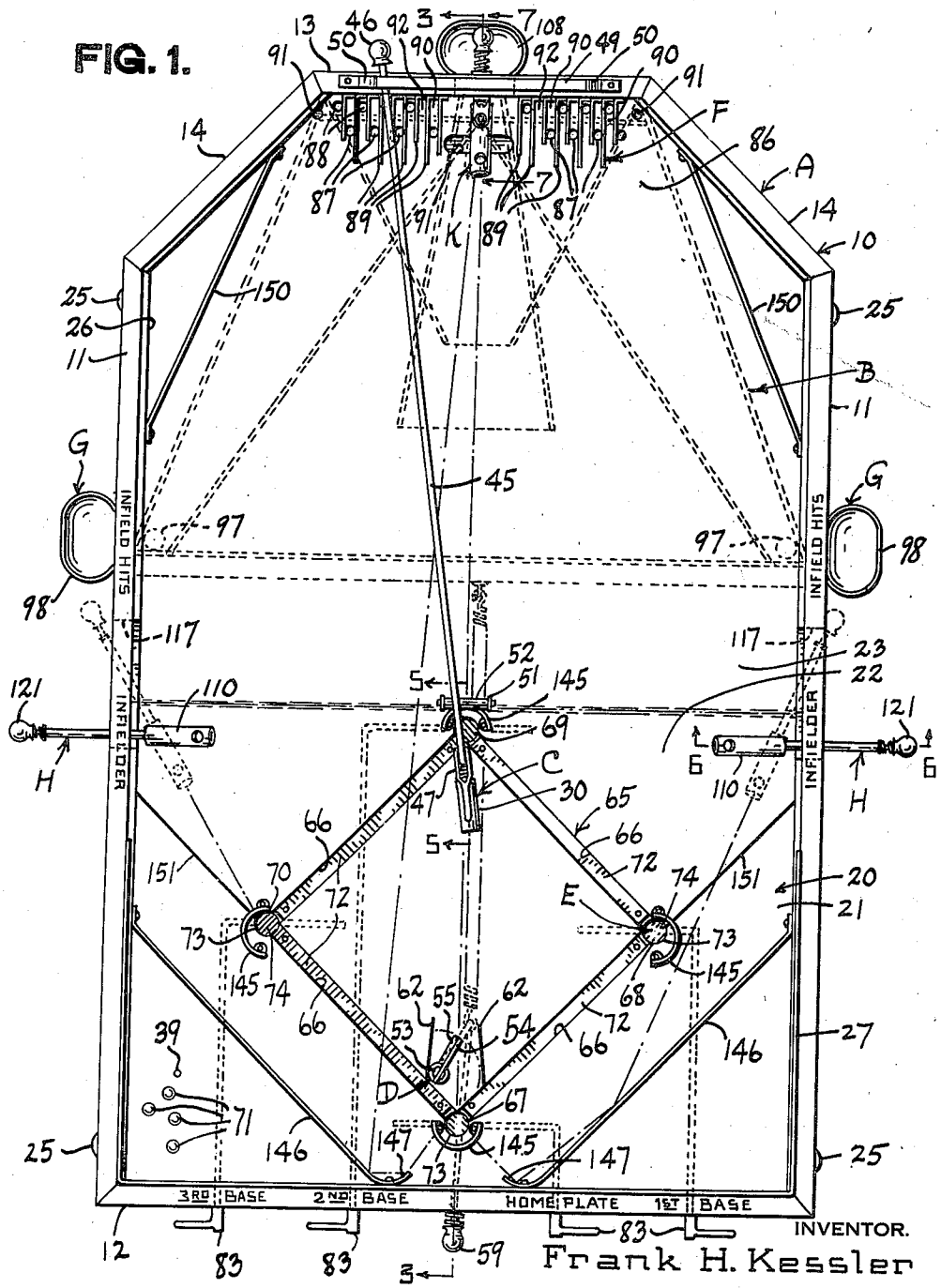
June 3, 1941. F. H. KESSLER 2,244,204

BASEBALL GAME APPARATUS

Filed April 20, 1939 3 Sheets-Sheet 1

FIG. 1.



