April 5, 1927. 1,623,038

E. V. BABBITT

BASEBALL GAME APPARATUS

Filed Jan. 22, 1924 2 Sheets-Sheet 1

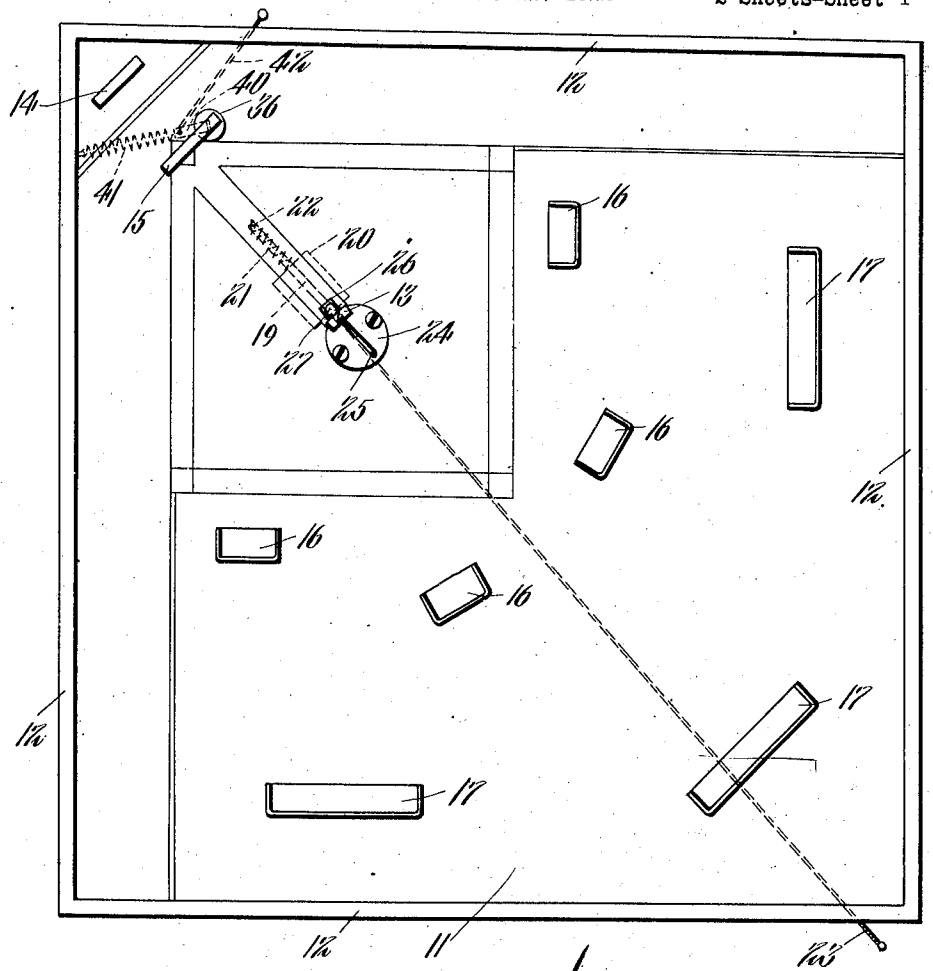


Fig. 1.

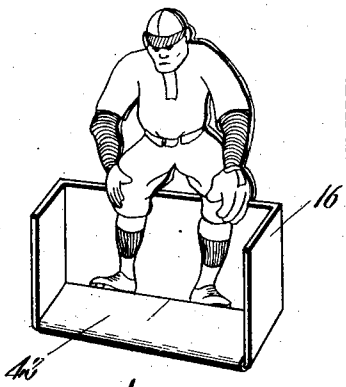


Fig. 2.

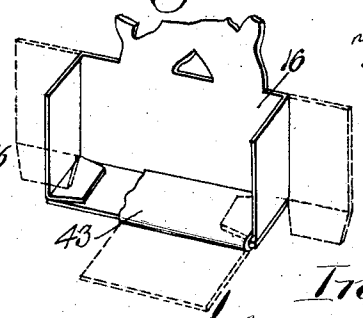


Fig. 2a.

