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(71) Applicant (for all designated States except US): **MATTEL, INC.** [US/US]; 333 Continental Blvd., El Segundo, CA 90245-5012 (US).

(72) Inventors; and

(75) Inventors/Applicants (for US only): **WEIDETZ, Erich** [US/US]; 8300 Manitoba Street, Apt. 116, Playa Del Rey, CA 90293 (US). **DERMAN, Scott** [US/US]; 8300 Manitoba Street, Apt. 116, Playa Del Rey, CA 90293 (US).

(74) Agent: **DEVOE, Charles, H.**; Kolisch Hartwell, P.C., 520 S.W. Yamhill Street, Suite 200, Portland, OR 97204 (US).

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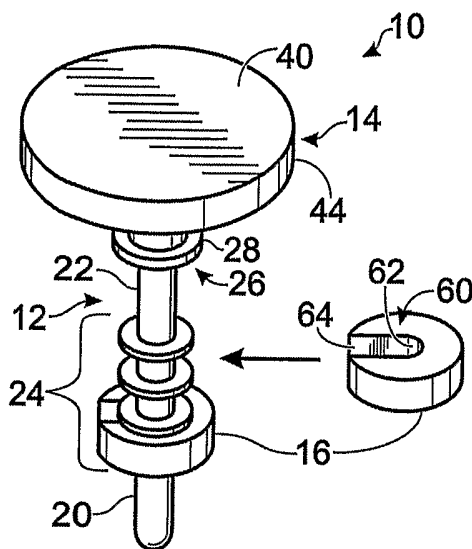
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(54) Title: GAMES WITH ADJUSTABLE SPINNING TOPS



(57) Abstract: Toy top kits may include a spindle having a lower end configured to engage a surface, an upper end having a first coupling portion, and a plurality of mounting sites, one or more weight members each configured to be removably mounted to a mounting site, and one or more caps each having a top surface, a bottom surface, configuration indicia, and a second coupling portion adapted to releasably engage the first coupling portion. Tops may be assembled by engaging a randomly selected cap with the upper end of a spindle and mounting weight members to the spindle according to the configuration indicia of the selected cap. Assembled tops may be spun simultaneously on a play surface, and the score corresponding to the top that remains spinning longest may be incremented.

GAMES WITH ADJUSTABLE SPINNING TOPS

Related Applications

[001] This application is based upon and claims priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) to the U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/688,223 entitled “Game with Adjustable Spinning Tops” and filed on June 6, 2005, the disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety for all purposes.

Technical Field

[002] The present disclosure is directed to spinning tops, and more particularly to adjustable tops and methods of game play suitable for use with adjustable tops. An adjustable top may be configured to have one or more adjustable characteristics such as weight, center of gravity, and so forth, which may affect spin behavior of the top. Such characteristics may be adjusted, for example, by use of a telescoping spindle, a removable cap, and/or one or more weights that may be removably mounted to the spindle. Some caps may include indicia indicating a specific configuration or adjustment of a top to which such a cap is attached, and/or other decorative, ornamental, or game play indicia. Methods of game play for such tops may include selecting a cap, assembling or adjusting a top according to the indicia on the cap, spinning several assembled tops simultaneously, and incrementing the score corresponding to the top that remains spinning longest.

Background

[003] Examples of spinning tops are found in the disclosures of U.S. Patent Nos. 537,887, 541,802, 1,139,119, 1,160,618, 1,974,516, 3,906,660, 5,324,226, Des. 301,259, and U.S. Patent Application Pub. No. 2004/0077271. Examples of spinning tops with adjustable and/or removable components are found in the disclosures of U.S. Patent No. 3,876,205,

5,020,798, 6,626,729, and UK Patent Application No. GB 2,371,496. Examples of play structures suitable for use with spinning tops are found in U.S. Patent Nos. 4,982,961; 6,739,939; and 6,905,389. Examples of games that include spinning tops are found in the disclosures of 2,639,921 3,143,347, 4,007,935, 4,256,306, 4,856,790, 4,982,961, 6,739,939; Des. 162,100; U.S. Patent Application Pub. No. 2004/0198152; BeyBlade's "Battle Tops" line of toys; and the Mattel "Battling Tops" game. All of the aforementioned disclosures are incorporated herein by reference.