INVENTOR.
Frank H. Kessler

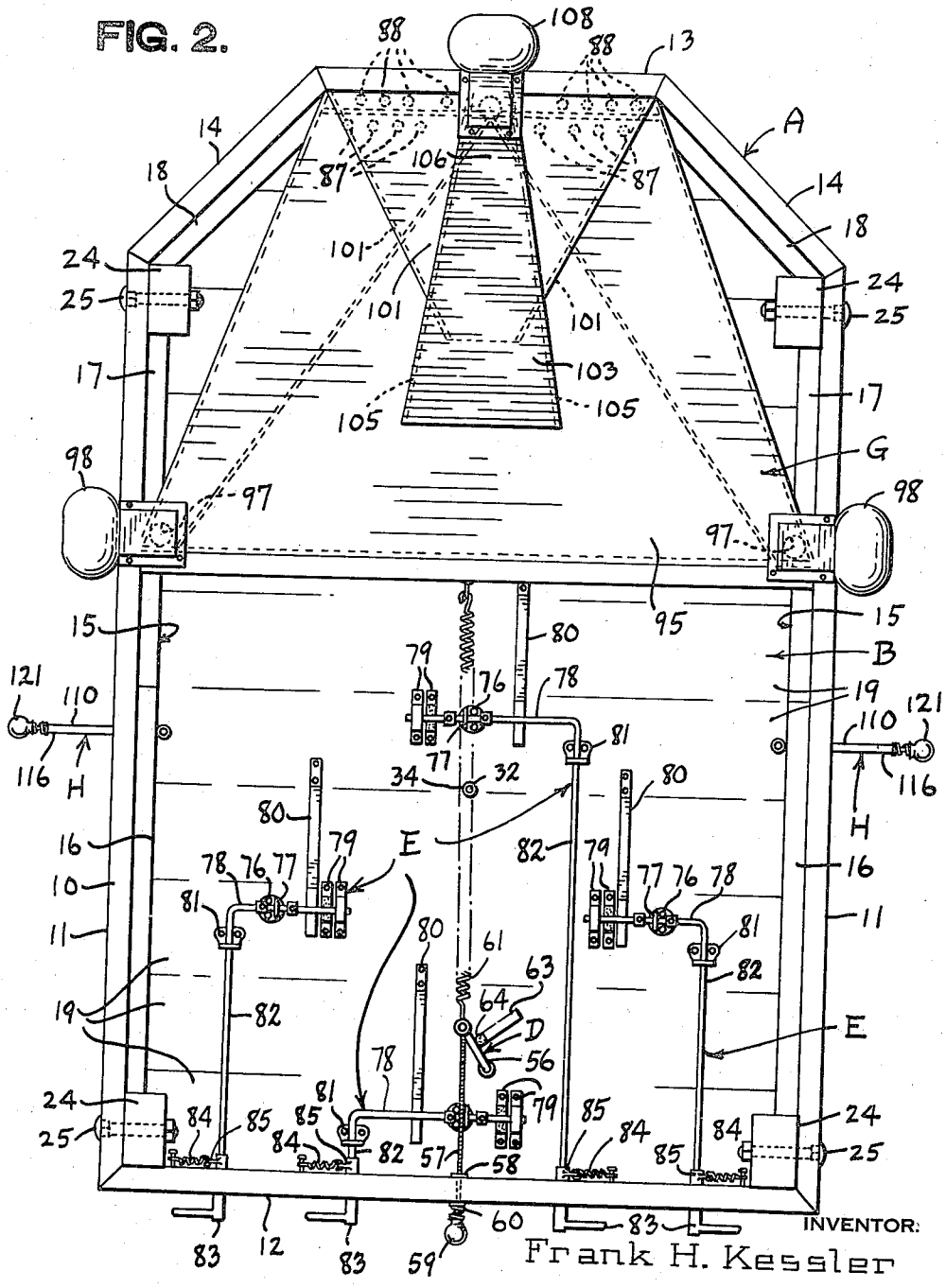
BY Lancaster, Allwine & Rommel
ATTORNEYS.

