

(19) World Intellectual Property Organization
International Bureau



(43) International Publication Date
16 December 2004 (16.12.2004)

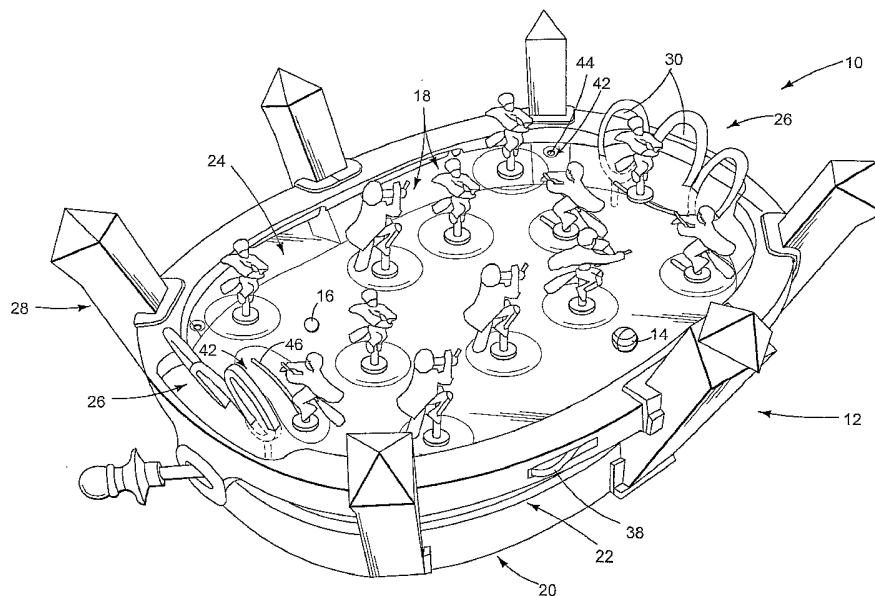
PCT

(10) International Publication Number
WO 2004/108235 A2

- (51) International Patent Classification⁷: **A63F**
- (21) International Application Number: PCT/US2004/018136
- (22) International Filing Date: 7 June 2004 (07.06.2004)
- (25) Filing Language: English
- (26) Publication Language: English
- (30) Priority Data:
60/476,468 5 June 2003 (05.06.2003) US
Not furnished 4 June 2004 (04.06.2004) US
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- (81) Designated States (unless otherwise indicated, for every kind of national protection available): AE, AG, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BW, BY, BZ, CA, CH, CN, CO, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, DZ, EC, EE, EG, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MZ, NA, NI, NO, NZ, OM, PG, PH, PL, PT, RO, RU, SC, SD, SE, SG, SK, SL, SY, TJ, TM, TN, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VC, VN, YU, ZA, ZM, ZW.
- (84) Designated States (unless otherwise indicated, for every kind of regional protection available): ARIPO (BW, GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, MZ, NA, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZM, ZW), Eurasian (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European (AT, BE, BG, CH, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, HU, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK, TR), OAPI (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GQ, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

[Continued on next page]

(54) Title: TABLE GAME



(57) Abstract: A game is provided including several player pieces mounted to a platform. Opposing players articulate player pieces to score goals by manipulating a ball through the opponent's goal. In some embodiments, a random timer triggers the release of an another ball that the opposing players try to catch using a magnetic portion of the player pieces. A launching mechanism may be included that, when triggered by one of the balls, ejects a corresponding player piece from the platform.

WO 2004/108235 A2



Published:

— *without international search report and to be republished upon receipt of that report*

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TABLE GAME

Background

[0001] A variety of table-top games are known for common sports such as
5 hockey, soccer, and foosball. These games typically require a user to manually
control all of the player pieces. There is usually only one ball, or puck, moving across
the base of the play area to be urged towards the opponent's goal. The thrill of these
games can therefore be increased by the addition of features that increase the
unpredictability of the game. Various mechanized figurines are also known which
10 may be used to throw an object; however, these figurines lack structure to catch or
pick up an object without manual intervention by a user. Examples of known
mechanized games and figurines are found in U.S. Patent Nos. 1,551,050; 2,903,264;
3,834,701; 4,515,371; 4,548,408; 5,046,734; 5,275,401; 5,297,792; 5,433,443;
5,655,767; 5,876,036; 5,931,465; and 6,171,169, the disclosures of which are
15 incorporated herein by reference, in their entirety and for all purposes.

Summary

[0002] The present disclosure relates generally to a game including several player
pieces mounted on a platform. More specifically, it relates to a game in which
opposing players articulate player pieces to score goals by causing a ball to enter the
20 opponent's goal. In some embodiments, a random timer triggers the release of
another ball that the opposing players try to catch using a magnetic portion of the
player pieces. One of the balls may fall through a hole in the platform, causing an
associated player piece to be launched from the platform.

Brief Description of the Drawings

[0003] Fig. 1 illustrates an exemplary table game according to the present description, including a playing arena and player pieces.

[0004] Fig. 2 is a detailed view depicting a portion of the playing arena, as shown
5 in Fig. 1, including turrets that release balls into play.

[0005] Fig. 3 is a detailed view depicting a portion of the playing arena, as shown in Fig. 1, including side paddles that return balls into play or retain the balls.

[0006] Fig. 4A is an enlarged view of one of the player pieces shown in Fig. 1, namely a goalkeeper.

