ABSTRACT: A hoop ball game has a main ring for passing a ball therethrough. The ring is suspended in an elevated, horizontal position between two posts by supporting lines. A deflector carried by the ring deflects the ball after passing through the ring. The deflector may be a U-shaped member depending from the ring in a diametral plane of the ring, or the deflector may be another ring of smaller diameter joined by detachable rods to the main ring. The main ring and deflector may be made of inflatable tubing, flexible rubber or plastic, wood or metal.
This invention concerns a hoop ball game which may be played in a pool but which is also adapted for playing on land. Hoover ball games known heretofore such as basketball and the like employ a rigid ring through which the ball is tossed. Once the ball passes through the ring a score is made. The present invention involves a game which includes a hoop assembly. This assembly employs a ring which is preferably flexible and which flexes in random ways so that reaction of the ring to impact of the ball is unpredictable. Under the ring is a hoop or other ring which serves as a deflector or holder for the ball which passes through the upper main ring. The deflector may also be flexible so that it will cause the ball to roll to one side or the other of the deflector; the particular direction of roll will be entirely unpredictable. The upper, main ring and the lower deflector can be rigid but in general flexible parts are preferable. The hoop assembly of ring and deflector may be made of inflatable tubing, solid or sponge rubber, solid or foam plastic, composition material, wood, metal, or a combination of materials.

The hoop assembly is suspended by lines made of wire, plastic or fabric cord. The lines are attached to diametrically opposite points of the hoop assembly. The lines may be made of material integral with the ring or deflector. Outer ends of the lines are engaged on posts, poles or other elevated supports. The posts may have clamps for mounting on the rim of a pool.

The hoop assembly is suspended in air over the surface of a body of water, or above the ground when the game is played on land. One of two teams stationed on opposite sides of the hoop assembly attempts to throw or toss a large ball, which may be twelve inches or more in diameter, through the horizontal main ring. Theretofore the ball is thrown or tossed by the team which receives the ball when it is deflected after passing through the main ring. Many different rules and procedures for throwing and receiving the ball, for scoring points, penalties, and the like may be specified depending on the particular game structure used, where the game is to be played, the age and number of players, score-keeping facilities, time allowed for play, etc.

The invention will be explained in detail in connection with the drawings, wherein:

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a hoop ball game embodying the invention, the game being shown mounted on a cylindrical pool containing water in which the players stand.

FIG. 2 is an enlarged vertical sectional view taken on line 2-2 of FIG. 1 through a hoop assembly.

FIG. 3 is an enlarged fragmentary sectional view taken on line 3-3 of FIG. 1 through a post supporting the hoop assembly.

FIG. 4 is an enlarged perspective view of a clamp and bracket support for the post.

FIG. 4A is a further enlarged sectional view taken on line 4A-4A of FIG. 4.

FIG. 5 is a perspective view of another form of clamp and bracket.

FIG. 6 is a perspective view of another form of hoop assembly employing a larger upper ring and lower smaller ring joined by rods.

FIG. 7 is a vertical cross-sectional view taken on line 7-7 of FIG. 6.

FIG. 8 is a perspective view of a rod employed to join the two rings of the assembly of FIGS. 6, 7.

FIG. 9 is a perspective view of the main ring of another hoop assembly with lower ring removed.

FIG. 10 is a perspective view of a game employing the hoop assembly of FIGS. 6, 7, shown on a reduced scale, the game being installed at a rectangular swimming pool.

FIG. 11 is an enlarged fragmentary sectional view of a post and support taken on line 11-11 of FIG. 10.

FIG. 12 is a view similar to FIG. 11 illustrating another post and support.

Referring first to FIGS. 1 and 2, there is shown a hoop assembly 10 comprising a main, upper, horizontal ring 12. Depending from the ring in a vertical diametrical plane of the ring is a U-shaped loop 14 joined at its ends to diametrically spaced points of the ring. The loop and ring are integral with each other and are formed of inflatable flexible rubber or plastic tubing. A valve 16 at the bottom of loop 14 enables the assembly to be filled with air by mouth or pump inflation, since the interiors of the ring and loop communicate with each other.

A pair of lines 18 which may be cords or wires are secured by knotted loops 19 to upper ends of loop 14 just under ring 12. Outer ends of the lines have knotted loops 22 engaged on hooks 24 of clamp rings 26. Each clamp ring is a cylindrical member slidable and adjustable on a vertical post 28, see FIG. 3. A thumbscrew 27 carried by the ring 26 engages the post to hold the line at a desired elevation above the surface of water 29 in cylindrical pool 30.

There are two vertical posts 28 at diametrically opposite positions on pool 30. The lower apertured end of each post is engaged in a clamp bracket assembly 32. As shown in FIGS. 4 and 4A includes a channel-shaped clamp 38 in the lower flange 40 of the clamp engages underneath the rings of the pool. The clamp 38 is held in place by a semicylindrical sleeve member 44. This sleeve member opposes and cooperates with a similar semicylindrical sleeve member 46 integral with upper flange 48 of a right angle bracket 50. The vertical flange 52 of the bracket abuts the inner side of the pool. A bolt 54 carrying thumb nut 56 extends through holes in the sleeve members and engages the apertured lower end of a post 28. The angle bracket 50 is separate from the clamp 34 so that the parts are laterally adjustably spaceable with respect to each other.

When a game is played using the apparatus shown in FIG. 1 teams T and T' at opposite sides of the suspended hoop assembly 10 will attempt to throw or toss ball 25 over and into ring 12. Thereafter the ball will fall down and strike deflector loop 14 as indicated by dotted lines in FIG. 2. From there the ball may roll laterally to either the side of team T or the side of team T'. This element of uncertainty as to direction of deflection imparts considerable interest and excitement to the game not found in games where a ball is not directed or deflected after it leaves a ring, or where the ball deflection is limited to fixed, prescribed directions.

