April 28, 1925. 1,535,918

R. HOFFMAN

BASEBALL GAME DEVICE

Filed Dec. 8, 1920 2 Sheets-Sheet 1

Fig. 1

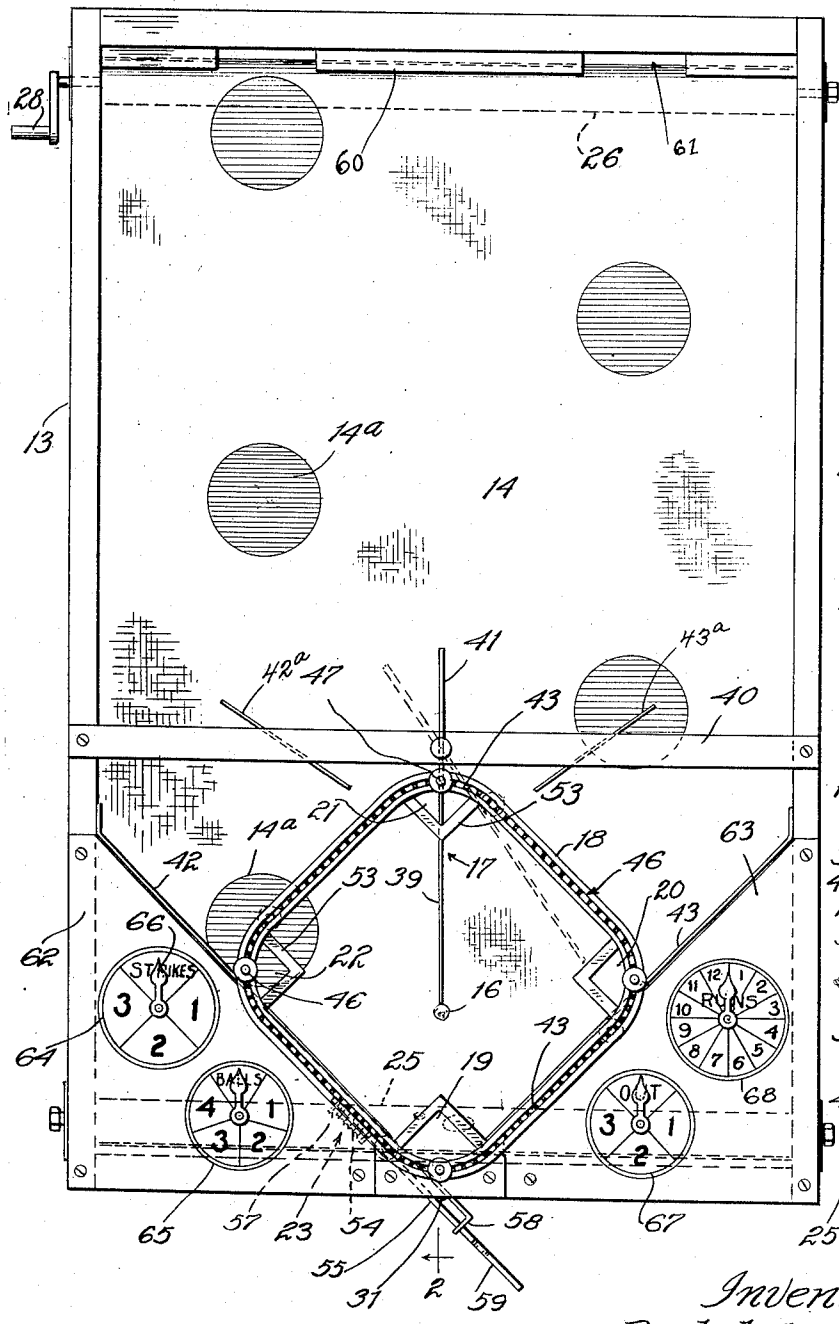
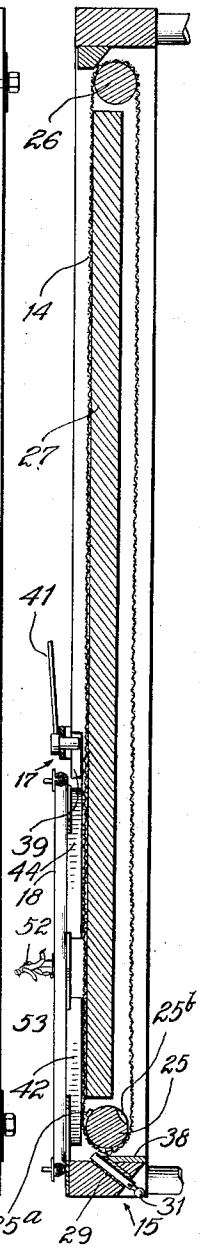