10 [0007] Fig. 4B is a view similar to Fig. 4A, showing translation of the player piece across a goal region.

[0008] Fig. 4C illustrates a gear assembly used to produce the player piece movements shown in Figs. 4A and 4B.

[0009] Fig. 5A is an enlarged front view of another of the player pieces shown in
15 Fig. 1, namely a swivel player piece.

[0010] Fig. 5B is a rear view of the swivel player piece of Fig. 5A.

[0011] Fig. 5C illustrates the swivel player piece of Figs. 5A and 5B in a neutral position.

[0012] Fig. 5D depicts the swivel player piece of Fig. 5C in a rotated position.

[0013] Fig. 6 is an enlarged view of the spring-mounted player piece of Fig. 1.

[0014] Fig. 7A is an enlarged view of the launchable player piece of Fig. 1.

[0015] Fig. 7B illustrates the launchable player piece of Fig. 7A being launched.

5 [0016] Fig. 8A is an enlarged view of a launching mechanism in a neutral position.

[0017] Fig. 8B shows the launching mechanism of Fig. 8A in a launched position.

[0018] Fig. 9A is an enlarged view of the inside of the launching mechanism of
10 Fig. 7A in a neutral position.

[0019] Fig. 9B depicts the inside of the launching mechanism of Fig. 9A in a launched position.

Detailed Description

15 [0020] Fig. 1 depicts a table game 10 according to the present description. In the depicted example, game 10 includes a playing arena 12, scoring balls 14, launching balls 16, and player pieces 18. Player pieces 18 may be manipulated by a user to interact with balls 14 and 16 during play of the game. In the illustrated embodiment, game 10 reflects the game of Quidich discussed in the popular children's book *Harry*

Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone, by J.K. Rowling; however, it should be appreciated that the game may take a variety of forms and represent fantasy games, as in the present example, or other games, such as soccer and hockey.

[0021] Playing arena 12 generally includes a base 20, sides 22, a platform 24, and
5 a goal region 26, as shown in Fig. 1. In the depicted example, platform 24 is raised above base 20 and made of transparent plastic. The platform maintains the player pieces spaced away from the base, and is adapted to simulate movement of the player pieces a distance above the base. Thus, player pieces 18 appear to be flying over the base. The sides and/or base of the arena may depict scenery or include additional
10 components to indicate that base 20 is at ground level. For example, in the depicted embodiment, turrets 28 extend upwards from the base to assist in suspending the platform above the base and thereby create a physical distance between the base and the player pieces resting on the platform. In some embodiments, the scenery is adapted to represent a difference in height between the platform and ground level;
15 however, it should be appreciated that the game may take other forms, such as water polo, in which case the "ground level" may be an ocean floor or other appropriate location.

[0022] Goal regions 26 may be sized to allow passage of balls 14 and/or 16. In the depicted example, goal regions 26 are intended to allow passage of scoring balls
20 14, through at least one of a variety of sections 30. In the example shown in Fig. 1, goal region 26 is divided into three rings. Each ring may be associated with a distinct point value, or the rings may be associated with the same point value. The game may

include mechanisms to automatically keep track of player's scores and may further include a buzzer, or other audio or visual effects that are actuated when a player scores. In addition, each section may be of a different size than the other sections to vary the difficulty of maneuvering one of balls 14 and/or 16 into the goal region, or to vary which of balls 14 and 16 will fit through the goal region.

[0023] Playing arena 12 typically includes other features, which may track players scores or move or hide elements, such as randomly releasing balls 16 from playing arena 12, to increase the unpredictability of the game. As shown in Fig. 2, turrets 28 may be used to release either or both of balls 14 and 16. In the depicted example, launching balls 16 are loaded into a chute 32 in turret 28. The top portion 34 of the turret may be rotated to start a timer mechanism to randomly release the balls out of opening 36. Balls 14 and 16 may be released from any suitable location of playing arena 12 so that they land on platform 24, and thereby enter game play. For example, the balls may be released from anywhere along the periphery of platform 24, anywhere on platform 24, such as up through the center, or anywhere above platform 24, such as the tops of turrets 28.

[0024] Playing arena 12 may further include side paddles 38, as shown in Figs. 1 and 3. Side paddles 38 may be used to manipulate balls 14 and/or 16. In some embodiments, the side paddles are used to push away the balls, while in other embodiments the side paddles are used to retain the balls. For example, as shown in Fig. 3, side paddles 38 may include magnets 40 that attract launching balls 16, which may be metal or may include magnetic portions.

[0025] Bowl-shaped receptacles, or depressions, 42 may be provided in platform 24 to retain scoring balls 14 and launching balls 16 in close proximity of a corresponding player piece to assist players in contacting the balls with their player pieces 18 or maneuvering the balls to particular locations on platform 24. Platform 24 has several trap-forming holes 44 typically located within depressions 42 to receive launching balls 16. Platform 24 may also include elongated grooves 46, along which player pieces 18 may be moved, as will subsequently be described.

[0026] In the exemplary embodiment shown in Figs. 1-8, player pieces 18 include a goalkeeper 48, and several supporting players spread across the platform to cover offensive and defensive positions. Each player piece 18 typically functions in a unique manner. These functions and methods of coupling player pieces 18 to platform 24 may include, but are not limited to, permanent mounting, including slidable, rotatable or spring mounting, or temporary mounting, such as launchable mounting. In the illustrative example, the supporting player pieces include a swivel player piece 50, a spring-mounted player piece 52, and a launchable player piece 54.