Summary

[004] In some embodiments, an adjustable toy top may be assembled from components of a toy top kit including a spindle, a cap that may be affixed to the upper end of a spindle, and one or more weight members that may be removably mounted to the spindle. The spindle may include a plurality of mounting sites to which the weight members may be mounted, such as to initially configure or to adjust one or more characteristics of the assembled top, such as weight, center of gravity, and so forth. Optionally, some tops or top components may include telescoping structure to allow a cap to be affixed in one of a plurality of predetermined positions relative to a vertical axis of the spindle. Such structure may be included in or on the cap, the spindle, or both. Optionally, each of a plurality of interchangeable caps may be used to adjust one or more characteristics of an assembled top. Adjusting top characteristics such as weight or center of gravity may affect one or more aspects of the top's spin behavior when spun on a surface, such as duration of spin, translational movement of the spinning top on the surface, stability of the spinning top after colliding with an obstacle (such as another spinning top), and so forth.

[005] In some embodiments, each cap may include configuration indicia, such as to indicate a configuration of one or more top components in an assembled top. For example,

configuration indicia may indicate the number and position of weight members mounted to one or more mounting sites on the spindle, a predetermined position of the cap relative to the spindle, and so forth. Each cap may optionally include other game indicia such as categorizational indicia, decorative indicia, trade dress indicia, and/or other indicia.

[006] Play sets for use with the toy tops of the present disclosure may include a play structure with a play surface and one or more launching sites configured to release a toy top onto the play surface when a rotational force is imparted to the top. Such play structures may further include slots configured to display caps, numbered holes with removable pegs, and/or other scoring means. Methods of game play for such adjustable tops may include affixing a randomly-selected cap to a spindle, assembling or adjusting a top according to the indicia of the cap, spinning several assembled tops simultaneously, and incrementing the score corresponding to the top that remains spinning longest. In some embodiments, caps may be selected from a supply of caps, such as provided with a game set. Between two players, the results of spinning competitions may be indicated by rewarding the winning player with the cap of the defeated player's top, which the winning player may display on the play structure.

[007] Optionally, some caps may have limited availability relative to other caps, which may provide a collectible element to some aspects of game play. Thus, in some embodiments, caps for game play may be selected from a player's personal collection. In such embodiments, players may compete for or otherwise exchange caps, and/or exercise strategy in selecting one or more caps to use during game play.

[008] The adjustable tops and methods of the present disclosure will be understood more readily after a consideration of the drawings and the Detailed Description.

Brief Description of the Drawings

[0009] Fig. 1 is a three-dimensional view of an exemplary embodiment of an assembled toy top according to the present disclosure, which shows a cap attached to an upper end of a spindle having several mounting sites, a removable weight mounted to a mounting site, and how another removable weight may be mounted to a different mounting site.

[0010] Fig. 2 is a cross-section view of the assembled toy top of Fig. 1, without the removable weights, showing how the cap is attached to the upper end of the spindle.

[0011] Fig. 3 is a partial cross-section view similar to that shown in Fig. 2, showing how the cap engages the upper end of the spindle.

[0012] Fig. 4 is a partial cross-section view of an alternative embodiment of an assembled toy top, showing a spindle with an elongate upper end and a cap with an elongate hollow sleeve extending from the bottom surface, the cap attached to the upper end.

[0013] Fig. 5 is a partial cross-section view of another alternative embodiment of an assembled toy top, showing a spindle with an elongate upper end, an extension member attached thereto, and a cap attached to the extension member.

[0014] Fig. 6 shows exemplary cap shapes suitable for use with the tops of Figs. 1–5.

[0015] Fig. 7 shows the top surfaces of two exemplary caps, each of which are shown to include configuration indicia and differentiable categorizational indicia.

[0016] Fig. 8 shows a three-dimensional view of an exemplary embodiment of a play structure with a central play surface and several launching sites disposed at the perimeter, and

scoring means including a plurality of slots disposed on a retaining wall, with two assembled toy tops spinning on the play surface and one toy top received in a launching site.

[0017] Fig. 9 shows a partial three-dimensional view of an alternative embodiment of a play structure with scoring means including a plurality of numbered holes each configured to receive a scoring peg.

Detailed Description

[0018] Referring to Fig. 1, an exemplary toy top 10 is shown to include a vertically-oriented spindle 12, to which is affixed a cap 14 and a weight member 16.

[0019] As shown in Figs. 1 and 2, spindle 12 includes a lower end 20, an upper end 22, and a plurality of mounting sites 24 disposed between the ends 20, 22. Lower end 20 is shown to be rounded, but may be configured as desired to engage, and rotate upon, a surface. Upper end 22, also shown in Fig. 3, further includes a first coupling portion 30, shown as an outwardly protruding shoulder 32 adjacent a groove 34. As explained in more detail below, first coupling portion 30 is adapted to releasably engage corresponding coupling structure on a cap.