Fig. 2



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Fig. 3

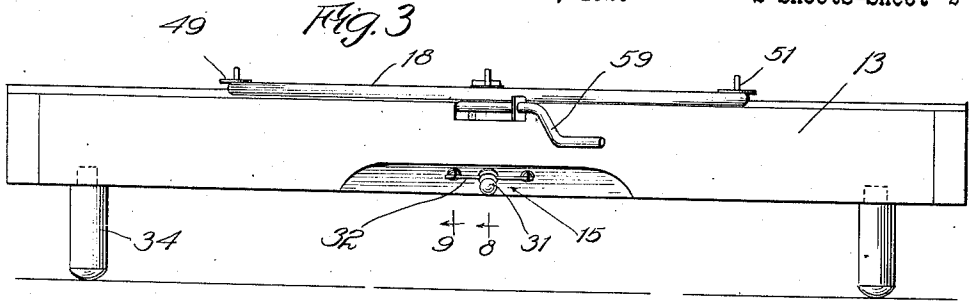


Fig. 4

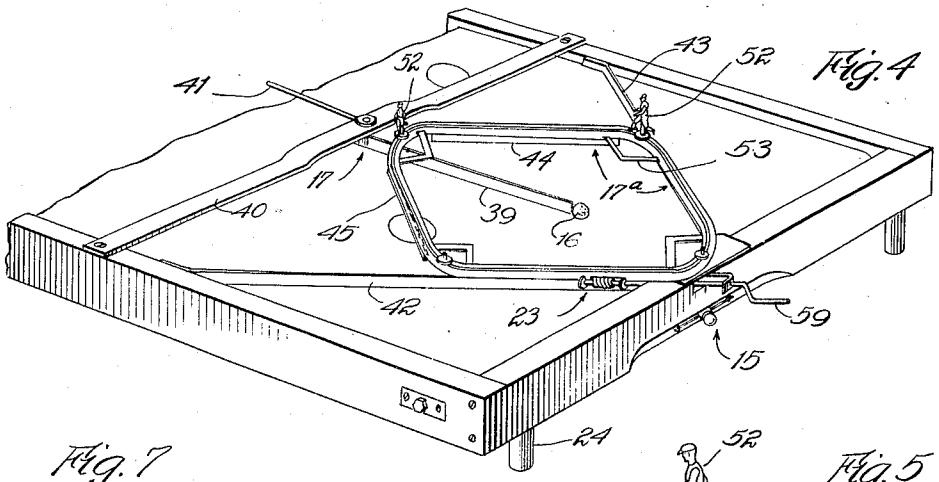


Fig. 7

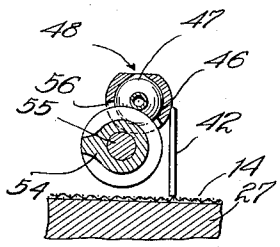


Fig. 6

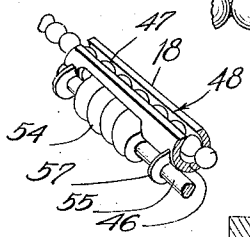


Fig. 5

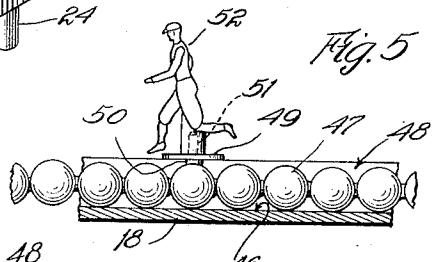


Fig. 10

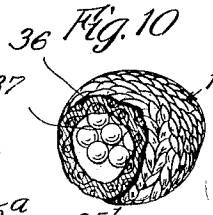
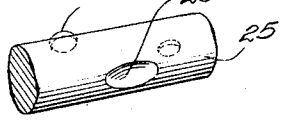


