

[54] **TUBULAR TRACK MARBLE GAME APPARATUS**

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[51] **Int. Cl.** A63f 7/00

[58] **Field of Search** 273/118 R, 118 D, 123 R, 273/120 R, 108, 113, 125, 86 D, 86 C, 121, 119; 46/43

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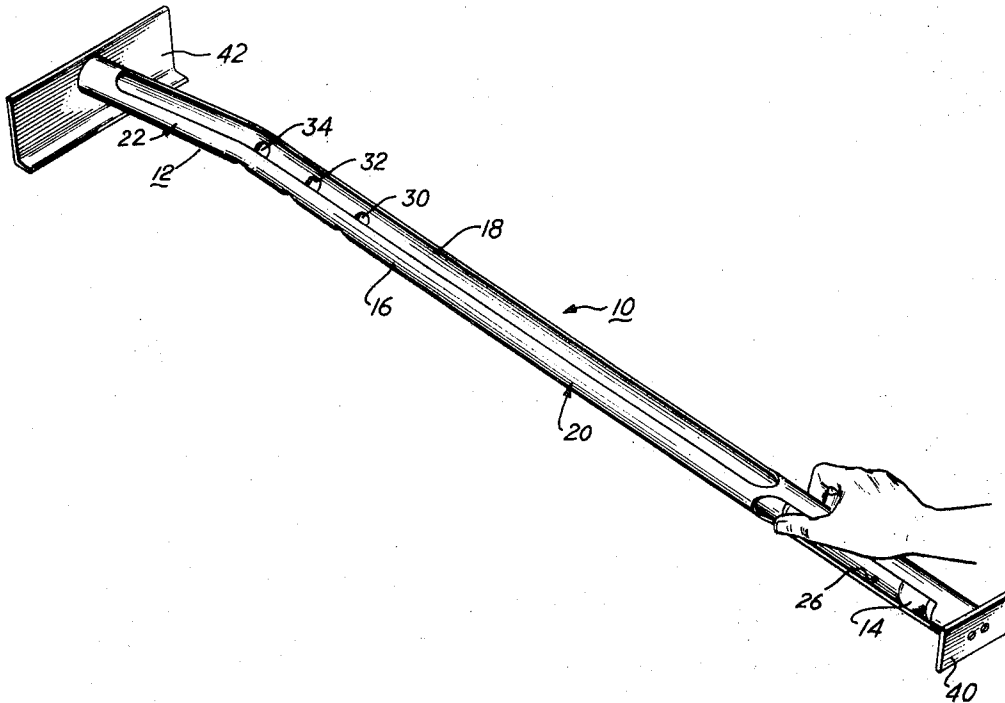
Assistant Examiner—Theatrice Brown