[0020] Mounting sites 24 on spindle 12 are shown to be a series of channels 36, defined by a series of protruding ridges 38. As shown in Fig. 1 and as explained in more detail below, the mounting sites are adapted to removably receive weight members 16.

[0021] Referring generally to Figs. 1–3, cap 14 is shown to be substantially disc-shaped, with a generally flat top surface 40, a bottom surface 42, and a peripheral edge 44. Cap 14 includes a second coupling portion 50, shown as a hollow sleeve 52 extending from bottom surface 42. Hollow sleeve 52 further includes an interior rib 54.

[0022] First and second coupling portions 50, 50 are configured to be releasably engaged with each other, to allow cap 14 to be affixed to (and removed from) the upper end of spindle 12. As shown in Fig. 3, the various components of the coupling portions of exemplary top 10 allow the cap to be affixed to the spindle in a snap fit relationship, with hollow sleeve 52 shaped to accommodate upper end 22. More specifically, when cap 14 is urged downward on the upper end of spindle 12, interior rib 54 engages groove 34, affixing the cap in place. Shoulder 32 provides additional structural support for cap 14 on spindle 12, and may also serve to limit downward motion of the cap on the spindle beyond the point at which interior rib 54 engages groove 34.

[0023] Although a snap fit relationship is shown, the coupling portions may take any appropriate form, and may include any manner of components including mechanical linkages, magnetic linkages, adhesive linkages, and so forth, that are collectively configured to establish a releasable connection or other engagement of the cap with the spindle. Some embodiments may include combinations of such components. For example, some embodiments that include coupling portions that are adapted to fit together in a snap fit relationship may also include a magnetic linkage, such as a magnetically attractive part on one of the coupling portions and a magnetically attracted part on the other coupling portion.

[0024] Some embodiments, such as a toy top kit, may include a plurality of interchangeable caps, each with similarly structured coupling portions, so that each cap may be affixed to (and thereafter removed from) spindle 12 or any other similarly configured spindle.

[0025] Weight members 16 may also be removably mounted to the spindle. Fig. 1 shows two weight members 16, one of which is mounted to a mounting site on the spindle, the other of which is shown separately to illustrate structural features of the weight member.

Specifically, weight member 10 includes mounting portion 60, shown as a notch 62 defined by an interior wall 64. As shown, interior wall 64 is configured to engage a mounting site so that the weight member may be removably mounted to the spindle. In the illustrated embodiment, notch 62 and/or interior wall 64 are configured for a frictional engagement with spindle 12, and more specifically to a mounting site of spindle 12, of sufficient retention so that the weight members do not come loose when the top is spun. As such, one or more ridges 34 may enhance the frictional engagement. Optionally, or in other embodiments, weight members 16 may include clip structure or other structural components by which the weight members may be removably mounted to one or more of the mounting sites on a spindle.

[0026] As described in more detail below, weight members 16 may be used to configure an assembled toy top to have a desired weight distribution or center of gravity. More specifically, in embodiments that include a plurality of identically configured weight members, such as a toy top kit, the center of gravity of a toy top may be initially configured by removably mounting one or more weight members to one or more of the mounting sites, and thereafter adjusted by changing the number and/or position(s) of the weight member(s) on the spindle. In embodiments that include a plurality of weight members with different weights, weight distributions, or other characteristics, the nature of the weight members mounted to the spindle, in addition to the number and position(s) of the weight member(s) on the spindle, may adjust spin behavior of the assembled top.

[0027] In addition, or as an alternative, to adjusting characteristics of the top by means of weight members, some embodiments may include top components with telescoping structure. Such structure may allow the length of the spindle to be adjusted, or allow the cap to be

affixed in one of a plurality of predetermined positions relative to a vertical axis of the spindle, and so forth. Such structure may be included in or on the cap, the spindle, or both.

[0028] For example, Fig. 4 shows an alternative embodiment of a top 60 in which a spindle 12 includes a first coupling portion 30 having a shoulder 32 and three grooves 34 disposed along an elongate upper end 22. A cap 14 includes second coupling portion 50 with an elongate hollow sleeve 52 with an interior rib 54. As described above with respect to top 10, first and second coupling portions 30, 50 are configured to be releasably engaged with each other, to allow cap 14 to be affixed to (and removed from) spindle 12. However, in the alternative embodiment shown in Fig. 4, cap 14 may be affixed to spindle 12 in any of a plurality of predetermined and separate positions. Specifically, the cap may be pushed downward or pulled upward on the spindle so that the interior rib engages any of the grooves 34. Each position results in adjusting the length of the top, and thus may also result in changing the center of gravity of top 60. In a telescoping embodiment, the spindle may also be configured to receive removable weight members, such as to provide or to limit options for adjusting the weight and/or center of gravity.