Fig. 11



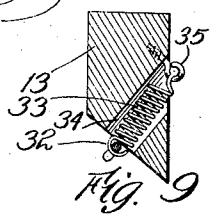
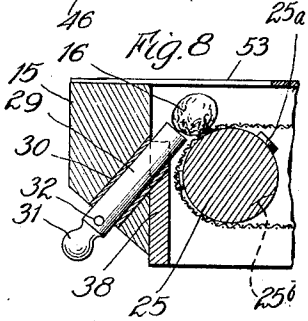


Fig. 9

Fig. 8



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UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE.

RUDOLPH HOFFMAN, OF KANKAKEE, ILLINOIS.

BASEBALL GAME DEVICE.

Application filed December 8, 1920. Serial No. 429,050.

To all whom it may concern:

Be it known that I, RUDOLPH HOFFMAN, a citizen of the United States, residing at Kankakee, in the county of Kankakee and State of Illinois, have invented certain new and useful Improvements in Baseball Game Devices, of which the following is a specification.

The invention relates to game devices, and has for its general purpose the provision of a miniature baseball game device by means of which two opposing sides, each represented by one or more persons, may play a game simulating in all substantial respects the game as it is commonly played.

The primary object of the invention, therefore, is to provide a device of the character set forth of such construction and arrangement as to enable the "batting" and "fielding" of a ball and the actuation of one or more "runners" or "men," whereby the batting may be accomplished by a person representing one side and the fielding by another person representing the other side, in opposition to each other for the purpose of making "runs" and "outs," respectively, substantially as in the actual game.

A more specific object of the invention is to provide means of extremely simple construction for fielding an impelled or "batted" ball, enabling the rapid and accurate positioning of the ball at any desired point upon the "field."

A further object of the invention is to provide a device of advantageous construction for impelling or "batting" the ball.

Still another object of the invention is to provide means for effectively controlling the runner or runners.

Another object of the invention is to provide means for facilitating the score-keeping operation.

Generally stated, an important object of the invention is to provide a commercially practicable device capable of cheap manufacture and well adapted for shipment.

The objects of the invention thus set forth, together with other and ancillary advantages which will be apparent as the description proceeds, may be attained by the construction and arrangement illustrated in the accompanying drawings forming part hereof, wherein Figure 1 is a top plan view of a preferred embodiment of the invention. Fig. 2 is a central sectional view through the device taken substantially on the line 2—2 of Fig. 1. Fig. 3 is a front or inner end elevation of the device. Fig. 4 is a fragmentary perspective view of the device, the scoring devices being omitted. Fig. 5 is a fragmentary sectional detail view of the runner-controlling device. Fig. 6 is a fragmentary perspective view illustrating the actuating means for the runner controlling device. Fig. 7 is a fragmentary transverse sectional view through said actuating means. Fig. 8 is a fragmentary transverse sectional view taken substantially on line 8 of Fig. 3. Fig. 9 is a similar view taken in the plane of line 9 of Fig. 3. Fig. 10 is a perspective view of the ball which is preferably employed, a portion of the cover being broken away for illustrative purposes. Fig. 11 is a fragmentary perspective view of one of the rollers for controlling the field.

The device comprises generally a supporting frame 13 having a movable field 14, and means 15 for impelling or "batting" a ball 16. Ball guiding means, including a movable controlling device 17 and stationary guide means 17^a, are operable in the movements of the field to position the ball at any point upon the field and particularly with reference to a stationary frame 18 providing four bases 19, 20, 21 and 22 corresponding with "home plate," "first base," "second base" and "third base," respectively. Associated with the frame 18 is a runner-controlling device designated generally by the numeral 23. Upon suitable points on the supporting frame 13 there may be mounted scoring devices as shown clearly in Fig. 1.

