfer relation to said impact-transfer device striker ball, said means for movably mounting said impact-transfer device including guide means extending about the circumference of said game board for guiding said impact-transfer device about the cir-

cumference of said playing surface, said guide means including a trough and means on said impact-transfer device extending into said trough for guiding said impact-transfer device 360° about said game board, said playing ball supporting means being movable with respect to said playing field, said impact-transfer device striker ball being operable to propel said one playing ball onto said playing surface from a location determined by the position of said impact-transfer device about the circumference of said playing surface.

2. A game in accordance with claim **1** wherein said field comprises regularly spaced depressions located substantially centrally upon said playing surface.

3. A game comprising a game board having a playing surface, said game board having a circumference and being adapted to receive a plurality of playing balls, an impact-transfer device, means for movably mounting said impact-transfer device for 360° movement about said circumference at various locations about said playing surface and means for supporting one of said playing balls on said impact-transfer device in impact-transfer relation to said impact-transfer device, said impact-transfer device including an impact-transfer object which is stationary with respect to said impact-transfer device, said playing ball-supporting means being constructed and arranged to support said one playing ball in an impact-transfer relation to said impact-transfer object and means for striking said impact-transfer object to propel said playing ball onto said playing surface from a location determined by the position of said impact-transfer device about said playing surface.

4. A game in accordance with claim **3** wherein said playing surface is generally circular and has a field of playing-ball capturing depressions therein.

5. A game in accordance with claim **4** wherein said field comprises regularly spaced depressions located substantially centrally upon said playing surface.

6. A portable game comprising a generally circular game board which defines a playing surface adapted to receive each of a plurality of playing balls in each of a field of ball-capturing depressions, an impact-transfer device including a striker ball and means mounted on said impact-transfer device for swingably supporting said striker ball relative to said impact-transfer device, means for removably mounting said impact-transfer device for guided 360° movement about the circumference of said playing surface, means for supporting one of said playing balls in impact-transfer relation to said impact-transfer device striker ball and means for operating said impact-transfer device striker ball to propel said one playing ball onto said field of ball-capturing depressions from a location about the circumference of said playing surface.

7. A game in accordance with claim **6** including indicating means in association with each of said ball-capturing depressions for assigning a value to each of said depressions and a plurality of game cards with indicating means thereon whereby each of said game cards is assigned a corresponding value.

8. A game in accordance with claim **7** including alphabetical indicating means in association with each of said ball-capturing depressions for assigning an alphabetical value to each of said depressions, each of said game cards having an alphabetical indicating means thereon substantially identical to the alphabetical indicating means assigned to each of said respective depressions.

9. A game in accordance with claim **7** including numerical and alphabetical indicating means in association with each of said ball-capturing depressions for assigning a numerical and alphabetical value to each of said depressions, each of said game cards having a numerical and an alphabetical indicating means thereon substantially identical to the numerical and alphabetical indicating means assigned to each of said respective depressions.

10. A portable game comprising a generally circular game board which defines a playing surface adapted to receive each of a plurality of playing balls in each of a field of ball-capturing depressions, means for removably mounting an impact-transfer device for guided **360°** movement about the circumference of said playing surface, means for supporting one of said playing balls in impact-transfer relation to said impact-transfer device and means for operating said impact-transfer device to propel said one playing ball onto said field of ball-capturing depressions from a location about the circumference of said playing surface, said game including playing card indicating means in association with each of said ball-capturing depressions whereby a playing card value is assigned to each of said depressions a plurality of game cards, each of said game cards having a playing card indicating means thereon substantially identical to the playing card indicating means assigned to each of said respective depressions.

11. A game comprising a game board having a playing surface adapted to receive a plurality of playing balls, an impact-transfer device, means for movably mounting said impact-transfer device at various locations about said playing surface and means for supporting one of said playing balls in impact-transfer relation to said impact-transfer device, said impact-transfer device including an impact-transfer object which is stationary with respect to said impact-transfer device, means for supporting said one playing ball in an impact-transfer relation to said impact-transfer object, said last named means defining a seat with generally upwardly extending side walls which diverge in the direction of said impact-transfer object, and means for striking said impact-transfer object to propel said playing ball onto said playing surface from a location determined by the position of said impact-transfer device about said playing surface.

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