[0027] As shown in Fig. 4A-C, goalkeeper 48 is mounted above a post 56 that extends upwards from platform 24. Post 56 is coupled to gear assembly 58, which is coupled to a rod 60. When a user twists rod 60 about horizontal axis A-A, gear assembly 58 rotates post 56 to rotate the goalkeeper relative to the platform. A user may also rotate rod 60 about vertical axis B-B to control translation of the goalkeeper position along elongated groove 46, which may be arcuate in shape. Thus, the goalkeeper may sweep across the platform to guard goal region 26. Rod 60 may

protrude from the side of playing arena 12 so that a user may move the corresponding playing piece 18 without interfering with game play on platform 24.

[0028] In the example shown in Fig. 5A-D, swivel player piece 50 is rotatably and slidably mounted to platform 24 and includes a first, or upper, body portion 62 and a second, or lower, body portion 64 with a coupling mechanism 66 disposed therebetween. Coupling mechanism 66 is adapted to urge rotation of the first body portion about an axis through the second body portion when the first body portion translates relative to the second body portion. In some embodiments, the coupling mechanism includes a spring adapted to compress and thereby permit the first body portion to move closer to the second body portion.

[0029] For example, in the embodiment shown in Fig. 5C, coupling mechanism 66 is engaged by a user pressing down on upper body portion 62 so that lower body portion 64 spins on a spring-loaded axis C-C. This spinning forces swivel player piece 50 to make contact with a nearby ball, such a scoring ball 14 or launching ball 16, to pass the ball to another player piece 18. In the illustrative example, coupling mechanism 66 includes a coil spring 68 housed in a shaft 70 that extends from the upper body portion and passes through the lower body portion. The lower body portion is mounted on a post 72 that slides within the shaft. As shown in Figs. 5A and 5B, the spring is disposed between the first body portion and the post. A pin 74 passes through the post and slides within an aperture 76 within shaft 70. When the spring is compressed, such as by a user pressing down on the head of the player piece, the upper body portion moves closer to the lower body portion. This movement urges

pin 74 to slide along aperture 76. Since aperture 76 is angled relative to axis C-C to spiral around shaft 70, the movement of pin 74 along the aperture causes the lower body portion to rotate relative to the upper body portion. As shown in Figs. 5C and 5D, shaft 70 of swivel player piece 50 may also slide along elongated groove 46, 5 thereby allowing translation of the player piece along the platform.

[0030] In some player pieces 18, such as spring-mounted players 52 shown in Fig. 6, the player piece is attached to a spring 78 that allows tilting of the player piece. Some of the player pieces 18 may include ball manipulation mechanisms 80 to assist in maneuvering balls 14 and 16. For example, broom 82 may be used to pass either of 10 the balls. Player pieces 18 may alternatively or additionally include a magnet 84 to catch balls 14 and/or 16, which may be metal or may include magnetic portions. In such a case, the player piece is typically positioned above depression 42 to further facilitate catching of a ball. When a ball rests within depression 42, a user may more easily push broom 82 or magnet 84 into contact with the ball. In the example shown 15 the magnet is attached to the hand of the spring-mounted players 52; however, magnet 84 may be disposed anywhere upon or within player pieces 18 or other ball manipulation mechanisms 80 without departing from the scope of the disclosure.

[0031] Moving on to Figs. 7A and 7B, launchable player piece 54 is removably coupled to the platform. In some embodiments, launchable player piece 54 includes a 20 launching mechanism 86 that is adapted to uncouple the player piece from the platform. Release of the player piece from the platform is triggered by positioning, or proximity of, ball 14 and/or 16 relative to the platform. Launching mechanism 86

may include a receiving portion 88 that receives the player piece and a release portion 90 that is operatively coupled to the receiving portion and adapted to trigger release of the player piece from the receiving portion, the details of which are shown in Figs. 8A and 8B.

5 [0032] In the illustrative embodiment shown in Figs. 8A and 8B, receiving portion 88 includes a column 92 in which a shaft 94 of launchable player piece 54 rests. Inside column 92 is a position plate 96 which is coupled to a spring 98 and adapted to support the launchable player piece 54, as shown in Fig. 9A and 9B. Through the side of column 92 is an aperture 100. To set launchable player piece 54
10 to its neutral position, shaft 94 is pressed into column 92 until the end of the shaft presses against position plate 96 and spring 98 is compressed. When the spring has been compressed so that position plate 96 is depressed within the receiving portion, past aperture 100, a protrusion 102 on release portion 90 is pulled into aperture 100 by an elastic element 104, thereby securing the position plate, and consequently the
15 launchable player piece, in a neutral position. Protrusion 102 is thus adapted to engage with the receiving portion and thereby couple the player piece to the platform when the player piece is in the neutral position. Protrusion 102 may extend from side arm 106, which is rotatably coupled to column 92. Therefore, when side arm 106 is rotated, the protrusion may be pulled out of aperture 100, thereby releasing position
20 plate 96 and allowing it to move to a launched position, expelling the launchable player from column 92.