The supporting frame 13 may be of any suitable construction, being herein made of wood and rectangular in form. Suitable legs 24 may be provided to support the frame at a slight elevation from the table or other support upon which it rests, and preferably such legs are in the form of pins removably mounted in the opposite end pieces or rails of the frame so as to be capable of detachment for shipping purposes.

The field 14 is in the form of an endless belt made of canvas or the like, mounted upon a pair of rollers 25 and 26 journalled near the opposite ends of the side rails of the main frame 13. The belt is made of such dimensions as to fill substantially the space defined by the frame and interposed between the oppositely travelling web portions of the belt is a board 27 upon the upper surface of which the uppermost web portion of the

belt is slidably supported. Said board is rigidly secured between the side rails with its upper surface substantially flush with the uppermost surface of the rollers 25 and 26. One of the rollers for the belt, preferably the roller 26 at the outer end of the frame has secured thereto a hand crank 28 by means of which the belt may be manipulated whereby to move the field 14 as desired. The belt may be of any preferred color, but preferably is made green to simulate a natural ball field.

At the front or inner end of the frame 13, substantially midway between the sides thereof, is located the batting or ball-impelling device 15. While this device may be of any suitable or preferred construction I have shown it herein as comprising a plunger 29 (Figs. 2, 3, 8 and 9) operable longitudinally in an upwardly and rearwardly inclined bore 30 formed centrally of the inner end rail of the frame. The outer lower end of the plunger is provided with a head 31, and near its outer end a wire or rod of small diameter extends transversely for connection at its opposite ends with a pair of resilient devices such as coiled tension springs 33. The springs are each entered in a bore 34 substantially parallel with the bore 30, and are equidistantly spaced on opposite sides of the plunger. The opposite or inner ends of said springs may be anchored by means of screw eyes 35. Normally the plunger is held by the springs 33 in position with its upper end terminating substantially in the plane of the uppermost surface of the roller 25 and between the roller and the inner face of the front end rail of the frame.

The ball 16 is adapted to be positioned upon the upper end of the plunger 29 so that when the plunger is drawn downwardly and released for movement by its controlling springs, the ball is driven upwardly and rearwardly a greater or less distance over the field. In order that the ball shall not bounce or roll to a greater extent than is desirable, it is peculiarly constructed so as to avoid substantially any resiliency therein. Herein I have shown a ball (Fig. 10) which comprises a cover 36 of suitable woven fabric formed as by knitting or crocheting, and enclosing a ballast preferably consisting of a quantity of lead shot 37. In order to prevent the ball from entering the space between the roller 25 and the front end rail of the frame, I preferably provide upon the inner face of said rail a relatively thin strip 38 (Figs. 2 and 8) extending some distance on opposite sides of the plunger.

The controlling device 17 for the ball is operatively associated with the frame 18 providing the bases 19 to 22, inclusive, and is adapted to coact with the stationary guide means 17^a to accomplish the rapid and accurate positioning of the ball, in the movements of the field 14, at any one of the several bases. The device 17 comprises an arm 39 pivotally mounted near one end upon a cross bar 40 secured to the opposite side rails of the frame, and the pivot upon which the arm is mounted carries at its upper end a rearwardly extending arm or handle 41 by means of which the arm may be readily manipulated. The cross bar 40 is elevated above the field so that it does not interfere in any way with the movement of the ball with the field.

The stationary ball guiding means 17^a coacting with the arm 17 in the "fielding" operation comprise suitable guide members located at proper places over the field to facilitate the positioning of the ball at any one of the bases, in the movement of the field. Thus I provide two elongated strips 42 and 43 extending from beneath the frame 18 at opposite sides of the home plate 19 outwardly along the first and third base lines to the main frame 13; also strips 44 and 45 (Fig. 4) extending along the lines between the first and second, and the second and third bases, respectively. All of said strips terminate at the upper surface of the field and are arranged diagonally so that in the movement of the field the ball engaging with one of said strips is caused to travel in the general direction of movement of the field. As shown in Fig. 1, two additional guide members 42^a and 43^a may be employed, if desired. These members are also arranged diagonally and are secured to the under side of the bar 40 so as to be engaged by the ball in the movements of the field. The strips 42 to 45, inclusive and the arm 39 thus constitute stationary and movable guide members for use in positioning the ball in the movements of the field.