[0029] Another example of a top with telescoping structure is shown in Fig. 5, in which a top 70 includes a spindle 12 with a first coupling portion 30, similar to that shown in Fig. 4, and a cap 14 with a second coupling portion 50 having a hollow sleeve 52 and an interior rib 54, similar to that shown in Fig. 2. However, second coupling portion 50 is also shown to include an extension member 72 that includes structural elements adapted to allow a cap 14 with a “short” sleeve to be affixed in any of several predetermined positions on a “long” upper end of a spindle. Specifically, extension member 72 itself is shown to include an upper end portion 74 adapted to be affixed to a cap, and a lower end portion 76 adapted to allow cap 14 to engage a first coupling portion on a spindle, in any of a plurality of predetermined and

separate positions — specifically, positions in which structure in the lower end portion 76 engages any of the grooves 34.

[0030] Thus, tops 10, 60, and 70 are adjustable in the sense that the mass and/or the center of gravity may be adjusted by removably mounting one or more weights to the spindle and/or by using the telescoping structure to affix a cap in one of a plurality of predetermined positions relative to the spindle.

[0031] As briefly mentioned above with respect to weight members 16, the various top components may be fabricated from a material such as plastic or some other resinous material, and/or may have metal parts, or be otherwise fabricated from one or more suitable materials, so that the various components may have a weight distribution and/or center of gravity. These components may in turn determine or affect spin behavior of the top when spun on a surface, such as duration of spin, translational movement of the spinning top on the surface, stability of the spinning top after colliding with an obstacle (such as another spinning top), and so forth.

[0032] Thus, some embodiments may include a plurality of each top component, each of which may have a different weight, weight distribution, center of gravity, and so forth, from others of its type, such that a top may be assembled to achieve a desired spin behavior, either by randomly assembling top components or by assembling specific components according to a predetermined configuration. In such embodiments, each component may be shaped or marked differently to indicate, for example, a different weight or other characteristic, such as to provide a visual reference for a user assembling or configuring a top in a desired configuration.

[0033] As such, the exemplary tops are also adjustable in the sense that the various components may be interchangeable with other components of the same type.

[0034] In some embodiments, the shapes of the various components may also affect one or more characteristics of an assembled top. Although the components of the exemplary embodiments illustrated in Figs. 1–5 are shaped to have substantially radial symmetry (i.e., the spindles are cylindrical, the spindle components are shown to be annular and of consistent form with respect to the vertical axis of the spindle, the weight members and caps are shown to be disc-shaped), some embodiments may include top components shaped to have a different symmetry, or no symmetry at all.

[0035] For example, Fig. 6 shows top views of a variety of caps, each of which include a differently configured peripheral edge 44, some of which include outwardly-extending protrusions or other features that may affect the stability or spin behavior of the toy top if it collides with an object while spinning. Moreover, such structural features may affect the spin of another toy top with which a top with such a cap comes in contact, such as if several tops are spun at once during game play. Optionally, other top components may have different shapes. For example, the different shapes illustrated in Fig. 6 may represent different cross-sections of parts of a spindle and/or of the spindle itself, weight members, and so forth.

[0036] Caps may optionally include indicia, such as configuration indicia adapted to indicate a configuration of one or more top components in an assembled top, categorizational indicia adapted to indicate that a cap belongs to one or more predetermined categories, and/or other game indicia. Fig. 7 shows views of top surfaces 40 of two caps 14, each of which are shown to include configuration indicia 80 and categorizational indicia 82.

[0037] As shown in Fig. 1, the configuration indicia 80 is a stylized representation of an assembled top, such as the top shown in Figs. 1–3, which has three mounting sites 24. The configuration indicia indicates a configuration of components of an assembled top. Specifically, the configuration indicia 80 on the caps of Fig. 7 shows one weight member mounted on one of three mounting sites. However, the configuration indicia may be adapted as suitable to indicate any desired configuration of components. For example, in embodiments that include telescoping structure, the configuration indicia may indicate a top configuration in which a cap is affixed in one of a plurality of predetermined positions relative to a spindle. Moreover, although configuration indicia 80 is shown in Fig. 7 as stylized graphical images of tops, the configuration indicia may include any suitable indicia such as images, text, symbols, and so forth, or any combination thereof, to indicate a top configuration.