[0033] In some embodiments, a lever arm 108 is rotatably mounted to the underside of platform 24 and magnetically attracted to ball 14 and/or 16. One end of lever arm 108 has a magnet 110 so that that portion of the lever arm is pulled toward platform 24 when launching ball 16 falls or rests in the corresponding hole 44. Rotation of the lever arm causes rotation of side arm 106, such as by pressing against ramp 112, which disengages protrusion 102 from the receiving portion and thereby uncouples the at least one player piece from the platform. When released, the corresponding player piece 18 is launched from its position on platform 24 into the air, as shown in Fig. 7B. It should be appreciated that uncoupling of a player piece need not be accomplished by a spring-loaded launching mechanism, as the configuration shown is intended as an example only of how to add unpredictability to a table game by uncoupling a player piece from the platform.

[0034] Each of the previously described player pieces 18 may incorporate any combination of the other player pieces' mechanisms and corresponding functions. The game typically includes five player pieces 18 per team as shown in Fig. 1, although Fig. 1 is intended as an example only and game 10 is not limited to the configuration shown.

[0035] During use, users move their player pieces 18 to maneuver scoring balls 14 into his or her opponent's goal region 26, thereby earning points, such as ten points per goal. As previously described a timer mechanism may randomly release launching balls 16 onto platform 24. Users then try to pick up launching balls 16 to earn additional points, such as fifty points each, which may also end game 10.

Launching balls 16 may each have a particular color to indicate other point values or stages of game 10. Launching balls 16 that fall through holes 44 in platform 24 activate launching mechanism 86 to eject the respective player piece 18 from platform 24. When a player is launched from the platform, that player may receive a penalty, 5 such as a point reduction or loss of that player for a specified time period. Alternatively, the launching of a player piece may be for entertainment purposes only and the launched player piece may be returned to the platform without that player incurring a penalty. Users may also engage paddles 38 to re-direct movement of launching balls 16 to his or her opponent's end of platform 24 or use the paddles to 10 prevent launching ball 16 from disrupting their own player pieces. The highest point score typically determines a winner of the game once one or all of launching balls 16 have been caught. Broom 82 may be provided to assist in hitting or deflecting scoring ball 14.

[0036] It is believed that the disclosure set forth above encompasses multiple 15 distinct inventions with independent utility. While each of these inventions has been disclosed in its preferred form, the specific embodiments thereof as disclosed and illustrated herein are not to be considered in a limiting sense as numerous variations are possible. The subject matter of the inventions includes all novel and non-obvious combinations and subcombinations of the various elements, features, functions and/or 20 properties disclosed herein. Similarly, where any claim recites "a" or "a first" element or the equivalent thereof, such claim should be understood to include incorporation of one or more such elements, neither requiring nor excluding two or more such elements.

[0037] Inventions embodied in various combinations and subcombinations of features, functions, elements, and/or properties may be claimed through presentation of new claims in a related application. Such new claims, whether they are directed to a different invention or directed to the same invention, whether different, broader, 5 narrower or equal in scope to the original claims, are also regarded as included within the subject matter of the inventions of the present disclosure.

WE CLAIM:

1. A table game comprising:

a plurality of player pieces; and

a playing arena having a base and a platform suspended above the base,

5 wherein the platform is transparent and maintains the player pieces spaced
away from the base, to thereby simulate movement of the player pieces a
distance above the base.

2. The game of claim 1, wherein the playing arena further includes sides
10 extending between the base and the platform, the sides of the playing arena
forming scenery adapted to represent a difference in height between the
platform and ground level.

3. The game of claim 1, wherein the game further includes at least one ball
15 adapted to be manipulated by the player pieces.

4. The game of claim 3, wherein the game further includes a timer mechanism
adapted to control release of the at least one ball onto the platform.

- 20 5. The game of claim 3, wherein the playing arena further includes paddles
adapted to extend across the platform and retain the at least one ball.

6. The game of claim 3, wherein the platform has a depression adjacent at least one of the player pieces that is adapted to retain the at least one ball in close proximity to such player piece.
- 5 7. The game of claim 6, wherein at least one of the player pieces is removably coupled to the platform.
8. The game of claim 7, wherein release of the at least one player piece from the platform is triggered by positioning of the at least one ball relative to the
10 platform.
9. The game of claim 3, wherein the playing arena further includes a goal region.
10. The game of claim 9, wherein the goal region has at least two sections.
- 15
11. A table game comprising:
- a playing arena having a platform;
 - at least one player piece; and
 - a launching mechanism adapted to detachably couple the at least one
20 player piece to the platform and selectively operable to release the at least one player piece from the platform.

12. The table game of claim 11, wherein the launching mechanism is adapted to forcibly launch the at least one player piece from the platform.
13. The table game of claim 12, wherein the launching mechanism is spring
5 loaded.
14. The table game of claim 11, wherein the launching mechanism includes a receiving portion adapted to receive the at least one player piece.
- 10 15. The table game of claim 14, wherein the launching mechanism further includes a release portion operatively coupled to the receiving portion and adapted to trigger release of the at least one player piece from the receiving portion.
16. The table game of claim 15, wherein the receiving portion includes a position
15 plate adapted to support the at least one player piece and move between a neutral position and a launched position.
17. The table game of claim 16, wherein in the neutral position the position plate is depressed within the receiving portion and secured in place by a protrusion in
20 the release portion.
18. The table game of claim 11, further including at least one ball, wherein the launching mechanism is triggered by proximity of the at least one ball.

19. The table game of claim 18, wherein a portion of the launching mechanism is magnetically attracted to the at least one ball.

20. The table game of claim 15, wherein the launching mechanism includes a protrusion adapted to engage with the receiving portion and thereby couple the
5 at least one player piece to the platform when the at least one player piece is in a neutral position.

