

Sept. 12, 1967

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3,341,199

BASEBALL AND HOME PLATE

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2 Sheets-Sheet 1

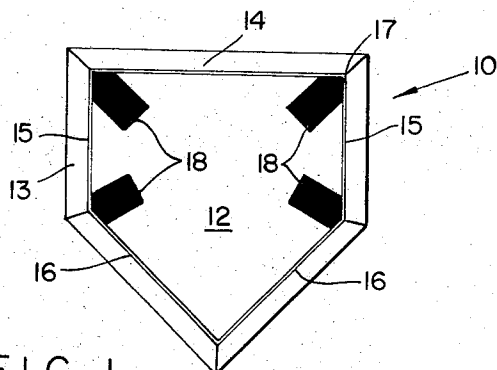


FIG. 1

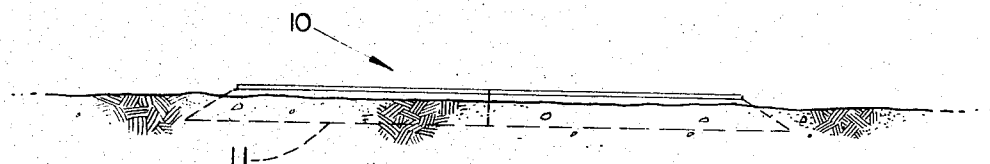


FIG. 2

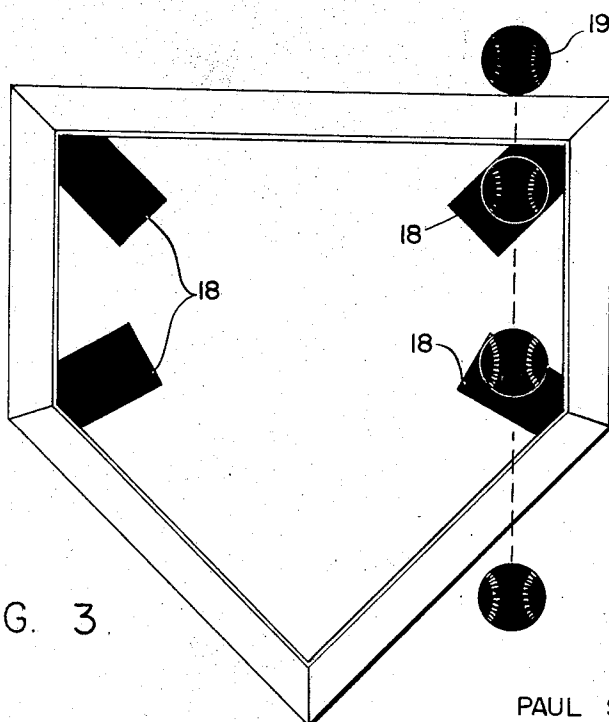


FIG. 3

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2 Sheets-Sheet 2

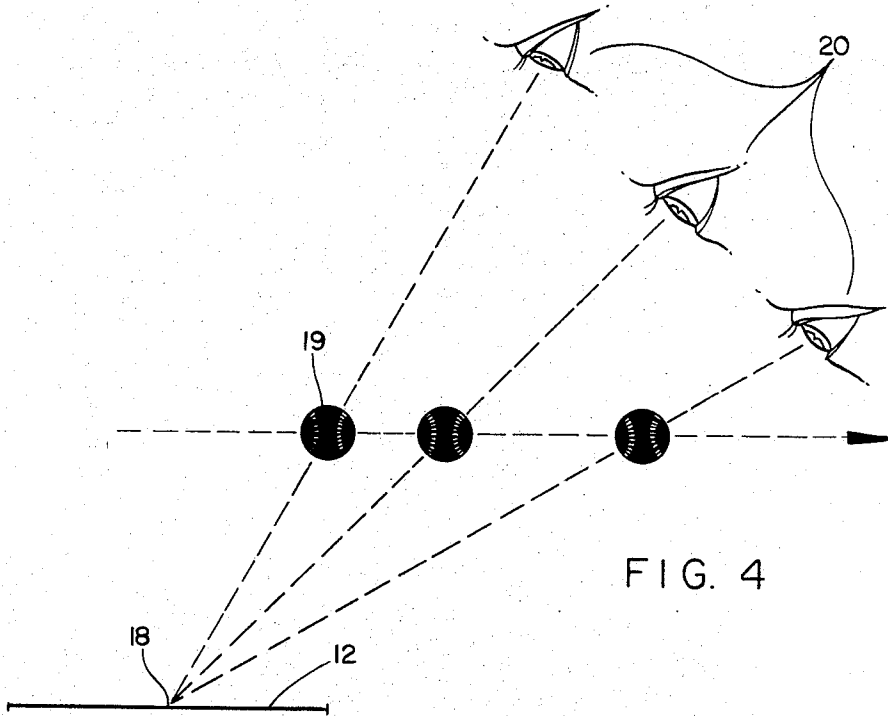


FIG. 4

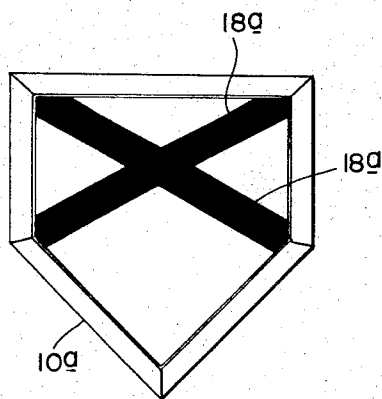


FIG. 5

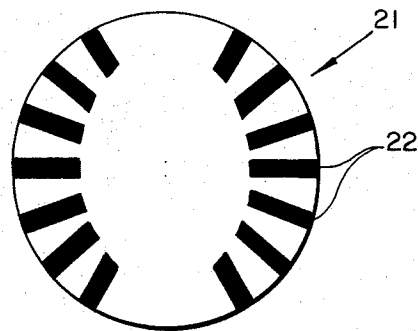


FIG. 6

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BASEBALL AND HOME PLATE

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1 Claim. (Cl. 273-25)

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A baseball home plate having inwardly extending strips at the corners thereof, such strips being of contrasting color to the top surface of the plate, to permit easy observation of a baseball having a color similar to that of the strips when passing over such strips.

This invention generally relates to a new and useful improvement in a baseball home plate so as to render such more useful to an umpire in determining pitched "balls" and "strikes."

The invention more particularly relates to a baseball home plate exhibiting stroboscopic properties in conjunction with pitched balls passing thereacross so as to provide an aid for the umpire in determining whether such pitched balls were "balls" or "strikes."

In the game of baseball it is often of importance to the plate umpire to be able to determine whether or not a pitched ball passes directly over a particular portion of the home plate. As evidenced by the frequent disputes between the plate umpire, the playing participants, and the viewing fans, it is believed basic that it is often difficult to determine whether or not a pitched ball has passed over the home plate, especially when such pitched ball approaches the peripheral portions of the home plate. Thus arises the use of such popular expressions as "nicking the plate" and "hitting the corner." Thus, a means by which the accurate visual determination by the plate umpire of whether or not pitched balls pass over the home plate is enhanced, would be helpful.

