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ATHLETIC FIELD MARKER

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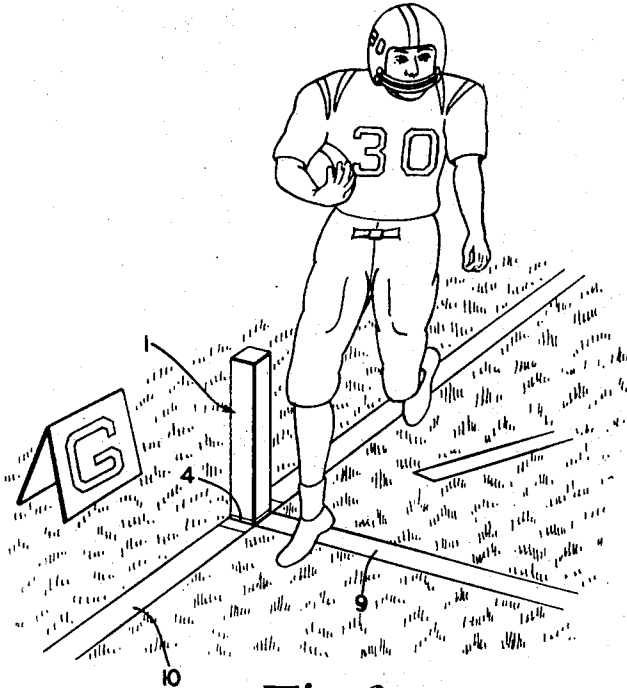
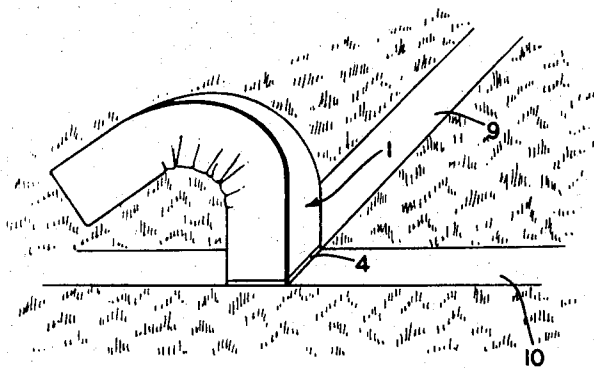
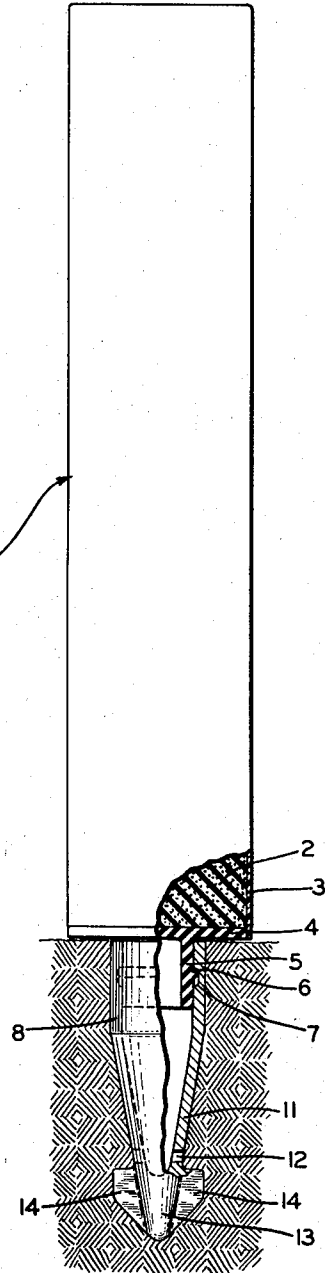


Fig. 1



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1

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ATHLETIC FIELD MARKER

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A corner marker for football fields and the like comprising a pliable, flexible post of foam-rubber-like material such as polyethylene foam having an impervious covering such as vinyl bonded to its outer surface. A rubber base plate is bonded to the lower end of the post and has a depending plug inserted into a socket in the ground.