Inventor:
Edwin V. Babbitt.
by Wright, Brown, Quinby & May
Attys.

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E. V. BABBITT

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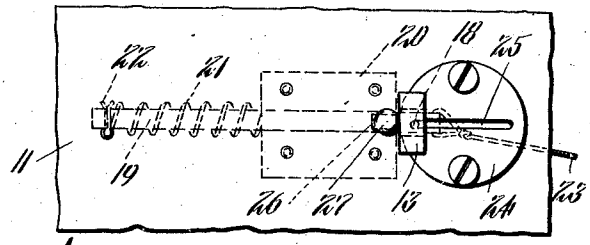


Fig. 4.

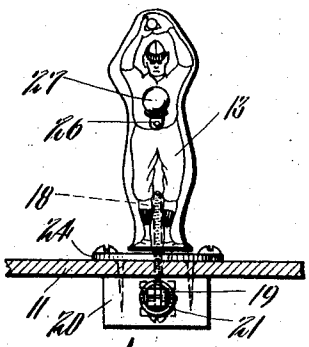


Fig. 3.

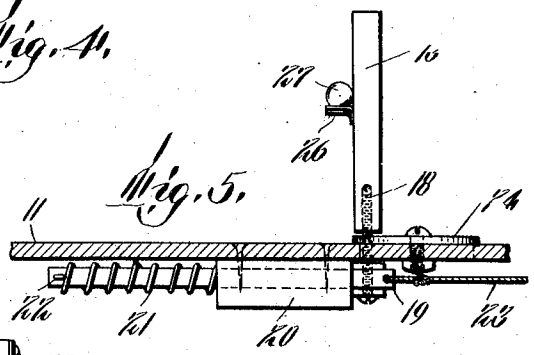


Fig. 5.

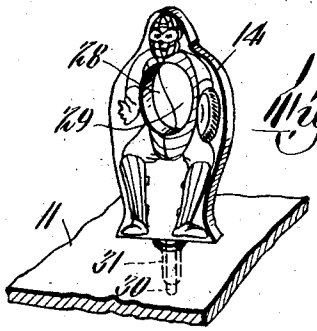


Fig. 6.

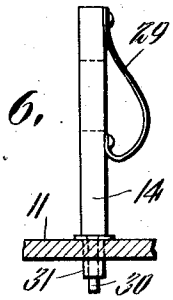


Fig. 7.

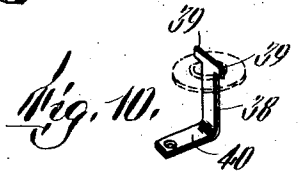


Fig. 10.

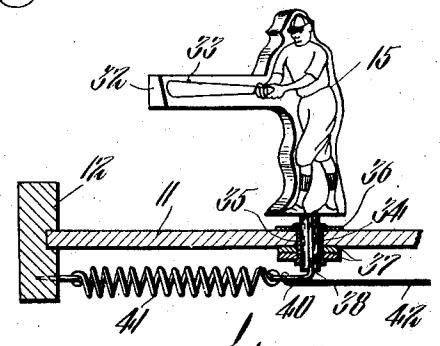


Fig. 8.

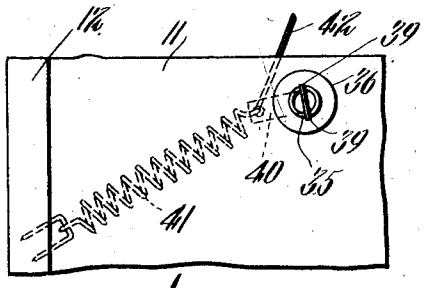


Fig. 9.

Inventor:
Ludwin V. Babbitt.
by Wright, Brown, Quinby & Shay
Attys.