[0038] In some methods of game play, as described in more detail below, players may be provided with a variety of top components, including a plurality of different caps. Players may assemble caps from the components as desired, compete to see which player assembles a top that stays spinning the longest, or achieves some other spin characteristic, and so forth. In embodiments that include caps with configuration indicia, a player may follow or otherwise use the configuration indicia to assemble a toy top as indicated. For example, a player may select a cap that indicates a weight member mounted to a predetermined mounting site, and assemble a top according to the indicated configuration.

[0039] Caps 14 are also shown in Fig. 7 to include categorizational indicia 82 adapted to identify the cap as belonging to one or more predetermined categories. Such categorizational indicia may be used during game play, for example, in a game setting wherein caps represent members of opposing teams or factions, such that spinning competitions between tops having

caps with different categorizational indicia may represent battles between opposing teams or factions. Optionally, in methods of game play that incorporate a scoring methodology, the categorizational indicia may be used to establish a value hierarchy among caps. For example, winning a spinning competition with a cap from one category may result in incrementing a score differently than winning a competition with a cap from another category. As such, categorizational indicia may be related to a set of rules for use in a game play method, for decorative purposes only, some combination thereof, or for any desired purpose.

[0040] As an example of categorizational indicia not necessarily related to game play, some caps (or other top components) may have limited availability with respect to other caps (or top components), and such limited availability may enhance the collectible aspect of the tops, such as if users desire to collect a number of caps (or top components) or a certain type, shape, character, category, or other attribute. The categorizational indicia thus may indicate that the cap is rare or common, and/or belongs to a certain set of caps with limited availability, and so forth.

[0041] Thus, categorizational indicia may take any form suitable to identify that a cap belongs to one or more categories. For example, the categorizational indicia shown on the caps in Fig. 7 represent, respectively, a superhero and a villain. Thus, the exemplary tops may be part of an embodiment that incorporates a superhero and villain theme in terms of opposing forces that engage in combat, symbolized by a spinning competition between tops.

[0042] As shown, configuration indicia 80 is shown separate from categorizational indicia 82, but some embodiments may include indicia indicating both initial configuration or adjustment of a top and categorizational membership. Optionally, although not shown, caps (and other top components) may include other game play indicia, trade dress indicia, decorative indicia, and so forth. In some embodiments, the configuration indicia and

categorizational indicia, as well as other indicia, may appear on top components other than the caps.

[0043] In use, the adjustable tops may be spun in any suitable manner in which a rotational force is applied to a top sufficient to balance the spinning top on its lower end. Such a force may be applied by hand, such as a user grasping the cap of the top and releasing it with a sharp twisting motion. Or, a string may be wrapped around the stem or base portion and pulled away. Optionally, a launching component may be configured to deliver such a force to a top, such as by positioning a top in a launching component and ejecting the top onto a surface. Such a component may be a hand-held spinning device, part of a larger play structure, or as desired.

[0044] Figs. 8 and 9 show exemplary embodiments of a play structure suitable for use with the adjustable tops discussed above, in which a hand-held spinning device may be used in conjunction with structural components of the play structure to spin one or more tops. An exemplary spinning device 90 is shown to include an elongate body 92 with a handle 94 at one end and a brace 96 shaped to receive a spindle at the other, with a length of cord 98 affixed to the body near the brace. In use, the cord may be wrapped around a spindle of an assembled top.

[0045] A play structure 100 is shown in the form of a stylized miniature stadium having a play surface 102 defined by a perimeter 104 and substantially bounded by a retaining wall 106. Disposed around perimeter 104 are several launching sites 108, each of which is configured to releasably receive an assembled top and to release a top to which rotational force is imparted. Each launching site 108 is shown to include launch structure 110 having generally horizontal upper and lower braces 112, 114, each of which include a shaped holder 116, 118.

[0046] An assembled top 10, attached to a spin device 90, is shown seated against one of launching sites 108 so that the handle 94 protrudes through an opening in the launch structure 110. So positioned, the handle may be pulled in the direction indicated by arrow 120, by which motion a rotational force is imparted to the top as the cord is rapidly unwrapped from the spindle. The spinning top is then propelled by friction onto the play surface, generally in the direction indicated by arrow 122, where it may come into contact with other spinning tops 10.

[0047] Play structure 100 also includes scoring means 130, shown as a plurality of slots 132 disposed on the retaining wall, each slot configured to receive at least a portion of a cap 14. Several caps 14 are shown displayed in slots 132. In methods of game play that include a scoring component, slots 132 may be used by players to display caps 14 taken from opponents' defeated tops.

[0048] An alternative embodiment of a play structure 100 is shown in Fig. 9 to include scoring means 130 consisting of a series of numbered holes 134 configured to receive scoring pegs 136, such as to indicate and increment a numerical score.