The invention relates to improvements in markers for athletic fields, and more particularly to goal line markers for use instead of the conventional corner flags for football fields, although not necessarily restricted to this use.

In college, high school and professional football these corner flags have been in general use for marking the four corners of all football fields until the introduction of applicant's invention a short time ago.

Each of these corner flags was usually a red flag about eighteen inches square attached to a steel staff, the lower ends of which were anchored in the ground at the inside corners of the four intersections of the goal lines and side lines.

In addition to the danger to players who may accidentally fall upon or be thrown upon one of the steel flag staffs, these corner flags have been the cause of some weird problems for game officials in past seasons. It has long been a rule that any player, or any ball which touches such a flag staff or flag is out-of-bounds behind the goal line.

In windy weather, with one or more of the corner flags blowing into the field of play, several circumstances may arise causing problems for the game officials and resulting in decisions which confuse the crowd.

As an example, a team may have put the ball in play from a point near their own goal line, and the ball carrier in sweeping around the end may unknowingly run through the inwardly blown adjacent corner flag in turning up field, with the ball still in the end zone and a foot or more within the side line. According to the above interpretation of the rule, this play is ruled a safety.

In another situation, a defensive back may intercept a forward pass in the field of play, and in recovering he may step back into the wave of the corner flag, although he still remains in the field of play. By such interpretation this should be called a dead ball at that spot.

In another situation, a pass receiver catching the ball in the air may unfortunately land with one foot in the wave of the flag, although well within the playing field, continuing on into the end zone to score. By the above interpretation of the rule, this play should be ruled as an incomplete pass, no score.

Again, in a somewhat similar situation, a pass receiver being unaware that he has run through a waving corner flag, may continue on into the end zone to receive the pass. Under the above-mentioned rule, the receiver became ineligible when he ran through the waving corner flag, although he remained in the field of play. As a result there would be no completed pass and no score.

Another example is where what looks like a perfect coffin corner kick, going out-of-bounds on the one foot line, unfortunately bounds through the waving corner flag while still in the field of play. Under the above interpretation this would be ruled a touchback.

2

Therefore, since the corner flags were not only a hazard to the players, but because the flags being blown into the playing field can cause such problems as above noted, applicant has produced the athletic field marker embodying the present invention.

A primary object of the invention is to provide a marker for the corners of football fields and the like, which will be absolutely harmless to players coming into contact therewith, and which will avoid the many problems presented by the conventional corner flags.

Another object of the invention is to provide such a marker in the form of a flexible, resilient post, formed of soft, pliable rubber-like material which will bend or crush when fallen upon or stepped on, and will return to its original upright position and shape when released.

A further object of the invention is to provide such a marker in which the lower end of the flexible, resilient post is bonded to a rubber base having an integral, downwardly disposed projection or plug adapted to be inserted into a receptacle or the like placed in the ground to hold the post in upright position.

A still further object of the invention is to provide such a marker comprising a post formed of polyethylene foam having a vinyl covering bonded thereto.

Another object of the invention is to provide such a marker in which the plug depending from the soft rubber base is provided with an annular bead adapted to fit within an annular groove within the receptacle.

The above objects together with others, which will be apparent from the drawing and following description, or which may be later referred to, may be attained by constructing the improved athletic field marker in the manner hereinafter described in detail and illustrated in the accompanying drawing, in which;

FIG. 1 is an elevation of the marker embodying the invention, with parts broken away for the purpose of illustration;

FIG. 2 is a perspective view of one corner of a football field showing one of the markers at the intersection of the goal line and adjacent side line; and

FIG. 3 is a perspective view of one of the markers in flexed position showing the manner in which the soft pliable rubber-like posts are bent when fallen upon or stepped on.

Referring now more particularly to the construction illustrated in the drawing, the athletic field marker embodying the invention comprises a soft, pliable, rubber-like post indicated generally at 1. This post may be of square cross section as indicated and as shown in FIGS. 2 and 3, may be of the same width as the width of the goal lines 9 and side lines 10, and of uniform width throughout its height. The post 1 may be formed of a foam-rubber-like material, preferably polyethylene foam as indicated at 2 in FIG. 1. The outer surface of this foam-rubber-like material is protected by a covering 3 of vinyl bonded thereto as shown in FIG. 1.