It is thus the object of this invention to provide a means by which this visual observation may be enhanced. The present inventor has determined that by placing markings upon the home plate in such a manner that a pitched ball passing over such portions becomes intermittently viewable, that a stroboscopic effect is produced which in turn aids the plate umpire in determining whether the pitched ball is a "ball" or a "strike." By judiciously placing such markings at the lateral portions of the home plate, or more specifically at the corners thereof, such stroboscopic effect is produced only when a pitched ball passes over those portions and thus renders the enhanced visual effect only in those areas which are most difficult to readily observe, to wit, the corners of a home plate. A stroboscopic effect is usually produced by an instrument called a "stroboscope" which may further be defined as an instrument for observing moving bodies by making them visible intermittently and thereby giving such bodies the optical illusion of being stationary. A stroboscope may operate by illuminating the object in question with flashes of light or by imposing an intermittent shutter between the viewer and the object. As above brought out, the present invention is directed to a home plate having alternate portions of dark or light color at the lateral portions or corners thereof so that a pitched ball passing thereover momentarily appears to come in and out of view and produces a stroboscopic effect that could equally be brought about by imposing an intermittent shutter arrangement (however presently impractical) between the umpire and the pitched ball. The rate and duration of the

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visible periods are also adjustable by varying the size and frequency of the home plate markings of the present invention and by so doing, the stroboscopic effect can be enhanced or diminished.

With the above and other objects in view which will hereinafter appear, the nature of the invention will be more clearly understood by reference to the following detailed description, the appended claim, and the several views illustrated in the accompanying drawings.