Patented Apr. 5, 1927. 1,623,038

UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE.

EDWIN V. BABBITT, OF FAIRHAVEN, MASSACHUSETTS.

BASEBALL GAME APPARATUS.

Application filed January 22, 1924. Serial No. 687,725.

The subject of the present invention is a game apparatus adapted to simulate on a miniature scale the game of baseball, and to afford to opposing players wide scope for the exercise of skill and judgment in playing the game. The apparatus includes a board, preferably of a size such that it can be placed and used on a small table, for instance a card table, the board being marked to represent a baseball field, and includes also pieces representing the players of one ball team and the batsman of an opposing team.

The improvements in which the invention particularly consist and which I desire to protect in this specification are embodied in a mechanical pitcher operable by one of the opposing players, a mechanical batsman operable by the other opposing player, and a practicable catcher; all of these pieces having improved features of construction and mounted in an improved way, conducive to the general object of giving wider scope to the judgment and skill of the players and of thereby increasing the interest in the game.

In this specification the term "pieces" means those parts of the apparatus which represent the players of the actual game of baseball, namely, the pitcher, catcher, batsman, basemen and fielders. The term "players" means the persons who manipulate the pieces in playing the miniature game by means of this apparatus.

The preferred form and character of the entire apparatus, and the preferred construction and mounting of the pieces in which my present invention particularly resides are shown in the drawings herewith furnished, in which,—

Figure 1 is a plan view of the entire apparatus.

Figure 2 is a perspective view of one of the pieces, specifically a baseman.

Figure 2^a is a broken perspective view showing the construction of said piece.

Figure 3 is a face view of the piece which represents the pitcher of the actual game of baseball and this figure shows also the means for operating such piece.

Figure 4 is a plan view and Figure 5 a longitudinal section showing the same piece and the means for operating it.

Figure 6 is a perspective view and Figure 7 a side elevation of the piece representing the catcher.

Figure 8 is an elevation of the piece representing the batsman and shows in section the means for operating such piece.

Figure 9 is a plan view of that part of the board where the batsman piece is located and shows the means for operating that piece.

Figure 10 is a perspective view of the mechanical part by which rotational movement is given to the batsman piece.

Like reference characters designate the same parts wherever they occur in all the figures.

The game board 11 may be of any material and structure which provides a sufficiently rigid flat surface, and it may be provided with any suitable means for supporting it on a table, and sufficiently above the level of the table to permit manipulation by the players of the means by which the mechanical pieces are operated.

I have here illustrated as the means for thus supporting the board and also as a wall to prevent the ball from rolling off the board, a frame consisting of members 12, 12 formed with grooves in their inner surfaces intermediate their upper and lower edges, into which the edges of the board are set, as shown in Figure 8. The board is marked to represent the conventional baseball field including the diamond, bases, and areas supposed to be covered by the outfielders. The piece representing the pitcher is shown at 13, the catcher at 14, the batsman at 15, the basemen and short stop at 16, 16, and the outfielders at 17, 17.

One of the basemen is shown in Figure 2 and comprises essentially an open-sided box placed on the board so that the ball may enter it when rolling or flying in the proper line to do so. A figure simulating a ball player may be added to this receptable if desired, to give a more artistic appearance to the piece. The outfielder pieces are essentially like the baseman pieces except that they are wider. These pieces are simply placed in their appointed positions on the board and left there to catch the ball or not as it happens to fly or roll in the sectors which they repectively embrace.

The pitcher is adapted to move under the control of one of the players so as to throw a ball in the direction of the catcher. This piece is mounted on a pin 18 (Figures 3 and 5) which rises through the board from a slide 19 mounted in a guide piece 20 below the board. The slide is conveniently a

straight bar of square section, or any other section if desired, and the guide 20 is a block having a guideway to fit the bar. The bar is put under pressure tending to move it to its limit of movement in one direction by a spring 21 which surrounds the bar and bears on a cotter pin 22 therein and reacts against the guide. A cord 23 is attached to the other end of the slide and passes under the board, and through the frame at a point where its end can be grasped and pulled by the player representing the ball team in the field. Limits to the movement of the piece under the pull of the cord and the force of the spring are given by the ends of the slot through which the pin 18 projects; and in order to eliminate wear on the boundaries of the slot in the board, a metal plate 24 is fastened to the upper side of the board and is provided with a slot 25.