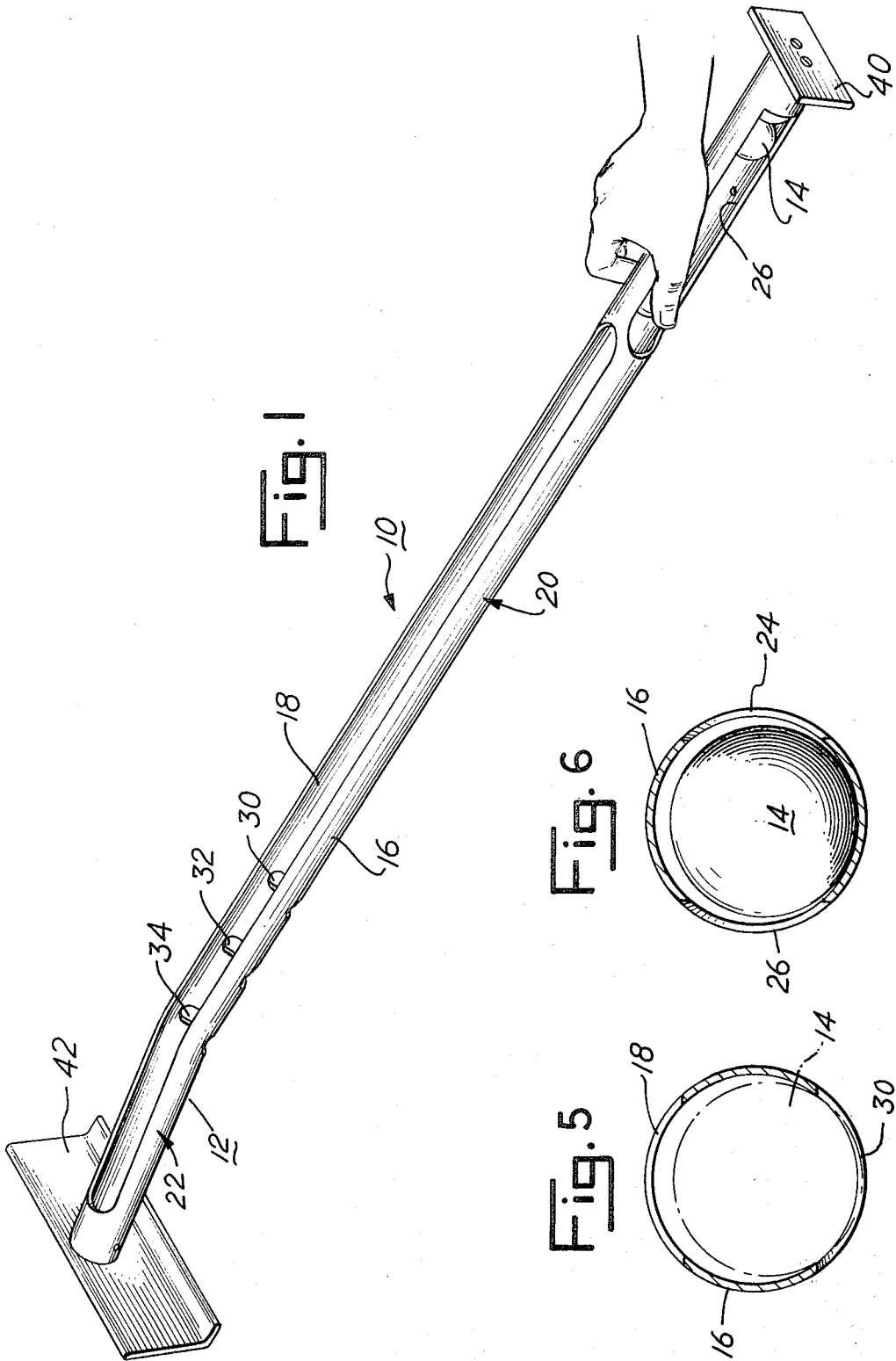
Attorney, Agent, or Firm—Hobbs & Green

[57] **ABSTRACT**

A game device in which an elongated track has an ascending section and a descending section and balls are disposed in said track and confined therein. Spaced slots are provided in the ascending section for receiving the balls which, when not in play, rest in the lower end of said ascending section, in position to be grasped by a player to propel the balls upwardly along the ascending section into the slots. If too much force is used in propelling the balls, they pass over the slots and enter the descending section. A spring may be provided at the lower end of the descending section to cause the balls to rebound to the slots. While the track is preferably of tubular construction and only slightly larger in inside diameter than the balls, the track may be of other configurations.