June 3, 1941. F. H. KESSLER 2,244,204

BASEBALL GAME APPARATUS

Filed April 20, 1939 3 Sheets-Sheet 2

FIG. 2.



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BASEBALL GAME APPARATUS

Filed April 20, 1939 3 Sheets-Sheet 3

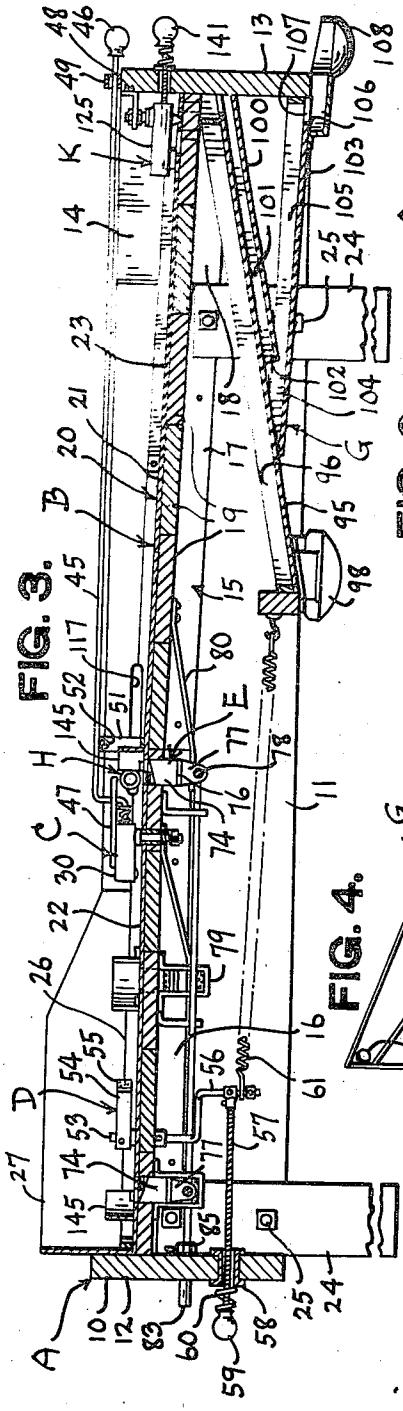


FIG. 3.

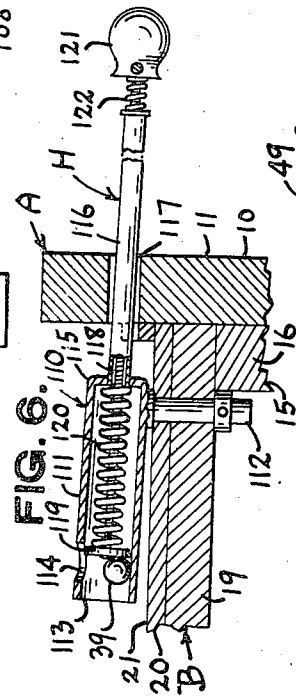


FIG. 6.

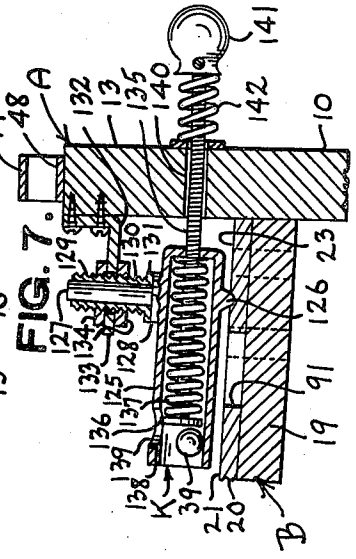


FIG. 7.