FIG. 5 shows another clamp bracket assembly 32A which can be used in place of assembly 32. Assembly 32A is a one-piece structure with cylindrical sleeve 58 integral with upper flange 60 of clamp 62. The clamp is a channel-shaped member provided with thumb screw 64 in lower flange 66 to engage the underside of rim 36 of the pool 30.

FIG. 6 shows another hoop assembly 10A. This assembly has an upper, larger, main horizontal ring 70 and a lower, horizontal, smaller ring 72. The rings are axially aligned and held in vertically spaced relationship by three rods 74. Each rod has a spherical knob 75 at its lower end detachably engaged in a recess 77 in ring 72; see FIGS. 7 and 8. The upper end of the rod is formed with a flat knob 76 which is removably engaged in undercut recess 79 in cup 78 depending from the underside of ring 75. The rods are quickly removable from the rings for taking apart the assembly. The rods and cups are circumferentially spaced apart around the rings. Their spacing is wide enough to permit ball 25 to pass between adjacent rods. The rods are longer than the diameter of the ball. The ball is small enough to pass easily through upper ring 70 but is preferably larger than the inside diameter of lower ring 72. Thus in playing the game, ball 25 may rest on ring 72 as shown in FIG. 7 by dotted lines in position P1, or the ball may bounce out and off ring 72 to leave laterally between the rings and rods as shown by dotted line position P2 of the ball.

Lines 18 are secured by knotted loops 19 to diametrically opposed parts of ring 70. Outer ends of the lines are engaged on clamp rings 26 as shown in FIG. 10. These rings are identical to those shown in FIG. 3. The clamp rings are engaged on
posts 28a which are telescopically engaged in tubular bases 85 embedded in the ground G adjacent to opposite sides of pool 30a. Bottom ends 86 of the bases are generally pointed to facilitate embedding the bases in the ground.

In playing with the hoop assemblies 10 and 10A of FIGS. 1 and 10, there is the important feature of uncertainty as to where the ball will stop after it passes through the ring. In either game the ball may be deflected laterally one way or the other. In loop assembly 10A there is the added feature that the ball may go in any of three directions depending on the location of rods 74. If desired, only two rods 74 may be provided instead of three. As shown in FIG. 9 the rods 74 may be provided instead of three. As shown in FIG. 9 the rods may be located at diametrically opposed positions under ring 70a of loop assembly 10B. This will increase the angular range of directions in which the ball can go after it bounces off lower ring 72. Assembly 10A or 10B has the further feature that the ball may land on and remain on ring 72. Occurrence of this is uncertain and imparts further interest and excitement to the game.

As mentioned above many rules for playing the game can be specified. Other rules can be originated by the players. The games can be played over water in a pool as illustrated or may be played on land, or on any suitable flat playing surface such as in a gymnasium, on board a ship, etc. Hardware appropriate for mounting the supporting posts on different playing surfaces can readily be provided. For example as shown in FIG. 12, a threaded cup-shaped base 80 can be permanently embedded in a floor 82. Post 28b is screwed into base 80 and is held in place by locknut 83. The locknut and post can readily be removed when necessary.

The lines 18 which support the hoop assembly can be attached to apertured tabs 90 extending outwardly of the assembly at diametrically opposed positions as shown in FIG. 9. Alternatively the lines can be integrally formed with ring 70. Many other variations and modifications may be made within the scope of the invention.

What I claim is:

1. Apparatus for a ball game, comprising a hoop assembly including a main ring; a pair of posts mountable in axially vertical spaced positions; means supporting said ring in a horizontal elevated position, said means including lines connectable between the posts and the hoop assembly to support the ring in said horizontal elevated position between the posts for passing said ball through the ring; and a deflector secured to the ring therebeneath and so arranged as to deflect the ball after it passes through the ring.

2. Apparatus as defined in claim 1, wherein said deflector is made of flexible material so that the deflector flexes on impact to deflect the ball in random, unpredictable directions.

3. Apparatus as defined in claim 1, wherein said deflector comprises another ring smaller in internal diameter than that of the main ring so that the ball strikes the smaller ring after passing through the main ring; and rods connecting the two rings, said rods being spaced apart circumferentially of the rings, the length of said rods being not less that the diameter of said ball so that the ball can pass laterally between the rings after deflection by the smaller ring.

4. Apparatus as defined in claim 3, wherein the rods are quickly detachable from the ring for taking apart said assembly.

5. Apparatus as defined in claim 3 wherein one of said rings is made of flexible material for deflecting the ball on impact thereby.

6. Apparatus as defined in claim 1, further comprising clamp and brace means engageable with said posts for mounting the same on the rim of a pool containing water.

7. Apparatus as defined in claim 6, wherein said clamp and bracket means are two separate laterally adjustable and spaceable members, said clamp means comprising a channel-shaped member for engaging on the rim of the pool, said bracket means comprising an L-shaped bracket member for abutting the rim and inside of the pool, said channel shaped member and said L-shaped bracket member carrying cooperating semicylindrical members for engaging the lower end of a post therebetween.

8. Apparatus as defined in claim 1, wherein said ring and deflector are made of inflatable tubing.

9. Apparatus as defined in claim 1, wherein said deflector is a U-shaped member extending downwards from the ring in a diametral plane thereof to intercept the ball after it passes through the ring.

10. Apparatus as defined in claim 9, wherein the ring and deflector are made of inflatable tubing, opposite ends of the U-shaped deflector being joined to diametrically opposite points of the ring, the interior of the deflector communicating with the interior of the ring so that the ring and deflector can be inflated simultaneously.