21. The table game of claim 20, wherein the launching mechanism includes a lever
10 arm adapted to rotate towards the at least one ball.

22. The table game of claim 21, wherein rotation of the lever arm disengages the protrusion from the receiving portion and thereby uncouples the at least one player piece from the platform.

15

23. A table game having multiple player pieces, at least one of the player pieces comprising:

a first body portion;

a second body portion; and

20 a coupling mechanism disposed therebetween and adapted to urge movement of the first body portion relative to the second body portion when a force is applied to the first body portion.

24. The table game of claim 23, wherein the coupling mechanism is adapted to urge rotation of the first body portion about an axis through the second body portion when the first body portion translates relative to the second body portion.

5

25. The player piece of claim 23, wherein the coupling mechanism includes a spring adapted to compress and thereby permit the first body portion to move closer to the second body portion.

10 26. The player piece of claim 25, wherein the spring is housed in a shaft that extends from the first body portion and passes through the second body portion.

15 27. The player piece of claim 26, wherein the second body portion is mounted on a post that is adapted to slide within the shaft, and further wherein the spring is disposed between the first body portion and the post.

28. The player piece of claim 26, wherein the shaft includes at least one aperture angled relative to the axis.

20

29. The player piece of claim 28, wherein a pin passes through the post and the at least one aperture and is adapted to slide along the at least one aperture, thereby producing rotation of the second body portion relative to the first body portion.

30. The player piece of claim 23, further including a ball manipulation mechanism coupled to one of the first and second body portions.

5 31. The player piece of claim 30, wherein the ball manipulation mechanism includes a magnetic portion.

32. A table game comprising multiple player pieces, at least one of the player pieces comprising:

10 a ball manipulation mechanism coupled to the at least one player piece and adapted to maneuver a ball, wherein the ball manipulation mechanism includes a magnetic portion.