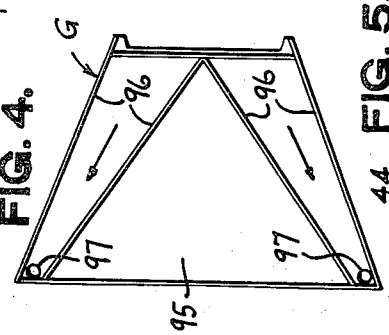


FIG. 4.

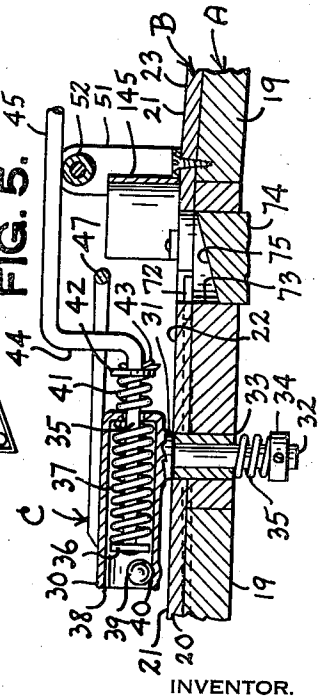


FIG. 5.

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Patented June 3, 1941 2,244,204

UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE

2,244,204

BASEBALL GAME APPARATUS

Frank H. Kessler, Ridgely, Md.

Application April 20, 1939, Serial No. 269,010

3 Claims. (Cl. 273—89)

This invention relates to improvements in baseball game apparatus, with which it is possible to play a game of baseball closely approximating regulation baseball, and an important object of the invention is to provide apparatus for playing a purely competitive game of baseball, in which speed and accuracy on the part of the opposing players, or teams of players, as well as skill, rather than mere chance, tend to determine the final outcome of a game, in much the same manner as regulation baseball.

Another important object of the invention is to provide baseball apparatus including pitching, batting, base-running and fielding means.

A further object of the invention is the provision of batting means, means for discriminating between hit balls to impart different values thereto, and fielding means so related to the gameboard as to give a base-runner greater advantage when the hit is of greater value.

A still further object resides in the provision of means discriminating between hit balls to impart different values thereto, corresponding with the relative values of infield and outfield hits in regulation baseball, and whereby a hit ball of greater value is available for fielding purposes after a time delay greater than that which occurs before a hit ball of lesser value is made available for fielding purposes.

Yet another object of the invention resides in the provision of means discriminating between hit balls to impart different values thereto, and whereby a hit ball of greater value is made available for fielding purposes at a greater distance from the diamond than is a hit ball of lesser value.

The invention also aims to provide a baseball gameboard having a playing surface and improved runway constructions beneath the playing surface for providing a differential between the times at which hit balls of different values are made available for fielding purposes and for providing also a differential between the distances to the diamond at which said differently valued hit balls are made available for fielding.

The invention further aims to provide a gameboard having batting means, base-running means and control means therefor operable from one end portion of the gameboard and also including pitching means, fielding means and control means therefore operable from the opposite end portion of the gameboard.

Still another object of the invention is to provide baseball game apparatus which may be produced in various sizes for competitive playing between opposing sides including one or more players.

A still further object resides in the provision of baseball gameboard including a mechanical ball shooter which may be directed toward any base of the gameboard for fielding purposes.

Another object of the invention is to provide an improved spring-powered ball shooter.

A further object is to devise improved batting means including a flexible operating shaft.

Another important object resides in the provision of an improved table construction including a continuous playing surface lying in dihedrally disposed planes.

Other objects and advantages of the invention will become apparent during the course of the following detailed description, taken in connection with the accompanying drawings, forming a part of this specification, and in which drawings:

Figures 1 and 2 are top plan and inverted plan views, respectively, of the improved baseball game apparatus.

Figure 3 is a longitudinal vertical sectional view substantially along the line 3—3 of Figure 1.