8 Claims, 7 Drawing Figures





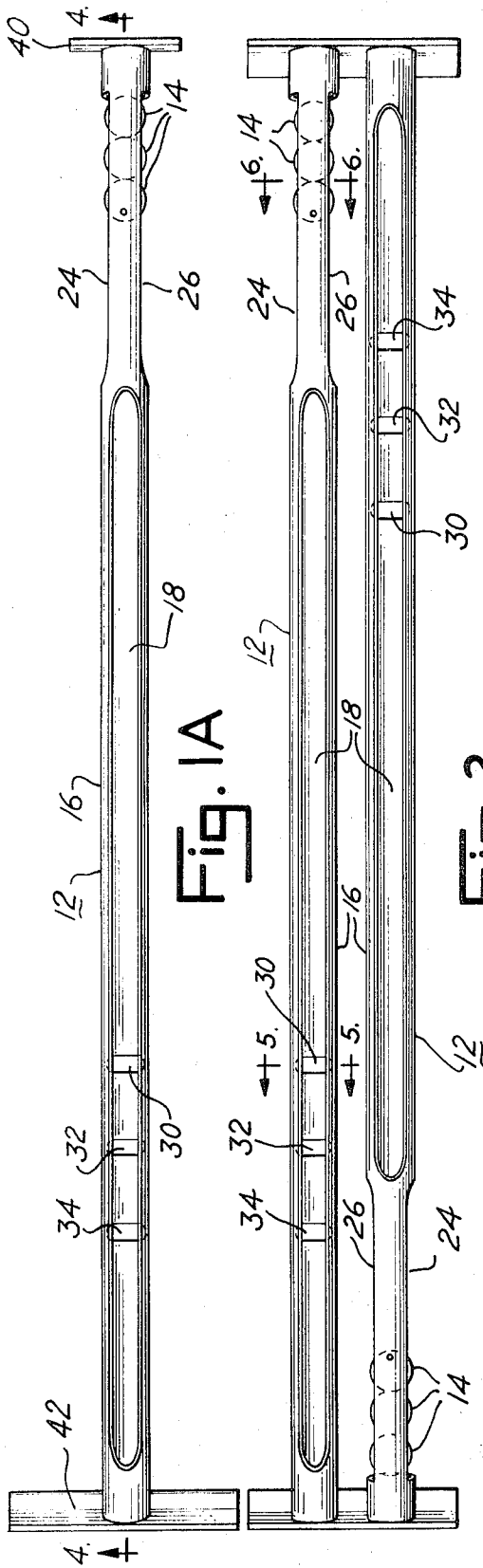


Fig. 1A

Fig. 2

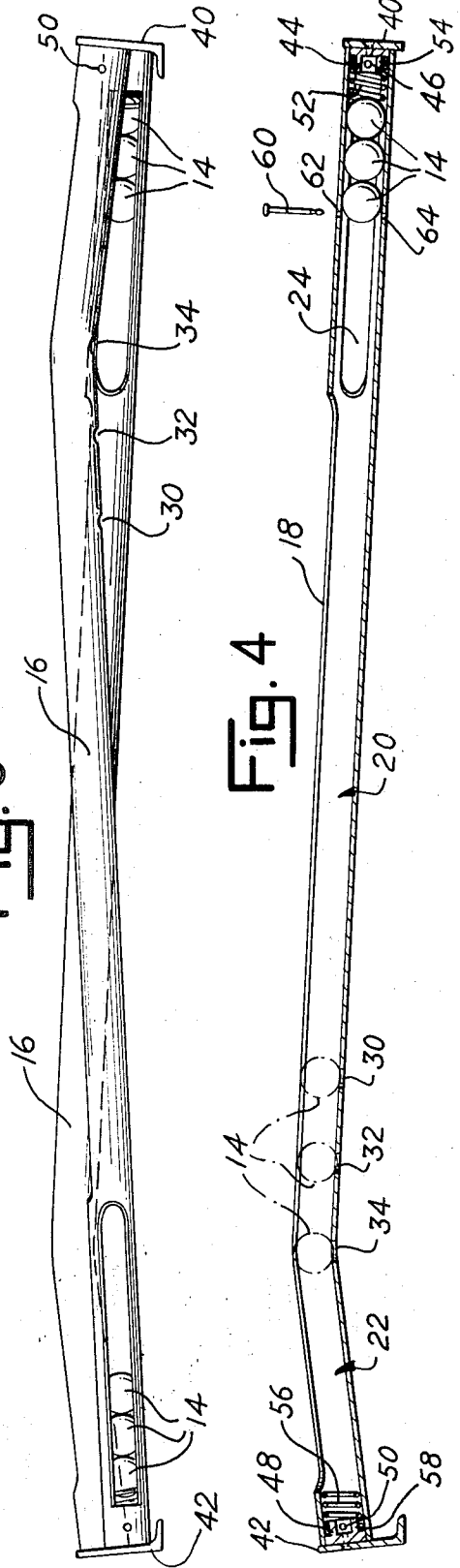


Fig. 3

Fig. 4

TUBULAR TRACK MARBLE GAME APPARATUS

Games which involve the use of balls on a board having pockets or slots for receiving the balls as they are propelled by various mechanical means, are well known and extensively used. In most of these prior games for home and party use, the balls are propelled by a spring operated plunger which strikes the balls and moves them over an unpredictable path where they may find one or more pockets or slots, which are given different scoring values for determining the winner. These games generally do not require any skill, and are virtually a game of chance and do not involve direct competitive endeavor. It is therefore one of the principal objects of the present invention to provide a game apparatus which can be conveniently used in the home or at parties or small gatherings, and which not only involves appreciable skill on the part of the participants but may involve direct and simultaneous competition.

Another object of the invention is to provide a game device which utilizes balls and a track for the balls having a plurality of ball receiving and scoring slots, and in which the balls are confined to the track and propelled and controlled directly by the use of the fingers and thumb of one hand of the player.

Still another object of the invention is to provide a relatively simple game, easily played by most people without any appreciable practice or preliminary training, and which can be enjoyed by one player or any number of players, either one following the other or in groups in which several players participate simultaneously.

A further object is to provide a game device of the aforementioned type which can easily be handled, stored and carried without setting up and taking down the parts of the device when it is to be stored or carried from place to place, and which lends itself to a variety of ways of playing, thereby maintaining the interest of the participants and their continued enjoyment of the game.

Additional objects and advantages of the present invention will become apparent from the following description and accompanying drawings, wherein:

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of one embodiment of the present game device, illustrating the manner in which the device is used in playing a game;