[0049] Exemplary methods of game play utilizing the concepts and components discussed above are outlined in the paragraphs below. Games may be played by one or more players, attempting to spin a top for the longest amount of time. Tops may be adjusted or initially configured according to a set of game rules (e.g., according to a configuration indicia of a cap) or as desired, to attempt to achieve a longer spin. Tops may be spun simultaneously in a bounded or contained area such that two or more tops may contact each other as they spin. These and other aspects of the methods herein described may be articulated in a set of rules or other printed matter that may accompany a game.

[0050] A method of play may include providing a plurality of toy top components including a plurality of spindles, weight members, and caps as described above, assembling at least two toy tops by engaging a randomly-selected cap with the upper end of a spindle and mounting one or more weight members to the spindle according to the configuration indicia of the randomly-selected cap, spinning the assembled toy tops simultaneously on a play surface, and incrementing the score corresponding to the top that remains spinning longest.

[0051] For example, in a method of game play between two players, a plurality of caps may be placed "face-down" on a play surface, such that any indicia on the top surface of each cap is not visible. The plurality of caps may be for common use for all players, such as that provided with a game kit. Alternatively, each player may have a plurality of caps consisting of caps selected by the player from his or her own personal collection, from a set of caps provided with a game kit, or otherwise.

[0052] In this example, play may proceed with players taking turns each drawing a cap and affixing the drawn cap to a spindle and configuring the top as indicated by the cap. Optionally, initial configuration of a top may be as indicated in a set of rules, which may provide that a given set of indicia on a cap corresponds to a given top configuration. Each player may then wrap a string around the base portion of the top and seat the top into a launching site on a play structure. Each player may then simultaneously spin his or her top and wait to see which top spins for the longest time. The player whose top spins for the longest time may be declared to be the winner of the round.

[0053] The method may optionally include repeating the assembling, spinning, and incrementing steps until the score corresponding to a top reaches a predetermined value. For example, rounds of play may be completed until one player, or a particular top, has won a predetermined number of rounds. The scoring method may vary, and may consist of an

incrementalization of a numerical score associated with a player or top, so that the first player or top to reach a predetermined number wins the competition, or the player or top with the greatest score after a number of individual rounds of spinning may be the winner, and so forth. Score may be kept by using scoring pegs in numbered holes on the play structure, or by any suitable recording means.

[0054] Optionally, some methods may incorporate a scoring methodology that includes removing the cap of the “losing” top and associating the at least one removed cap with the scoring top. Thus, instead of recording an incremental score, victories may be measured by the amount of caps won by a winning player or top.

[0055] In embodiments in which each cap further includes categorizational indicia adapted to indicate that the cap is included in one of a plurality of predefined categories, including a first category and a second category, the scoring methodology may consist of incrementing the score corresponding to the top that remains spinning longest includes, if the cap is in the first category, removing the cap and associating it with the scoring top, or, if the cap is in the second category, transferring a previously associated cap of the first category from another top to the scoring top.

[0056] For example, in a commercial embodiment in which each character is categorized as a villain or a hero, winning with a “hero cap” may entitle the winner of the round to display the cap in one of a plurality of display slots on a play structure, and winning with a “villain cap” may entitle the winner of the round to take a hero cap from another player’s displayed cap. In such an example, the winner of the competition may be the player with the most hero caps at the end of a predetermined number of rounds of game play.

[0057] Several aspects of the exemplary methods of game play may be modified from that disclosed above, and may be reflected in the set of rules to accompany the game. The rules may thus be configured to provide a game with a desired degree of complexity or difficulty, for example to adapt the game to players of a predetermined age range, to incorporate a theme or themes other than that discussed above, and so forth. Optionally, if the game includes a collectible aspect, the rules may incorporate the collectibility of the caps. The rules may include additional methods of game play consistent with the components and concepts of the game as described above, and may vary from those as indicated herein.

[0058] It is believed that the disclosure set forth herein encompasses multiple distinct inventions with independent utility. While each of these inventions has been disclosed in a specific form, the embodiments thereof as disclosed and illustrated herein are not to be considered in a limiting sense as numerous variations are possible. The subject matter of the inventions includes all novel and non-obvious combinations and subcombinations of the various elements, features, functions components, concepts, and/or properties disclosed herein. Also, where the claims recite "a" or "a first" element of the equivalent thereof, such claims should be understood to include incorporation of one or more such elements, neither requiring nor excluding two or more such elements.