Figure 4 is a top plan view of an inclined runway plate preferably forming a part of the invention.

Figures 5, 6 and 7 are vertical sectional detail views of pitching, infielding and outfielding shooters, respectively, taken substantially on the lines 5—5, 6—6, and 7—7 of Figure 1.

In the drawings, which for the purpose of illustration show only a preferred embodiment of the invention, and wherein similar reference characters denote corresponding parts throughout the several views, the letter A generally designates the improved baseball game apparatus, comprising a gameboard B, pitching means C, batting means D, base-running means E, means F to discriminate between hit balls for imparting different values thereto, means G to withhold from access hit balls of different values for different lengths of time and to make said hit balls of different values available at different distances from the diamond, infielding means H, and outfielding means K.

The gameboard B may be formed of wood, metal or composition materials and preferably comprises a polygonal frame 10 including side boards 11, an end board 12, and an end board 13 joined to the side boards by corner boards 14. Fixed to the insides of the side boards 11 and corner boards 14 are ledger strips 15, each including a normally horizontal section 16, and inclined sections 17—18. Laid transversely on

the ledger strips 15 are boards 19 forming a subfloor carrying a resilient plywood panel 20 providing a continuous playing surface 21 including a normally horizontal portion 22 and an inclined dihedrally disposed portion 23 sloping therefrom. The gameboard may be supported at a suitable playing height as by legs 24. In the example shown, the playing surface is disposed between the top and bottom edges of the polygonal frame, so that the upper portion of the frame serves to enclose the playing surface, and the lower portion of the frame forms a skirt-like housing and support for portions of the game apparatus beneath the subfloor, as well as enabling rigid attachment of the legs 24 as by bolts 25. The juncture of the plywood panel 20 and polygonal frame 10 may be concealed by a suitable molding strip 26. If desired, the frame may carry an upwardly extending sheet metal backstop 27 forming an additional barrier about the horizontal portion 22 of the playing surface.

Referring now to the pitching means C, as shown more particularly in Figures 1, 3 and 5 of the drawings, the same may include a barrel 30 mounted for horizontal swinging movement above the horizontal portion 22 of the playing surface, in any suitable manner. In the example shown, the barrel 30 includes a downwardly extending spacer boss 31 and shaft 32 rotatably secured in a sleeve 33 as by collar 34, an expansion coil spring 35 being interposed between the collar 34 and sleeve 33. Extending into the barrel 30 is a rod 35 provided at its co-axial inner end with a plunger disc 36 and contractile coil spring 37 for urging the disc toward the mouth end 38 of the barrel. In order to insure retention of a ball 39 within the mouth end of the barrel until the pitching means is operated, a slight concavity 40 may be formed in the barrel. Encircling the rod 35 exteriorly of the barrel is an expansion coil spring 41 in abutment with a washer 42 bearing against cotter pin 43. The rod 35 may include an upwardly offset portion 44 and a horizontal extension 45 crossing the end board 13 of the frame and terminating in a knob 46. In order to limit compression of the spring 37 to prevent excessively fast pitching, there may be fixed to the barrel a wire loop 47 so that upon predetermined compression of the spring 37, the bight portion of the loop will engage the upwardly offset portion 44 of rod 35.

Secured on the end board 13 are strips 48 and 49, the lower strip 48 tending to prevent wear and the upper strip 49 including downturned end portions 50 for limiting swinging movement of the rod 35 and barrel 30.

Rotatably supported beneath the rod 35, as by upstanding bracket 51 is a transverse sleeve 52 forming a roller bearing for the rod 35 throughout its range of swinging movement.