FIG. 1A is a side elevational view of the game device shown in FIG. 1;

FIG. 2 is a top plan view of a device illustrating a dual arrangement for playing a game in a competitive manner between two players;

FIG. 3 is a side elevational view of the arrangement of the game device shown in FIG. 2;

FIG. 4 is a longitudinal cross sectional view of the game device, the section being taken on line 4 — 4 of FIG. 1A;

FIG. 5 is a vertical cross sectional view of the game device, the section being taken on line 5 — 5 of FIG. 2; and

FIG. 6 is a cross sectional view of the game device, taken on line 6 — 6 of FIG. 2.

Referring more specifically to the drawings, numeral 10 indicates generally the present game device, which consists basically of a track structure 12 and a plurality of balls 14 in the track structure. In the embodiment of the device illustrated in the drawings, the track struc-

ture consists of a generally tubular member 16 having a slot 18 on the upper side thereof extending a substantial distance along the track. The track has an ascending section 20 and a descending section 22, the two sections being joined integrally together to form a rigid track construction. Slots 24 and 26 are provided near the bottom of ascending section 20, and the plurality of balls 14, three balls being shown in the embodiment of the drawings, normally are poised between these two slots.

The balls are preferably of steel and are confined in the tubular track, since neither slot 18 nor slots 24 and 26 are sufficiently large to permit the balls to pass therethrough. The balls normally rest in the lower end of the ascending section 20, and are propelled by the player up the ascending section 20 by placing one or more fingers through slot 24, for example, and the thumb through slot 26, for the purpose of grasping the balls. The balls are then propelled by a rapid movement of the hand along slots 24 and 26 to cause the balls to roll up the ascending section. Near the top of the ascending section are slots 30, 32 and 34 in the bottom of the track, the first two being positioned along the upper end of the ascending section, and the last being at the pinnacle of the track section, i.e. at the point of juncture between the ascending and descending sections. These slots are sufficiently large to hold the balls, yet sufficiently small that the balls can readily roll over them if sufficient force is applied to the balls during the initial propelling operation.