The runner-controlling device 23 is associated with the frame 18, and may be of any preferred construction. Herein the frame 18 is constructed to provide a channel 46 for the reception of an endless ball-chain 47. Preferably the frame is formed from a tube bent into the proper form and having its upper surface cut away so as to provide a slot 48 (Fig. 7) therein. At equidistantly spaced points in the chain 47 a plurality of disks 49 are secured (Fig. 5). Said disks are each made rigid with one of the balls of the chain, as by being mounted on a rigid neck or stem 50, and each carries an upstanding pin 51 upon which may be removably mounted a runner 52 preferably simulating the form of a man or player. The disks 49 are adapted to slide along the upper surface of the frame with the stems 50 operating in the slot 48. The runner is thus maintained in upright position. For the purpose of defining the bases 19 to 22, inclusive, at the several

corners of the frame 18, I provide angular members 53 secured upon the inner side of the frame so as to project inwardly therefrom and preferably elevated a sufficient distance above the field so as to permit the ball to move thereunder without restriction.

For the purpose of causing the runners 52 to travel, means is provided for actuating the endless ball-chain 47. This means may also be of any suitable or preferred character, but herein preferably comprises a worm 54 fixed upon a shaft 55 extending parallel with a portion of the channel 46 and hence with the chain travelling therein. The portion of the channel adjacent the worm is cut away as at 56 to receive a portion of the worm with the worm engaging the balls of the chain 47. Herein the shaft 55 carrying the worm is journalled in a pair of lugs 57 and a lug 58. The lugs 57 are herein secured at opposite ends of the worm to the depending strip 42 constituting one of the guide members, and the lug 58 is formed on a continuation of the strip 42 and provides a support for the free end of the shaft 55. Said end of the shaft is bent to form a crank 59 by means of which the shaft may be rotated to effect the travel of the chain 47 and hence of any runners mounted upon the pins 51.

For convenience in describing the operation of the device the two opposing parties are herein termed the "fielder" and the "batter". Assuming the parts to be in the position shown in Fig. 1, the ball is placed by the fielder at the free end of the arm 17 centrally positioned. The fielder then operates the crank 28 to move the field so as to position the ball upon the upper end of the plunger 29. In order to render it difficult for the fielder to thus properly position the ball the roller 25 may be provided with one or more indentations and projections 25^a and 25^b disposed near the path of movement of the ball and tending to move it out of its true course. In the event that the fielder fails to position the ball so that it will contact with the plunger, it becomes a "ball". On the other hand, the ball contacting the upper end of the plunger constitutes a "strike", and in accordance with the regular rules of the game, the batter may either actuate the impelling means or request the delivery of another ball in which latter event a "strike" will be called. A failure on the part of the fielder to deliver the required number of strikes out of the permissible number of balls delivered results in a "walk". On the other hand, the failure on the part of the batter to impel the ball upon the field within three strikes will constitute an "out". In the event that the batter in the operation of the ball-impelling means drives the ball to a position upon the field either within the "infield" defined by the frame 18, or beyond it, he operates the crank 59 to move a runner positioned at home plate 19 toward first base. At the same time the fielder actuates the crank 28, and, if necessary, the controller 17 to move the ball to first base or to any one of the other bases, as may appear desirable, to cut off the runner. Thus assuming the ball to have been driven to a position between first and second bases, (dotted lines Fig. 1) the fielder moves the arm 17 into engagement with the ball and at the same time operates the field in such direction that the ball guided by the arm 17 will move toward first base, the fielder making an effort to have the ball reach its destination before the runner arrives at his destination as actuated by the batter.

In numerous places upon the field spaces or spots 14^a are provided. These spaces constitute "out-zones", so that if, either through accident or the fielder's manipulation of the field, the ball rests within one of said circles, an "out" results.