The pitcher piece is provided with a rest 26 formed as a shallow trough for supporting the ball 27; and the pitcher is detachably mounted on the pin 18, the latter being preferably threaded and the pitcher piece having a complementally threaded socket. This threaded connection between the pin, which is the carrier for the pitcher, and the pitcher piece itself, affords a simple means for securely mounting the piece in a detachable manner, and, which is more important, it also enables the piece to be adjusted both angularly and vertically, thereby enabling the player to control to a substantial degree the direction in which the ball is thrown and the height of its path. Direction is influenced by the trough-like formation of the ball rest 26, the sides of which so far embrace the ball as to deflect the latter slightly from the line in which the pitcher moves if the pitcher piece should be turned on its carrier pin toward one side or the other of this line. To increase the realistic appearance of the apparatus, the pitcher piece is preferably cut in the outline of a man about to pitch a ball and is decorated on its front and rear faces to represent a pitcher in that attitude.

The catcher piece 14 is formed with a hole 28 enough larger than the ball to permit the latter to pass freely through it when thrown in the right direction and at the right height. In rear of this hole there is attached to the piece a net or stop 29, preferably made from a strip of cloth or netting about as wide as the hole and attached above and below the hole, with some slack. This net stops the ball if it passes through the hole in the catcher and allows the ball to drop or to be easily removed, but without causing the ball to rebound through the hole. The catcher piece is pivotally mounted so that it may turn freely, having for this purpose a pivot pin 30 which fits freely in a bearing tube 31 set in the board. The pivotal mounting of the catcher piece has an important advantage in the playing of the game because it allows the catcher piece to turn, and thereby yield, under the impact of the ball when struck at either side of the hole, since the pivot axis is in or near the vertical diameter of the hole, whereby it checks the ball and causes it to drop on the board without any substantial rebound.

The batsman piece 15 is formed with a lateral projection 32 for a bat, and is preferably otherwise outlined and decorated to represent a ball player holding a bat in position to strike a ball. One important novel feature of this piece is that the face 33 of the bat, which is opposed to the pitcher and receives the impact of the ball, is so beveled that it slopes upwardly away from the pitcher. It is practically a plane sloping surface. This beveled surface causes the ball to be lifted when the bat strikes it properly with sufficient force, and so enables the player manipulating the batsman to knock the ball in a more or less high path, according to the force with which he causes the batsman piece to swing. The batsman is pivoted in the board, having a pin 34, preferably a wooden dowel, which fits freely in a bearing 35. This bearing is conveniently a tubular rivet passing through the board, and through washers 36 and 37 upon and beneath the board, and flanged over the outer sides of these washers. The pin 34 is slotted and receives a machine element 38 which, for convenience of description, I have called a key, and by which oscillative movement is transmitted to the batsman. This so-called key is conveniently made of a strip of sheet metal having sufficient stiffness for the purpose in view and cut to a width less than the diameter of the bearing 35, so that it may be pass through said bearing and turn freely therein. That is, all of the key except the upper end is of the width indicated, but such upper end is provided with wings 39 at each side, as shown in Figure 10, which rest on the upper end of the bearing and support the key and the batsman piece. The lower end of this key member protrudes from the bearing and is bent to one side, forming an arm 40 to which are connected a spring 41 and a cord 42. The spring is fastened to one of the adjacent members of the board frame by a staple or any other suitable means, and the cord passes through an adjacent member of the frame where it can be conveniently grasped and pulled by the player whose side is supposed to be at the bat.