The tubular track, which may be constructed of aluminum, steel, or plastic, is supported at one end by an end member 40 and at the other end by an end member 42, end member 40 being rigidly secured to the lower end of the ascending section by a sleeve 44 which is secured in place by a screw or pin 46, and end member 42 being held in the lower end of the descending section by a sleeve 48 secured in the end of section 22 by a screw or pin 50, the two sleeves being welded or otherwise rigidly joined to the respective end members. Since the two end members are rigidly secured to the respective ends of the tubular track, the track is held in such a position that the ascending and descending sections of the track remain firmly in their proper position, with the top of the track being at the point of juncture between the two sections. While only three slots are shown in the track, a different number, either greater or smaller, may be used if desired.

In order to cushion the balls as they roll back down the ascending section, a spring 52 or other resilient member is preferably placed in the lower end of the ascending section, the spring shown being a coil spring seated over a neck 54 of sleeve 44. A spring 56 is also preferably provided at the lower end of descending track section 22 for cushioning the balls as they reach the lower end of the section, or for rebounding the balls up the descending section to the slots. The spring 56, shown as a coil type, is seated over a neck 58 on sleeve 48. Other types of cushioning means may be used in place of springs 52 and 56, such as a rubber pad or other resilient member. When the game is not in use, the balls may be retained in the lower end of ascending section 20 by a pin 60 which is inserted in holes 62 and 64.

In playing the game with the present device, the player stands at the end where the two side slots are located. With the balls in the position shown in the draw-

ings, the player grasps the first ball, i.e. the ball farthest from the adjacent end plate, between his fingers and thumb, with the fingers along one slot, for example 24, and the thumb along slot 26. With a quick movement, the ball is pushed upwardly along the ascending track section until it reaches the slots. If the ball is pushed at one speed, it will lodge in slot 30, whereas if it is pushed at a greater speed, it will lodge in slot 32 or 34, or perhaps pass slot 34 and roll down descending track section 22, where it will normally remain. However, if the ball is rolled sufficiently hard, it may contact and compress spring 56 which will cause the ball to rebound and pass over one or more of the slots again.

The object of the game normally is to place the three balls in the three separate slots, as indicated in broken lines in FIG. 4. If only one of the devices is used, the players would normally take turns rolling the three balls upwardly to the slots. However, if two or more devices are used, the players can play simultaneously for a preselected period in which the players may complete the propelling and lodging of the balls in the slots. The game can be played by scoring the slots differently, such as one point for slot 30, two points for slot 32, and three points for slot 34. As an alternative, the game may be played by recording the time required to fill the slots with the balls, and the amount of time required for each player to fill the slots can be compared. When the double arrangement shown in FIG. 2 is used, direct competition between the players is provided by seeing who can get the balls in the slots first.

Various changes may be made in the structure. While the ascending and descending sections are shown as fixed structures, they may be modified so that the inclines can be mechanically adjusted, or the inclines may be adjusted by slightly elevating one end or the other, thereby varying the force required to propel the balls and lodge them in the slots. Further, while the track is shown as straight, it may be curved laterally in either direction while maintaining the ascending and

descending sections, and the depth of the slots may be varied in order to make it easier or more difficult to lodge the balls therein. Other changes and modifications may be made without departing from the scope of the invention.

I claim:

1. A game device comprising a track having an ascending section and a descending section joined together adjacent their highest ends, a plurality of balls on said track, a ball receiving means in the bottom of said track near the highest end of said ascending section to cause the ball to lodge along the ascending section, and means confining said balls in said track, said track being tubular and the internal cross-sectional dimensions thereof being only slightly larger than the diameter of said balls.
2. A game device as defined in claim 1 in which said ball receiving means consists of a slot.
3. A game device as defined in claim 1 in which said ball receiving means consists of a plurality of spaced slots.
4. A game device as defined in claim 1 in which end members attached to the ends of said track support said track in rigid position.
5. A game device as defined in claim 4 in which a spring is disposed in the lower end of said ascending section.
6. A game device as defined in claim 5 in which a spring is disposed in the lower end of said descending section, forming a resilient ball rebounding means.
7. A game device as defined in claim 1 in which slots are provided in the side of said tubular track adjacent the lower end of said ascending section to permit the player to grasp the balls.
8. A game device as defined in claim 7 in which a slot extends along the top of said ascending and descending sections.

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