The vinyl covering is placed over all of the sides and top end of the post. A soft rubber base 4 is bonded to the lower end of the post 1 and provided with a centrally located depending projection or plug 5 which may be of tubular construction, as shown in FIG. 1.

An annular rib 6 is formed upon the projection or plug 5 to be received in the annular groove 7 formed in the interior of the tubular metal socket or receptacle 8 which is driven into the ground at the intersection of the goal line 9 and the adjacent side line 10.

The receptacle 8 may be formed of metal, preferably aluminum or the like, and has the tapered lower portion 11 with drain apertures 12 at its lower end. The receptacle is shown as terminating in the driving point 13 which may have wings 14 thereon to assist in anchoring the receptacle in the ground. As shown in FIG. 1, the upper end of

3

the receptacle 8 is open to receive the depending projection or plug 5 upon the rubber base 4 of the marker.

With an athletic field marker as illustrated and described there will be no danger of injury to players who may fall upon or be thrown upon one of the markers, as the flexible, pliable rubber-like post will bend or flex as shown in FIG. 3, when fallen upon or stepped on, and will return to its original position and shape, as shown in FIGS. 1 and 2, when released.

It will also be evident that the many problems presented by the old corner flags will be entirely avoided by the use of the pliable, resilient post embodying the invention. For example, as shown in FIG. 2, a ball carrier may pass close to one of the improved markers without danger of being ruled out of bounds, so long as he stays within the playing field, as there is no waving flag extending into the playing field for a player to come in contact with, and there is no possible chance of the runner touching the post unless he actually goes out-of-bounds.

In the same way, there is no possible chance of a defensive back intercepting a forward pass in the field of play being called out-of-bounds unless he actually steps out-of-bounds.

It will be seen that with the improved corner posts located at the intersection of the side line and the goal line, a pass receiver has plenty of room to score without any possible chance of touching the corner post unless he actually steps out-of-bounds.

In the same way, a ball may pass very close to the post without contacting the same, making it possible for a perfect coffin kick to go out-of-bounds on the one foot line or even closer to the goal line without touching the corner post.

The improved athletic field marker was used during the 1965 football season by the Big Ten Conference teams and was also used by the Notre Dame team. On Jan. 17, 1966 applicant's corner post marker was adopted by the NCAA Rules Committee.

In the foregoing description certain terms have been used for brevity, clearness and understanding, but no unnecessary limitations are to be implied therefrom beyond the requirements of the prior art, because such words are used for descriptive purposes herein and are intended to be broadly construed.

Moreover, the embodiments of the improved construction illustrated and described herein are by way of ex-

4

ample, and the scope of the present invention is not limited to the exact details of construction.

Having now described the invention or discovery, the construction, the operation, and use of preferred embodiments thereof, and the advantageous new and useful results obtained thereby; the new and useful construction, and reasonable mechanical equivalents thereof obvious to those skilled in the art, are set forth in the appended claims.

I claim:

1. A football field corner marker for use at the intersection of each goal line and side line on a football field, said corner marker comprising a pliable, flexible post formed of foam-rubber-like material, having a vinyl-like coating, said post being of the same width as the width of said goal lines and side lines and being of uniform width throughout its height, a rubber base plate of the same cross-sectional size and shape as the post bonded to the lower end of said post, a depending rubber plug integral with said rubber base, and a socket member for insertion into the ground, said socket member having an open upper end to receive said depending plug.

2. An athletic field marker as defined in claim 1, in which the foam-rubber-like material is polyethylene foam.

3. An athletic field marker as defined in claim 2, in which the socket member has an annular groove therein and the plug has an annular bead adapted to be received in said groove, and in which the lower portion of the socket member is downwardly tapered and drain-opening means is provided in the lower portion of the socket therein, and in which wings are provided upon the tapered lower end of said socket member.

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