The relation of the key piece to the spring and to the batsman determines the position of rest of the latter. This position of rest occurs when the arm 40 is in line with the pull of the spring. The anchorage of the spring is located at a conveniently near

point on the adjacent member of the frame, although not necessarily at the nearest point; and the slot in the pivot of the batsman piece which receives the key is located in such a plane that when the key piece is at rest the bat will project across the line of travel of the pitcher, either squarely or at such other angle as the maker of the apparatus may deem best. Then the cord 42 is led away at a wide enough angle to the arm 40 to insure the piece being turned when the cord is pulled upon, and also to enable the bat to be swung altogether out of the path of the pitched ball.

In playing miniature baseball by the aid of this apparatus, the player who manipulates the pitcher draws back the pitcher, putting the spring 21 under stress, and then lets go, after having given the opposing player warning of his intention to do so. The distance to which the pitcher is pulled back before being released determines the force with which the ball is pitched; and this, together with the adjustment of the pitcher as previously described, determines the trajectory of the ball. The ball can be pitched straight and true enough to pass through the hole in the catcher piece to count as a strike, if the batsman has missed it or failed to swing at it, or it can be thrown low enough or enough to one side to mislead the batsman player and cause him to strike at a ball which cannot be hit.

Meanwhile the player who manipulates the batsman draws the batsman piece aside preparatory to the pitching of the ball, and at the signal given by the pitcher player when the ball is about to be delivered he either releases the batsman piece, or fails to do so, according as his judgement indicates that the ball to be pitched will count as a "strike" or as a "ball." When by releasing the batsman piece more or less suddenly this player can, if he has correctly estimated the character of the ball being pitched, knock the ball more or less high, this being permitted by the beveled formation of the bat. In fact, it is possible in the various conditions which may arise in the playing of this game to strike the ball in practically all the ways and all the directions in which the ball is struck in the actual game of baseball.

For the rest, and in order to carry out the game similarly to actual baseball, I have provided markers to indicate base runners and their positions, and other accessories to settle disputed questions which may arise in the course of the game; but as I make no claim to these adjuncts I have not shown or described them herein.

Most of the rules of actual baseball are applicable to the miniature game, with certain conventions made necessary by the inanimate character of the pieces. If the batsman strikes at the ball without hitting it, or if the batsman player fails to strike and the ball passes through the hole in the catcher, it counts as a "strike." If the batsman player fails to swing and the ball does not go through the hole in the catcher, this counts as a "ball." If the ball is hit by the batsman it may be knocked in any one of a great variety of ways, for instance as a foul, a high or low fly, a grounder, etc. If the ball is stopped by any of the pieces representing the fielders, basemen or short stop after being struck by the batsman, the player at the bat is out, but if the ball passes between or over the pieces in the field the play counts as a one, two or three base hit or a home run, according to the special rules which may be established.

An important and valuable feature of the game apparatus consists in the simplicity of its mechanical features and the low cost at which the pieces and the means for manipulating them may be made. The mechanical pieces, by which I mean the pitcher, batsman and catcher, may be cut from thin board stock; the pivot for the batsman may be a wooden dowel cut by a saw to provide the slot for the operating key; the key may be stamped from thin sheet metal; the bar which supports the carrier pin for the pitcher may be a single wooden rod; the guide 20 for the bar may be made from a block of wood attached to the game board by nails, and the carrier pin itself may be a stove bolt such as can be secured in the open market at low cost, passed through the bar and secured by nuts at either side of the bar. The other pieces may be made of stiff paper stock bent up in the form shown in Figure 2 and formed with wings which overlap at the bottom of the open box which is thereby formed, and are secured by a binding 43 of sheet metal, such binding serving also as a reinforce for the only part of the box which is subject to much wear. Finally the bearings for the pivoted batsman and catcher may be provided by tubular rivets which are obtainable in large quantities at low cost. The foregoing statement of materials and structures, however, is illustrative of what may be used, and does not indicate limitation of the invention thereto.