At the extreme outer end of the field between the outer end rail and the roller 26 are located a plurality of strips 60 positioned with respect to each other to form spaces 61. If the batter succeeds in driving the ball into one of these spaces, this feat constitutes a "home run".

It will be understood that the game may be played either by two persons each representing a side or by a greater number of persons arranged or paired in opposition to each other. If it is desired that a plurality of persons may be arranged on the opposite sides, the runners 52 are distinguished from each other in any suitable way, as by means of color or some such distinguishing characteristic so that each party participating shall be represented by a particular runner. In each instance of operation the runners are under the control of the person "batting" and the "fielding" is in charge of the person opposed to the batter. The players of the opposed sides are thus arranged in pairs and as in the regular game "bat" successively.

For the purpose of facilitating the operation of keeping score, I preferably provide a plurality of scoring or counting devices at the rear end of the frame 13. These devices may be mounted upon angular plates 62 and 63 which may be secured upon the rear corners of the frame at the upper edges thereof as shown in Fig. 1. Each of said plates may carry a plurality of counting devices. Thus the plate 62 at one corner bears two circular scales 64 and 65 divided respectively into three and four sections, the sections being numbered for "strikes" and "balls" respectively. A hand or pointer 66 is pivotally mounted at the axis of each of

said scales so as to indicate the desired number thereof. Similarly the plate 63 is provided with a pair of counting devices 67 and 68 adapted respectively for tabulating "outs" and "runs". Obviously any other or additional counting devices may be employed as may be desired.

It will be apparent that I have produced a game device by means of which a miniature or toy game of baseball may be played in a manner similar in all substantial respects to the game as played in actual practice. Successful playing of the game requires a substantial amount of skill, as in the regular game, the means of control for the opposing parties being of such a nature as to permit of relatively great accuracy. At the same time the element of chance is sufficiently strong to render the game intensely interesting. The construction and arrangement of the various devices is simple, and the device is capable of manufacture at a relatively low cost. Moreover, it is capable of withstanding relatively hard usage, and is readily adapted for shipment in a compact form.

It is to be understood that the foregoing illustrates one embodiment only of my invention, it being obvious that changes may be made in the form, arrangement and construction of the various novel features, that their mode of operation may be varied, and that features may be omitted, without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.

I claim as my invention:

1. A baseball game device comprising in combination, a movable field, means for impelling a ball onto said field, a frame fixedly mounted above said movable field to provide a definite path for a runner, means for causing a runner to move along said path, and means operable to position the ball substantially in the line of travel of the runner.

2. A baseball game device comprising, in combination, a field movable longitudinally, means for impelling a ball onto said field, a diamond-shaped frame fixedly mounted above said movable field to provide a definite path for a runner, means for causing a runner to move along said path, diagonally extending members fixedly mounted above said field, and a pivotally mounted member, said diagonally extending members and pivotally mounted member being associated with said movable field so that the ball may be positioned in the path of said runner.

3. A baseball game device comprising, in combination, a movable field, means for impelling a ball onto the field, a frame fixedly mounted above the field to provide a definite path for a runner means for causing a runner to travel with reference to the field in said definite path, and guiding means for positioning the ball with reference to said path of movement in the movement of the field, said guiding means comprising a plurality of stationary guide members and a pivotally mounted guide member swingable with reference to the stationary guide members.

4. A baseball game device comprising, in combination, a field, means for impelling a ball onto the field, a frame fixedly mounted above the field to provide a definite path for a runner means for controlling a runner adapted to cause it to travel in said definite path, and means operable to position the ball including a pivotally mounted guide member swingable to position the ball with reference to said path of travel.

5. A base ball game device comprising, in combination, a supporting frame, a movable field, means for impelling a ball onto the field, a diamond-shaped frame fixedly mounted above said field and providing a definite path of movement for a runner, means for causing a runner to travel in said definite path of movement over the field, means for positioning the ball with reference to said path of movment to intercept said runner, and scoring devices mounted upon the frame.