As for the batting means D, the same may comprise a rock-shaft 53 extending vertically through the gameboard and carrying at its upper end a strip-like bat 54 provided on its batting side with a suitable resilient layer 55, such as sponge rubber. Beneath the gameboard, the rockshaft 53 may include a crank 56 operatively connected as by flexible shaft or cable 57 extending through bearing sleeve 58 to knob 59. Between the sleeve 58 and knob 59, a contractile coil spring 60 may be interposed to absorb shocks during use of the batting means. Extending from the crank 56 to a fixed portion of the gameboard is an expansible coil spring 61 so arranged as to elongate upon drawing of the cable 57 outwardly of the gameboard frame, by means of the knob 59, and to contract upon release of the knob in a manner to effect swinging of the bat for hitting or bunting a pitched ball. Marked or otherwise provided on the surface of the gameboard are spaced lines 62 bounding that portion of the gameboard within reach of the bat. Carried by a bracket 63 secured in downwardly depending relation from the subfloor of the gameboard is a resilient stop 64, such as sponge rubber, in the path of travel of the crank 56 to prevent excessive swinging of the bat.

The base-running means E may embody certain details of construction disclosed in the U. S. Patent 67,951 granted to William Buckley. The diamond 65 is located in the horizontal portion of the playing surface and may include grooved runways 66 extending in downwardly inclining relation successively between home plate 67, first base 68, second base 69, third base 70, and back to home plate. The base-runners consist of four spheres 71, such as marbles, adapted to roll by gravity along the downwardly inclined runways 66 between adjacent bases, but requiring successive elevations from the lower to the higher levels of adjacent runway ends. In the example shown, the runways 66 may be formed by cutting away portions of the upper panel and the subfloor, and fastening flat metal strips 72 over the base of the grooves to form continuous surfaces over which the spheres may roll from one base to another.

In order to elevate the spheres from one runway to another, each corner of the diamond is provided with a vertical bore 73 extending through the gameboard. Vertically slidable in each bore 73 is a cylindrical lifter 74 provided with a truncated top face 75 downwardly inclining in the direction of the succeeding runway. To the base of each lifter 74 is secured a bracket 76 including a downwardly extending tab 77 through which loosely extends a rocker arm 78 for elevating the lifter. Suitable stop means 79 may be provided for limiting movement of each rocker arm to prevent excessive elevating or dropping of the lifters. Secured to the bottom of the gameboard are leaf springs 80 for urging the rocker arms 78 in a downward direction. Extending from the rocker arms 78 and rotatably mounted in brackets 81 are operating shafts 82 passing through the end board 12 of the frame and terminating in crank handles 83. If desired, the leaf springs 80 may be assisted by coil springs 84 acting upon arms 85 fixed to the operating shafts 82.

In order to impart different values to hit balls, means F is provided. Any ball which is hit beyond the juncture of the horizontal and inclined portions of the playing surface will of course tend to roll by gravity to the lower or discharge end 86 of the inclined portion 23. Two series 87—88 of staggered openings may extend downwardly through the gameboard and resilient divider strips 89 may be secured between the openings to form pockets 90, some being provided with an opening in one series 87, others including an opening in the other series 88, while still other pockets may be without openings in either series 87—88. If desired, shallow depressions 91 may be formed in the playing surface, so that not all hit balls will necessarily roll into an opening of either series 87—88. The hit balls rolling into an opening in series 87 or series 88 are classified as infield or outfield hits, respectively.

The pockets without openings form home-run compartments 92.

In order to withhold hit balls of different values from access for fielding purposes until the expiration of different lengths of time and to then make the hit balls available at different distances from the diamond, means G is provided. Disposed beneath the table is an inclined plate 95 having its upper receiving end below the series 87 of openings and provided with upstanding ribs 96 forming ducts leading to separate discharge openings 97 at opposite extremities of the lower end of the plate. Fixed to opposite sides of the polygonal frame beneath the openings 97 are container cups 98 for balls classified as infield hits. It will be noted that the duct-forming ribs 96 are so arranged that infield hits to the right or left sides of the gameboard will be delivered to the right or left container cups, respectively, upon completion of a relatively direct run.