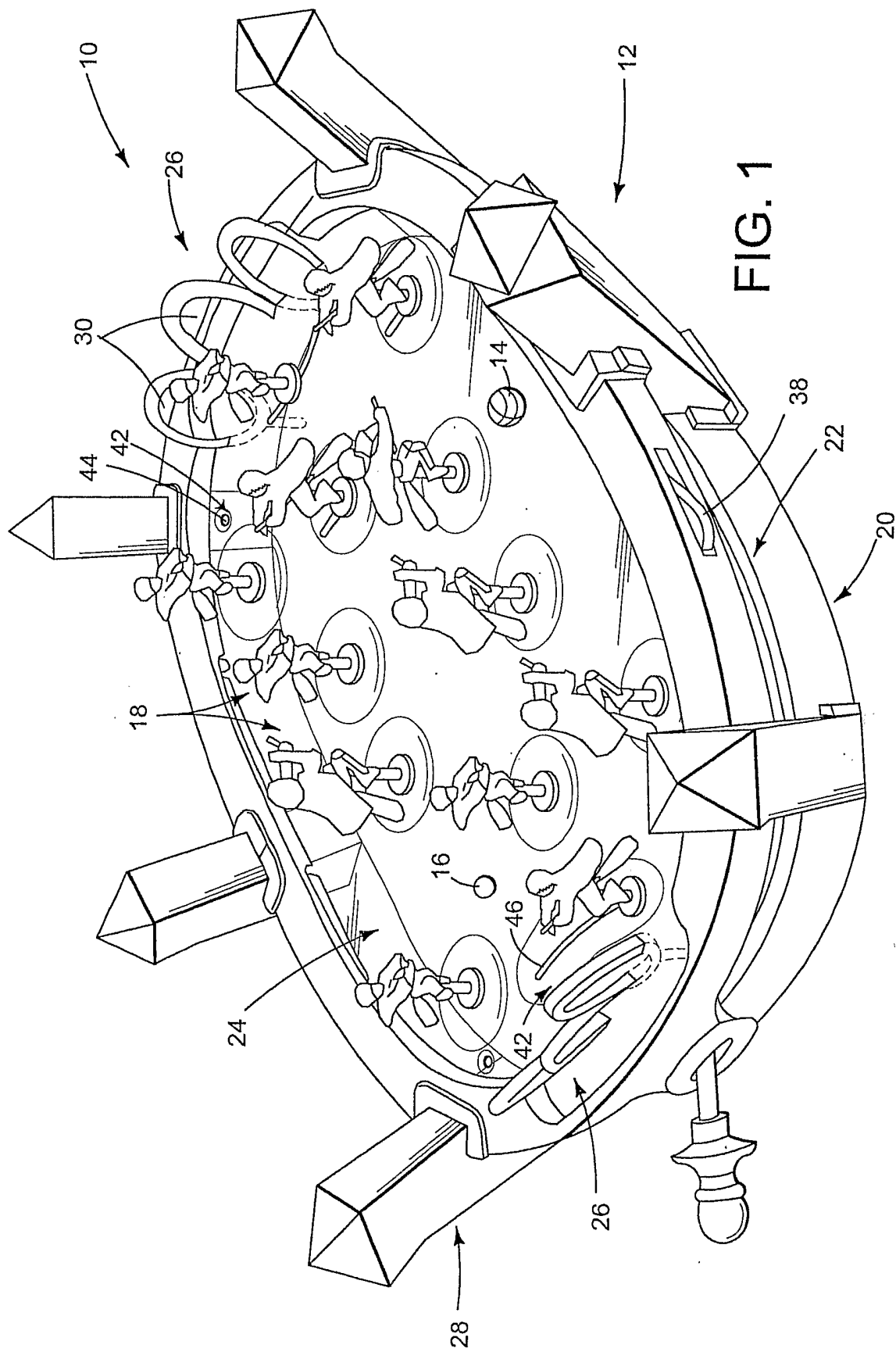


FIG. 1

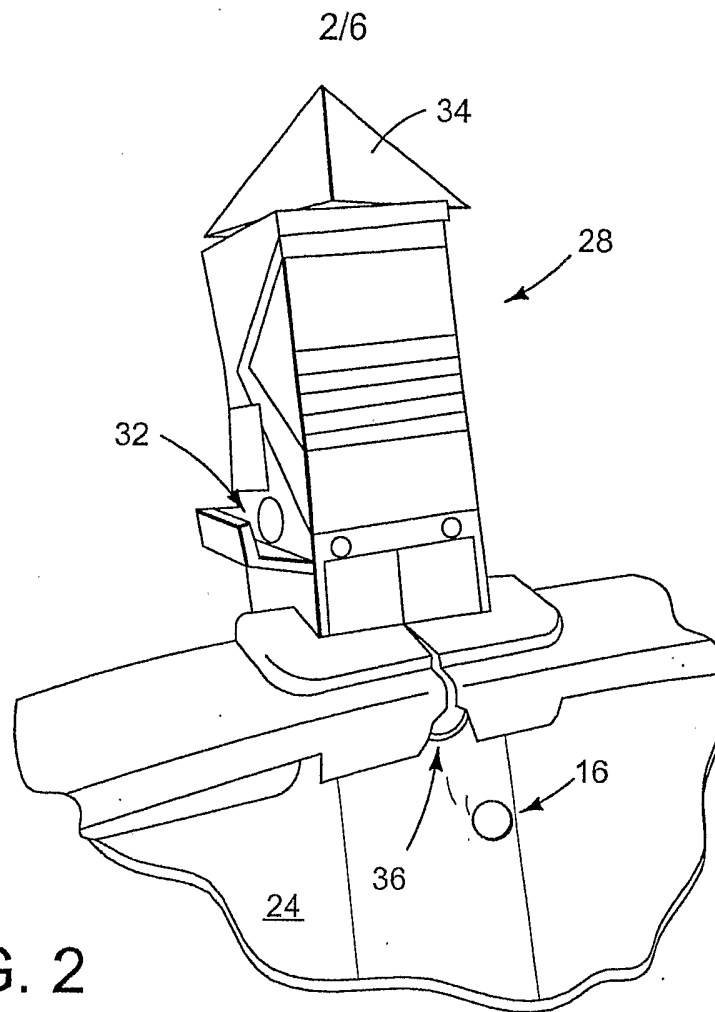


FIG. 2

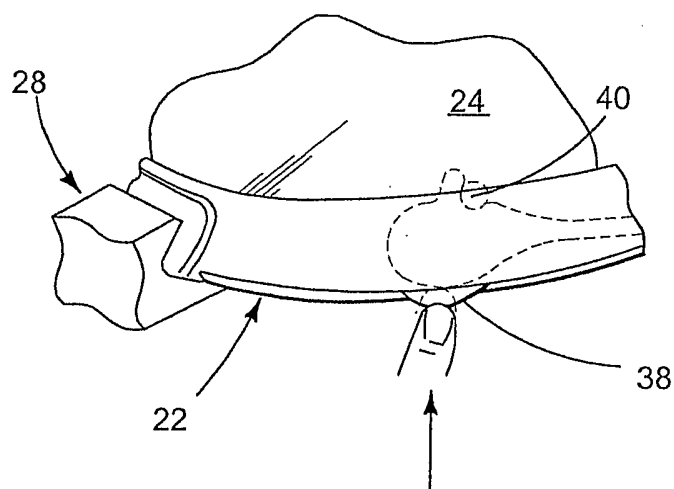


FIG. 3

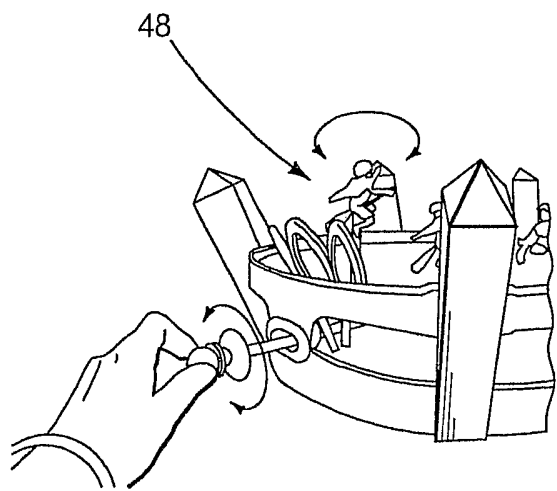


FIG. 4A