[0059] It is believed that the following claims particularly point out certain combinations and subcombinations of features, functions, elements, components, actions, and/or properties that may be claimed through amendment of the present claims or presentation of new claims in this or a related application. Such amended or new claims, whether they are directed to a different invention or directed to the same invention, whether different, broader, narrower or equal in scope to the original claims, are also regarded as included within the subject matter of the inventions of the present disclosure.

What is claimed is:

1. A toy top kit, comprising:
a spindle, having
a lower end configured to engage a surface;
an upper end having a first coupling portion; and
a plurality of mounting sites;
one or more weight members, each weight member configured to be removably mounted to one or more mounting sites; and
one or more caps, each cap having a top surface, a bottom surface, configuration indicia, and a second coupling portion adapted to releasably engage the first coupling portion.
2. The toy top kit of claim 1 wherein at least one of the plurality of mounting sites is disposed on the spindle between the upper end and the lower end.
3. The toy top kit of claim 2 wherein the spindle further includes a plurality of annular ridges, and wherein each of the plurality of mounting sites is defined by at least one annular ridge.
4. The toy top kit of claim 1 wherein the configuration indicia is disposed on the top surface of the cap.
5. The toy top kit of claim 1 wherein the configuration indicia is adapted to indicate a method by which one or more weight members is removably mounted to one or more mounting sites.

6. The toy top kit of claim 5 wherein the method indicates one or more predetermined mounting sites to which one or more weight members are removably mounted.

7. The toy top kit of claim 5 wherein the method indicates one or more predetermined weight members to be removably mounted to one or more mounting sites.

8. The toy top kit of claim 1 wherein the second coupling portion is disposed on the bottom surface of the cap.

9. The toy top kit of claim 8 wherein the second coupling portion comprises a sleeve extending from the bottom surface, the sleeve including one or more ribs disposed on the interior of the sleeve, and wherein the first coupling portion comprises one or more detents configured to receive one or more of the ribs.

10. The toy top kit of claim 9 wherein the one or more detents are arranged to define a plurality of predetermined positions of the cap relative to a vertical axis of the spindle.

11. The toy top kit of claim 8 wherein the spindle further includes a projecting portion configured to be releasably retained in any of a plurality of predetermined positions relative to a vertical axis of the spindle, and wherein the first coupling portion is disposed on the projecting portion.

12. The toy top kit of claim 1 wherein each cap further includes categorizational indicia adapted to indicate that the cap is included in one of a plurality of predefined categories.

13. The toy top kit of claim 1, wherein the toy top kit further comprises:
a length of string, and
a spinning device fastened to one end of the length of string, the spinning device including a handle and a brace configured to receive a portion of a spindle.

14. A toy top play set, comprising:
the toy top kit of claim 13; and
a play structure, having
a play surface defined by a perimeter;
a launching site disposed at the perimeter of the play surface, the launching site configured to releasably receive a toy top and to release a toy top to which rotational force is imparted;
a wall extending upwardly from at least a portion of the perimeter, and
scoring means disposed on the play structure.

15. The toy top play set of claim 14 wherein the scoring means comprises a plurality of slots disposed on the retaining wall, each slot configured to receive at least a portion of a cap.

16. The toy top play set of claim 14 further comprising a plurality of pegs, and wherein the scoring means comprises a plurality of numbered holes, each numbered hole configured to receive a peg.

17. A method of game play, comprising:

(a) providing a plurality of toy top components including a plurality of spindles, each having a lower end configured to engage a surface, an upper end, and a plurality of mounting sites; a plurality of weight members each configured to be removably mounted to a mounting site; and a plurality of caps each configured for releasable engagement with the upper end of a spindle, and each including configuration indicia adapted to indicate a manner in which one or more weight members is removably mounted to one or more mounting sites;

(b) assembling each of at least two toy tops by:

engaging a randomly-selected cap with the upper end of a spindle; and

mounting one or more weight members to the spindle according to the configuration indicia of the randomly-selected cap;

(c) spinning the assembled toy tops simultaneously on a play surface;

(d) incrementing the score corresponding to the top that remains spinning longest.

18. The method of claim 17, further comprising:

(e) repeating (b) through (d) until the score corresponding to a top reaches a predetermined value.

19. The method of claim 17 wherein incrementing the score corresponding to the top that remains spinning longest includes removing the cap of the at least one other simultaneously spun top and associating the at least one removed cap with the scoring top.

20. The method of claim 17 further comprising providing scoring means, and wherein wherein incrementing the score corresponding to the top that remains spinning longest includes modifying the scoring means to indicate the incremented score.