Disposed beneath the plate 95 is a second similarly inclined plate 100 having its upper receiving end below the series 88 of openings and provided with convergent upstanding ribs 101 forming a guideway leading to a discharge end 102. Disposed beneath the plate 100 is an oppositely inclined plate 103 having its upper receiving end 104 below the discharge end 102 of the plate 100 and provided with convergent upstanding ribs 105 forming a guideway leading to a discharge end 106 provided with an outlet opening 107. Fixed to the gameboard frame beneath the opening 107 is a container cup 108 for balls classified as outfield hits. It will be observed that the length of time required for these balls to reach the container cup 108 will be greater than that required for balls classified as infield hits to reach the container cups 98 because of the indirect path tending to retard travel of the balls. It will also be seen that the container cup 108 is located at a greater distance from the diamond than either of the container cups 98.

The infielding means H may include two infielders 110, one located adjacent each container cup 98. Each infielder 110 comprises a barrel 111 so mounted on a pivot pin or shaft 112 as to incline slightly downwardly from its mouth end 113, which is provided with an aperture 114 through which a hit ball to be fielded may be dropped. Extending axially from its opposite end 115 is a tubular stem 116 passing freely through an elongate slot 117 in the side board 11. Extending through the stem 116 is a flexible shaft 118 provided at its inner end with a plunger disc 119 and contractile coil spring 120 for urging the disc toward the mouth end of the barrel. At its outer end, the shaft 118 is provided with a knob 121 and a contractile coil spring 122 for absorbing shocks occurring during use of the infielder. The slot 107 is of a length permitting pivotal swinging of the barrel so that the device may be aimed at any portion of the diamond.

The outfielding means K comprises a barrel 125 pivotally mounted for swinging movement in a plane parallel to the inclined portion 23 of the playing surface. In the example shown, the pivotal mounting includes a boss 126 contacting the portion 23 of the playing surface and an upstanding pin or shaft 127 reduced to provide an upwardly facing annular shoulder 128. Encircling the shaft 127 is a bearing sleeve 129 provided with exterior screw threads 130 and a flange 131 engaging the shoulder 128. Secured to the end board 13 is a bracket 132 including an apertured arm 133 adjustably carrying the sleeve 129, as by nuts 134 engaging the threads 130 of the sleeve at opposite sides of the arm 133.

Extending axially into the barrel 125 is a flexible shaft 135 provided at its inner end with a plunger disc 136 and a contractile coil spring 137 for urging the disc toward the mouth end 138 of the barrel. An aperture 139 may be provided in the mouth end for charging the barrel with a hit ball to be fielded. The flexible shaft 135 at its outer end portion perferably extends through an elongate slot 140 in the end board 13 and terminates in a knob 141 provided with a contractile coil spring 142 for shock absorbing purposes.

In connection with the fielding means H and K, the plates or bases of the diamond are each provided with an upstanding semi-cylindrical target 145, preferably of a metal adapted to ring or otherwise audibly indicate when struck by a fielded ball.

In order that the target 145 at home plate may be hit by a ball shot from the infielding or outfielding means H—K, resilient deflector strips 146 are provided. These strips extend in spaced relation to the sides of the diamond adjacent home plate and are secured cornerwise of the frame, the end portions 147 of the strips attached to the end board 12 being of arcuate formation tending to direct a fielded ball toward home plate. The function of the strips 150 at the opposite end of the table is to deflect a batted ball toward the center line of the table and prevent lagging of the ball along the side and corner boards 11 and 14.