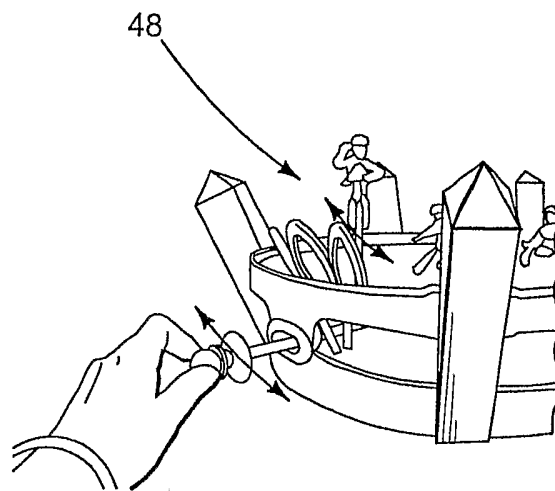


FIG. 4B

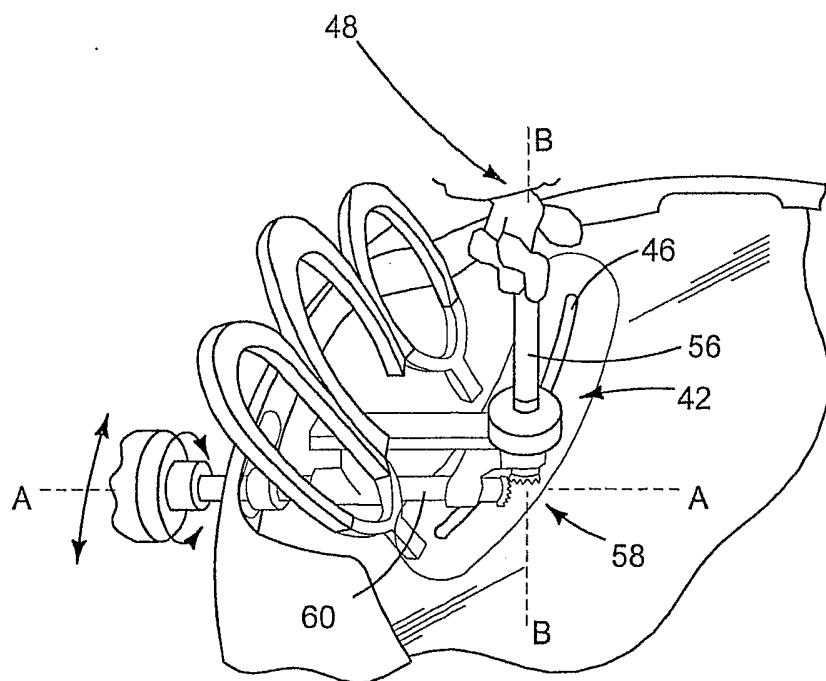


FIG. 4C

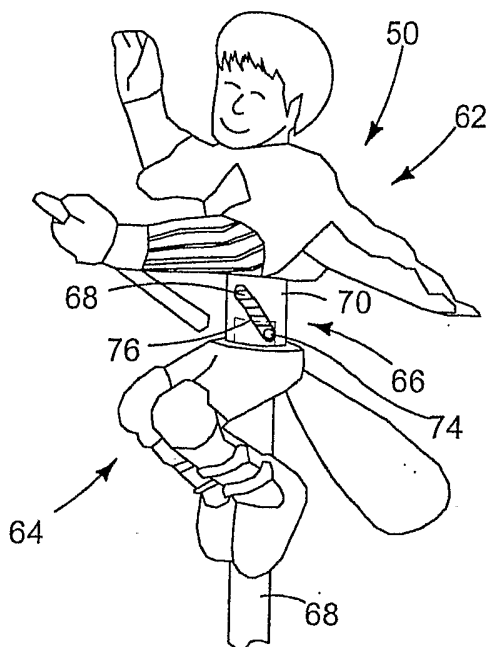


FIG. 5A

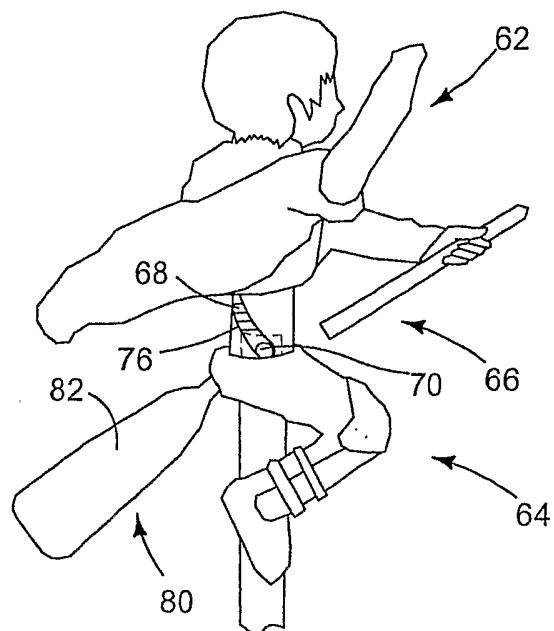


FIG. 5B

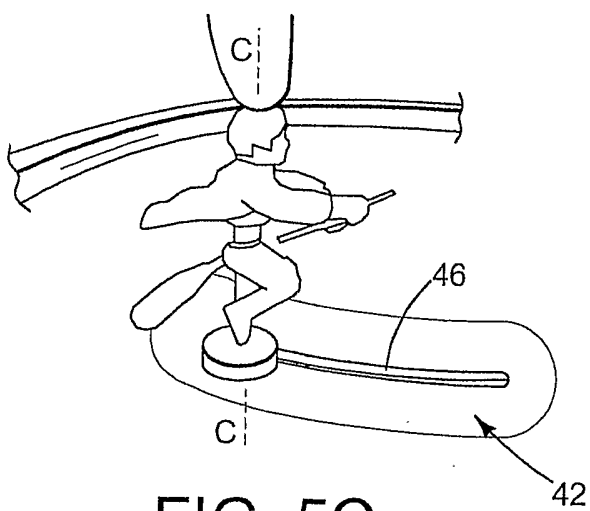