21. The method of claim 17,
wherein each cap further includes categorizational indicia adapted to indicate that the cap is included in one of a plurality of predefined categories, including a first category and a second category; and

wherein incrementing the score corresponding to the top that remains spinning longest includes, if the cap is in the first category, removing the cap and associating it with the scoring top, or, if the cap is in the second category, transferring a previously associated cap of the first category from another top to the scoring top.

Fig. 1

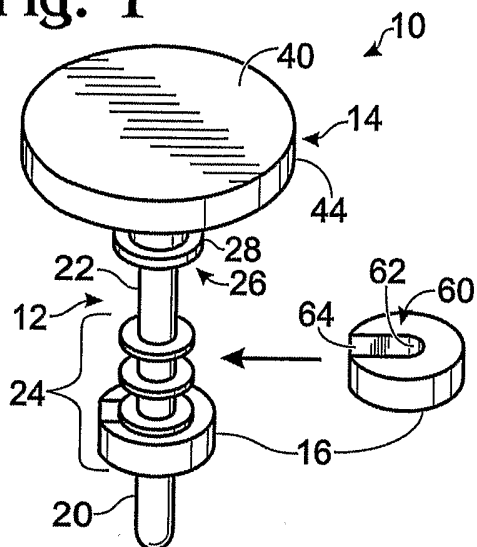


Fig. 2

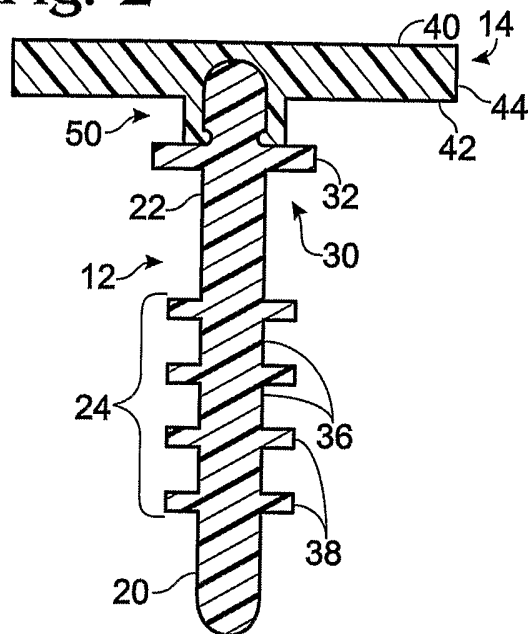


Fig. 3

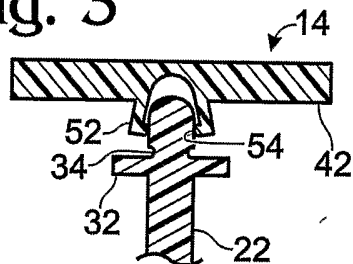


Fig. 4

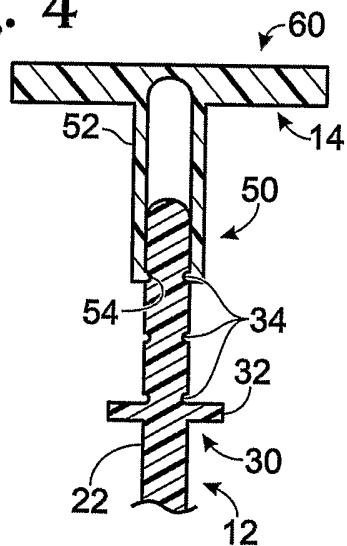
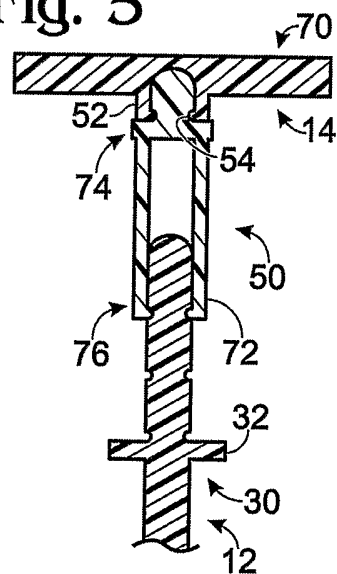


Fig. 5



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Fig. 6

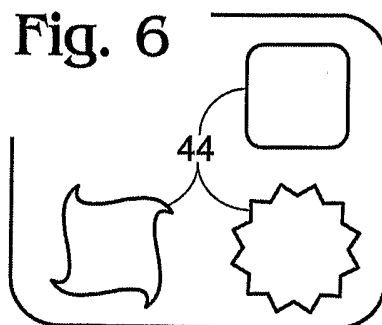


Fig. 7