What I claim and desire to secure by Letters Patent is:

1. In a baseball game apparatus, a mechanical pitcher piece adapted to be manipulated so as to throw a ball through the air, a mechanical batsman piece operable to strike at the ball so thrown, and a catcher piece having an opening through which the ball my pass and being so pivoted that it may be turned by a ball striking the piece at one side of such opening.

2. In a baseball game apparatus, a mechanical pitcher piece adapted to be manipu-

lated so as to throw a ball, a mechanical batsman piece operable to strike at the ball so thrown, and a catcher piece having an opening large enough to admit a ball, which opening, however, is of less width than the piece itself and is enclosed on both sides by the material of the piece, the catcher piece being pivoted on an axis substantially coincident with the vertical diameter of said opening, whereby the piece may be turned by a ball striking it at either side of the opening.

3. In a baseball game apparatus, a board having a perforation forming a bearing, a batsman piece having a slotted pivot rotatably and removably contained in said bearing, a key piece detachably entered in the slot of said pivot and having an arm, a spring connected to said arm and to the board tending to place the batsman piece in a given position, and a connection for operation by the player to swing the batsman piece against the opposition of said spring.

4. In a baseball game apparatus, a board having a bearing recess passing through it, a mechanical batsman piece provided with a pivot rotatably seated in said bearing piece and having a slot, a key piece fitting said slot and having an arm extending beneath the board, a spring fastened to said arm and to the board, a cord fastened to the arm and adapted to be moved so as to swing said arm and put said spring under stress, at the same time swinging the batsman, a pitcher piece adapted to be manipulated so as to throw the ball, and a catcher piece arranged in the path of the ball so thrown and at the opposite side of the batsman piece from the pitcher piece.

5. In a baseball game apparatus, the combination with a board of pieces representing a pitcher, a batsman and a catcher, means for manipulating the pitcher piece so as to deliver a ball, the batsman piece having a lateral arm representing a bat, which arm is formed with an inclined, substantially plane, face toward the pitcher piece, and means for swinging the batsman piece so as to strike at a ball delivered by the pitcher piece.

6. In a baseball game apparatus, the combination with a board of pieces representing a pitcher, and a batsman means for manipulating the pitcher piece so as to deliver a ball, the batsman piece having a lateral arm representing a bat, the face of which arm opposed to the pitcher piece is substantially plane and inclined so as to slope upwardly and backwardly from the pitcher piece, and means for swinging the batsman piece so as to strike at a ball delivered by the pitcher piece.

7. In a baseball game apparatus, a board having a bearing opening through it, a key piece formed from a strip of sheet metal contained in said bearing and having wings on its upper end resting on the upper edge of the bearing, said key piece having a lateral arm beneath the board, a spring connected to said arm and anchored to the board, a cord fastened to said arm and adapted to be pulled upon so as to swing the arm against the resistance of the spring, and a batsman piece having a pivot adapted to fit in said bearing and provided with a slot to receive said key piece.

8. In a baseball game apparatus, a board, a tubular rivet mounted in said board to form a bearing, a sheet metal key piece passing through said bearing having wings on its upper end resting on the bearing and provided beneath the bearing with a laterally extending arm, a spring and a cord, both attached to said arm, the spring being anchored to the board, and a batsman piece having a pivot fitting rotatably in said bearing, which pivot is slotted to receive said key piece.

9. In a baseball game apparatus, a board, pieces mounted on said board to represent a pitcher and a catcher, the pitcher piece being mounted with provision for manipulation to deliver a ball, the board having a passage forming a bearing at a location intermediate the pitcher and catcher pieces, a flat key piece located in said bearing and rotatable therein having a laterally extending arm beneath the board, a spring connected to said arm and anchored to the board, normally holding the key piece in a given position, a batsman piece having a pivot fitting rotatably in said bearing, which pivot is slotted to receive the key piece and the slot is located at such an angle that the key piece normally holds the batsman piece with its bat across the line between the pitcher and catcher, and a cord attached to the aforesaid arm and extending thence in a direction enabling it, when pulled upon, to swing the batsman piece aside from said line.