FIG. 5C

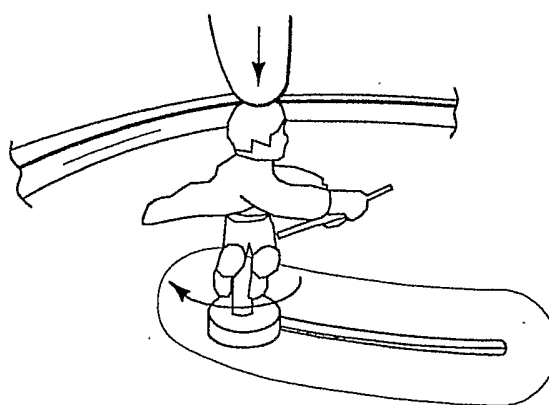


FIG. 5D

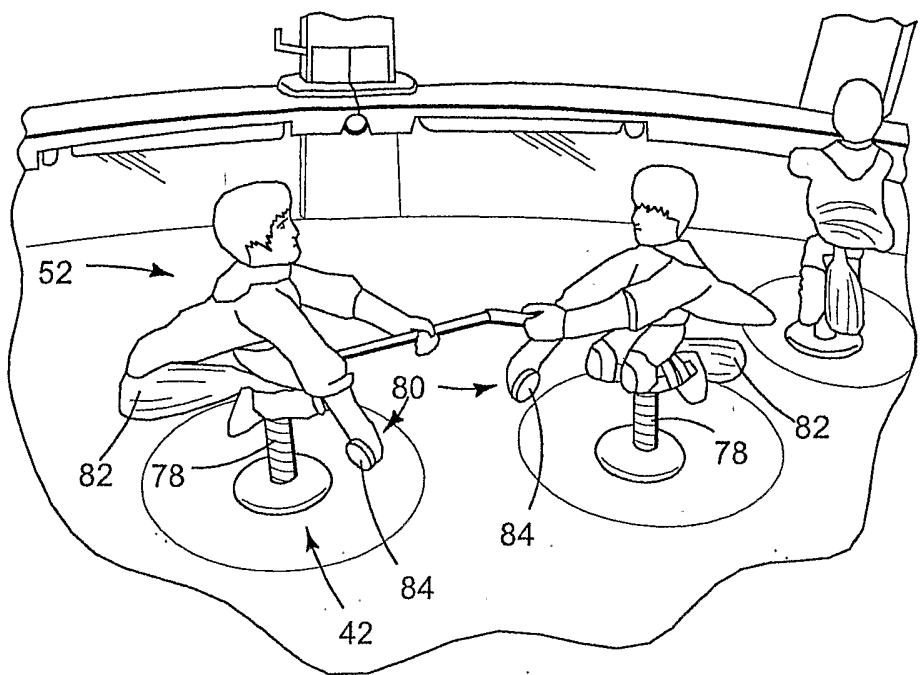


FIG. 6

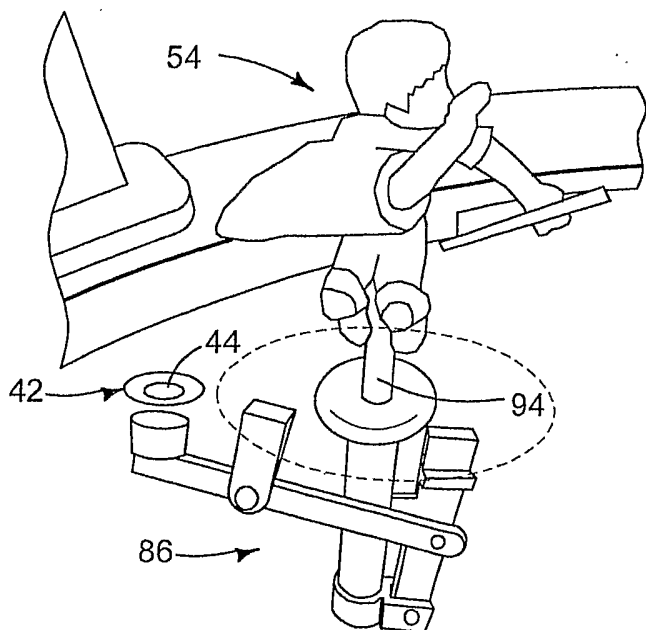


FIG. 7A

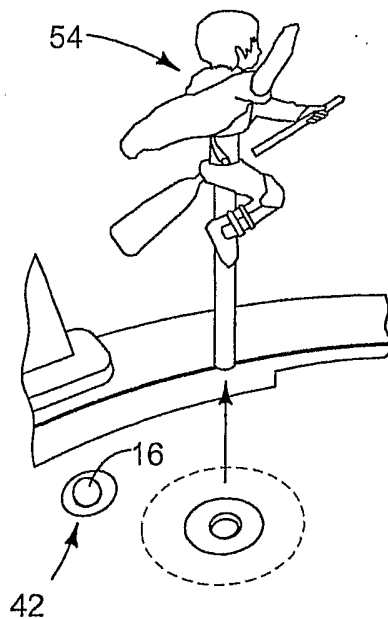


FIG. 7B