In the drawings:

FIGURE 1 is a top planar view of a baseball home plate showing portions thereof marked in accordance to the preferred form of the invention;

FIGURE 2 is a front view of the home plate shown in FIGURE 1, and specifically shows such in mounted position;

FIGURE 3 is a top planar view similar to FIGURE 1 but exhibiting the stroboscopic effect produced by a ball passing thereover;

FIGURE 4 is a schematic representation of the stroboscopic effect shown in FIGURE 3 of the drawings taken from the side;

FIGURE 5 is a top planar view of a home plate depicting a modified form of the markings thereon; and,

FIGURE 6 is a top planar view of a modified home plate also encompassed by the present invention.

Referring now to the drawings and more specifically to FIGURE 1 thereof, it can be seen that the home plate of the preferred form of the present invention is of the irregular pentagonal shape normally encountered in home plates and is further identified by the reference numeral 10. The home plate 10 is further comprised of a base portion 11, a top planar surface 12 normally visible when the home plate is in playing position such as shown by FIGURE 2 of the drawings and upwardly sloping side portions 13 which connect the top planar surface 12 with the base portion 11 along the five sides of home plate 10. Further constructional details of home plates of the general aforementioned type may be had by referring to U.S. Patent No. 2,122,266, the specification of which is hereby incorporated by reference.

The home plate of the present invention may be further characterized by the irregular pentagonal shape of its upper surface 12 which includes one long side 14, two short sides 15 adjacent to the long side 14, and two sides 16 of intermediate length and adjacent said shorter sides 15. The two short sides 15 are positioned at right angles to the long side 14 while the two sides 16 of intermediate length are positioned at an angle of approximately 135° with the short sides 15. At each of the four apices 17 of the shorter sides 15, dark elongated strips are placed on the top surface 12 of the home plate as shown. These strips 18 inwardly extend towards the center of the home plate's top surface 12 and are aligned along the bisectrix of each apex 17. These strips may be more accurately described as portions of color contrasting to that of the top surface 12 and may be painted, adhered, or formed integrally with the top surface 12 of the home plate 10.

Turning now to FIGURE 3 of the drawings, the stroboscopic effect exhibited by a ball passing over these portions of contrasting color 18 is shown. The ball 19, for purposes of explanation, will be assumed to be of a dark color similar to that of the portions 18. It should, of course, be recognized that the particular colors selected is not of ultimate concern so long as a contrast which will exhibit a stroboscopic effect is brought about. Thus a pitched ball 19 passing over the darkened portions 18 of the surface 12 in several observable positions as shown by the three eye positions in FIGURE 4 of the drawings, becomes alternately more and less visible as depicted more clearly in the showing of FIGURE 3 of the drawings. Thus a viewing by an umpire depicted by reference

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numeral 20 of a pitched ball 19 which passes over the darkened portions 18 of the home plate 10 becomes more visible through the stroboscopic effect noted above and thus the possibility of the umpire rendering a more accurate decision of whether the pitched ball was in fact a "ball" or a "strike" is increased.

Naturally other designs other than that shown specifically in FIGURES 1 and 3 may be used so long as they incorporate the teachings of the present invention therein. FIGURE 5 of the drawings depicts one such alternate embodiment in which the darkened portions or strips 18a have been extended inwardly towards the center of the home plate so that they cross each other and thus present a modified home plate 10a in which a stroboscopic effect is possible over the entire visible top portion thereof.

FIGURE 6 is a further modification showing the concepts of the present invention incorporated therein wherein a home plate 21 of generally oval shape is therein depicted as having darkened portions or strips 22 of varying length inwardly projecting from the lateral sides thereof toward the center portion. These strips 22 are shorter at the top portions of the home plate 21 as viewed in FIGURE 6 and progressively are extended in length toward the center portions thereof so that a stroboscopic effect may be exhibited by a pitched ball passing over the lateral portions thereof more clearly.

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Although only a single preferred embodiment of the invention has been specifically illustrated along with two alternate embodiments thereof, it is to be understood that modifications may be made within the spirit and scope of the invention herein disclosed as defined in the appended claim.

I claim:

A baseball home plate of irregular pentagonal shaped upper surface having one long side, two short sides at right angles to said long side and two sides of intermediate length each of which is at an angle of approximately 135° with respect to its corresponding shorter side and an inwardly extending and elongated rectangular strip at each apex adjacent to one of said short sides, said strip oriented parallel to the bisectrix of the angle at its respective apex, said strips being further of a color contrasting to that of the top planar surface of said plate, and a baseball having a color similar to that of the strips.

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25 RICHARD C. PINKHAM, *Primary Examiner*.