10. In a baseball game apparatus, a board having a slot, a guide secured to the under side of the board, a slide arranged in said guide to move parallel with the slot, a carrier member projecting upward from said slide through the slot, a pitcher piece mounted on said carrier member and having means for holding a ball, a cooperating piece facing the pitcher piece in the line of said slot, means enabling a player to move the pitcher piece and slide away from the cooperating piece, and a spring acting on said slide tending to project it toward the cooperating piece.

11. In a baseball game apparatus, a board having a slot, a guide secured to the under side of the board, a slide arranged in said guide to move parallel with the slot, a carrier member projecting upward from said slide through the slot, a pitcher piece mounted on said carrier member and having

means for holding a ball, said means having a trough-shaped rest projecting from the front side of the pitcher piece, a cooperating piece facing the pitcher piece in the line of said slot, means enabling a player to move the pitcher piece and bar away from the cooperating piece, and a spring acting on said slide tending to project it toward the cooperating piece, the pitcher piece being adjustable angularly on the carrier member, whereby its trough-shaped rest may be so aimed as to deflect the ball from the line of travel of the pitcher piece.

12. In a baseball game apparatus the combination with a board of a carrier member guided to move in a given path substantially parallel to the plane of said board, and a pitcher piece mounted on said carrier member and having means for holding a ball, said means including a trough shaped rest projecting from the front side of the pitcher piece; said pitcher piece being adjustable angularly on the carrier member to aim said rest divergently from the line of travel of the pitcher piece.

13. In a baseball game apparatus the combination of a board, a pitcher piece and means for moving said pitcher piece in a given path relatively to the board, said pitcher piece having a ball support formed to permit the ball to leave the pitcher piece upon arrest of said piece after being put in motion in its prescribed path; said support having guiding portions adapted to influence the path in which the ball travels when so leaving the pitcher piece, and being adjustable angularly with respect to the path in which the pitcher piece moves.

14. In a baseball game apparatus the combination of a board, a pitcher piece and means for moving said pitcher piece in a prescribed path of limited extent, said pitcher piece having a ball guiding rest adapted to support a ball and permit such ball to leave the pitcher piece upon arrest of the latter after having been put in motion, said rest being laterally adjustable angularly to aim the ball divergently from the path of the pitcher piece.

15. In a baseball game apparatus, a board having a slot, a carrier member slidingly mounted underneath said board and projecting upward through said slot, a pitcher piece adjustably mounted on said carrier member and having a ball supporting rest, a spring acting on said carrier member tending to hold it at one end of the slot, said carrier member being movable by manipulation of the player toward the opposite end of said slot.

16. In a baseball game apparatus, a board having a slot, a slide mounted underneath the board and guided to move in a path parallel to said slot, a carrier pin projecting upwardly from said slide through said slot, and a spring acting on said slide tending to hold it with the pin at one end of said slot.

17. In a baseball game apparatus, a board, a block secured to the under side of said board and having a guideway, the board having a slot parallel to said guideway and extending away from one end of the block, a bar slidingly mounted in said guideway and protruding at both ends from the block, a spring surrounding one protruding end of the bar and bearing against an abutment thereon, and reacting against the block, a cord secured to the other protruding end of the bar and adapted to be pulled upon so as to move the bar against the resistance of said spring, a screw pin projecting from the bar through the slot in the board, and a pitcher piece screwed upon the pin above the board, said pitcher piece having a ball rest and being adjustable on the pin both angularly and as to its height above the board.

18. In a baseball game apparatus, a board, and a player piece in the form of an open sided box adapted to catch a batted ball, said player piece being of flexible box board bent into the prescribed shape and having adjacent wings at the bottom and a binding of sheet metal embracing and gripping said wings.

In testimony whereof I have affixed my signature.

EDWIN V. BABBITT.