In the operation of the game apparatus, the opposing sides each consisting of one or more players are stationed at opposite end portions of the table. A sphere 71 is placed upon the lifter 74 at home plate and a ball 39 is placed in the pitching means. After the bat has been drawn back by the player at bat, the pitcher shoots the ball 39. If the pitched ball does not pass between the lines 62 defining the batter's reach, a "ball" is declared. If the pitched ball is hit and strikes a target 145 at one of the bases, it is considered caught and the batter is declared "out." If the hit ball rolls into a base hole, any runner heading for that base is declared "out." A ball batted into the barrel of the pitcher C and remaining there is considered caught and the batter is declared "out." Foul lines 151 are provided to determine fair and foul hits as in regulation baseball. Plays are made for the base-runners on fair hits by means of the fielding means H—K. As soon as the ball is hit, the base-running sphere 71 is released by means of the home plate lifter handle 83. Any other runners or spheres 71 on bases may also be selectively released if the player or players of the side at bat decide that bases or runs can be made, this being accomplished by manipulation of any or all of the lifter handles 83. If the hit ball remains on the level portion of the infield, a player may pick it up as soon as it stops rolling, drop it in the barrel of either infielder 110 and shoot for any base. If the fielded ball strikes a target 145 or rolls into a base hole before the runner or sphere 71 arrives, the man is "out." A batted ball which rolls into the outfield but fails to reach a home-run compartment 92, or drop into one of the depressions 91 for an "out," or into an opening of the series 87—88, is considered to be a foul into the stands.

When the batted ball drops into an opening in the series **87**, it is classified as an infield hit and is withheld from access for fielding purposes until it reaches a container cup **98** at either side of the table, and during this time the base-running means C, under control of the player or players at bat, may be manipulated to cause any or all spheres **71**, constituting base-runners, to make as many bases as possible, and with comparative safety. That is true also in case the batted ball drops into an opening in the series **88**, whereby an outfield hit is made, except that the player or players at bat then have a greater chance to make bases or score runs because the ball then requires a greater length of time to reach the outfield container cup **108**. In the case of either infield or outfield hits, the batted ball is retrieved as soon as it reaches a container cup **98** or **108**, then it is dropped in the nearest shooter of fielding means H or K, and the shooter is then aimed at any target **145** in an attempt to catch a runner sphere **71** off base. As the outfield cup **108** and shooter are at a greater distance from the diamond than either of the infield cups **98** and shooters, it will be more difficult to catch a runner off base upon the making of an outfield hit, much the same as in regulation baseball.

It will therefore be seen that it is possible to play an exciting baseball game using the apparatus of the present invention, with practically all of the plays of regulation baseball duplicated or closely simulated.

Various changes may be made in the form of invention herein shown and described, without departing from the spirit of the invention or the scope of the following claims.

I claim:

1. A gameboard comprising a polygonal frame, ledger strips including angularly disposed sections secured in corresponding relation within opposite sides of the frame, sub-flooring boards laid on said ledger strips between said opposite sides, and a resilient sheet laid on said sub-flooring boards to provide an uninterrupted playing surface including opposite end portions, one disposed in angular relation to the other.

2. A gameboard comprising a polygonal frame, a board secured within the frame intermediate the marginal edges thereof, said board including a discharge end provided with parallel series of outlet openings through the board, a cross-member carried by the frame beneath the board, a first plate having a receiving end disposed beneath one of said series of openings and inclined downwardly toward said cross-member, said plate being provided with upstanding ribs diverging from a point intermediate the ends of said one series of openings and terminating at their outer ends adjacent the opposite ends of said cross-bar, outlet openings in said plate in outwardly adjacent relation to the outer ends of said ribs, a second plate having a receiving end disposed beneath another of said parallel series of outlet opening and inclined downwardly toward said cross-member, said plate terminating in a discharge end, a third plate having a receiving end disposed beneath the discharge end of said second plate and downwardly inclined away from said cross-member, said third plate including downwardly convergent upstanding ribs and an outlet opening therebetween, and separate containers disposed beneath the outlet openings of said first and third plates and including access openings at the sides of said polygonal frame.

3. In baseball game apparatus, a board providing a playing surface including a diamond, a pivotally adjustable ball shooter carried by the board in outwardly disposed relation to one side of the diamond, and a resilient deflector carried by the board in outwardly disposed relation to an adjacent side of the diamond, whereby a ball properly fired against said deflector from said shooter will be directed toward the plate at the end of said adjacent side remote from the shooter.

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