6. A baseball game device comprising, in combination, a frame, a field, means for impelling a ball onto the field, a frame mounted above said field to provide a definite path of movement for a runner, means for causing a runner to travel in said path of movement over the field, and means for guiding the ball to any desired point with reference to said path of movement, said field comprising an endless belt, rollers carried by said frame and supporting said belt, and means for rotating one of said rollers.

7. A baseball game device having, in combination, a movable field, stationary runner-guide means mounted above the field in parallel spaced relation thereto, and a movable guide member operable in a movement of the field to position a ball beneath said stationary guide means.

8. A baseball game device comprising, in combination, a movable field, means for supporting a runner for movement in a stationary path above the field and in spaced relation thereto, and means operable in the movement of the field to guide a fielded ball to a position beneath the path of travel of the runner.

9. A baseball game device having, in combination with a field, means adapted for guiding a fielded ball to any desired point upon the field comprising a plurality of stationary guide members and a guide member movable with reference to said stationary guide members, said movable guide member being operable to position the ball adjacent either of said stationary guide members.

10. A baseball game device having, in combination with a longitudinally movable

field, ball-guiding means comprising a plurality of stationary guide members arranged diagonally with reference to the field, and a movable guide member operable with reference to the stationary guide members and adapted to coact with the latter guide members in the movements of the field to position the ball at any desired point upon the field.

11. In a baseball game device the combination with a frame having enclosed therein a field, runner-controlling means comprising a second frame providing a continuous guide channel, an endless runner-actuating member operable in said channel, said member being in the form of a chain consisting of a plurality of balls closely connected together, actuating means for said chain comprising a worm mounted in operative association with said channel and adapted to engage said balls, and means for actuating said worm.

12. In a baseball game device having a field, runner-controlling means comprising a stationary frame providing a continuous channel, an endless ball chain entered within said channel, a worm operatively associated with said channel so as to operatively engage said balls, and a crank shaft for actuating said worm, certain of the balls of said chain being adapted to support the runner.

13. A baseball game device comprising, in combination, a field, a frame enclosing the field, a second frame fixed with reference to said main frame and providing a plurality of bases, means for positioning a ball as desired on said field with reference to said bases including means for moving said field, and means operatively associated with said second frame for guiding the ball to any desired position in the field.

14. A runner-controlling device for baseball game devices comprising, in combination, a continuous channel, a ball chain entered within said channel, and means for actuating said chain longitudinally, certain of said balls of the chain having horizontal disks secured thereto, said disks having upstanding pins adapted to receive removably a figure representing a runner.

15. A baseball game device comprising, in combination, a field, means for impelling a ball to the field, means operable to position a ball in operative association with said impelling means, a frame mounted above said field to provide a definite path of movement for a runner, said path having bases interposed therein means for causing a runner to travel in said path and means for controlling the ball to position it with reference to said bases.

16. In a device of the class described, the combination with means for impelling a ball, means for delivering a ball to said impelling means comprising an endless belt and a roller adjacent the impelling means over which said belt is arranged to travel, said roller having means for deflecting the ball in its travel from its true path.

17. A baseball game device comprising, in combination, a frame having a field enclosed therein, means providing a plurality of bases, a diamond-shaped guide track connecting said bases, means for causing a runner to travel along said track between any of said bases, and means operable to position a ball to intercept a runner of any of said bases.

18. A baseball game device comprising, in combination, a field, a plurality of bases above said field, manually operable, means for moving runners from base to base, and separate manually operable means for moving a ball from any point on said field to said bases to intercept said runners.

19. In a baseball game device, the combination of a frame, a field, means manually operable to impel a ball onto the field, a diamond-shaped frame including bases fixed relative to said frame, means carried by said diamond-shaped frame for movably supporting a runner, and means for moving the ball longitudinally and laterally of said frame to position it at any one of said bases.

20. In a baseball game device, the combination of a frame, a field, means manually operable to impel a ball onto the field, a diamond-shaped frame including bases fixed relative to said frame, means causing a runner to travel between said bases, and means for moving the ball longitudinally and laterally of said frame to position it at any one of said bases.

In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand.

RUDOLPH HOFFMAN.