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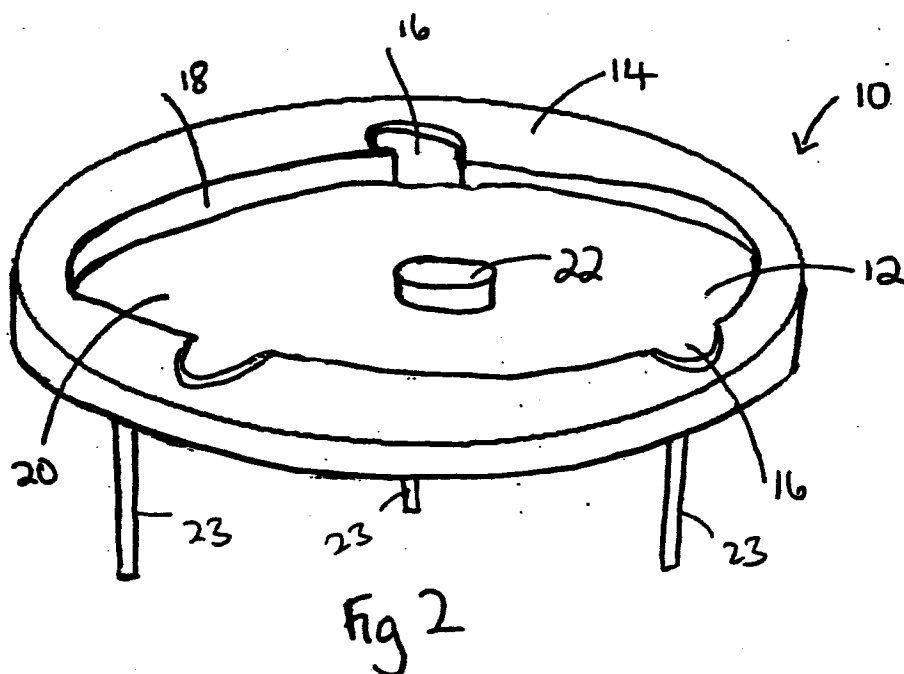
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(54) Table game apparatus

(57) A table game apparatus comprising a table (10) having a playing surface (12) and a border (14) upstanding from and extending around the playing surface (12),

the table (10) comprising at least one opening (16); in which the table (10) further comprises a discrete bumper (22) in the playing surface (12), separate from the border (14).



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Description

Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to table game apparatus and particularly to tables for playing a table ball game of the pool, snooker or billiards type.

Background to the Invention

The games of billiards, snooker and pool are generally played on a rectangular flat open playing table surrounded by a rectangular cushioned border. Pockets for receiving the balls played in the game are conventionally located in the cushioned border along the major sides of the table and at the corners of the table.

Various other shapes for billiards or pool tables have been proposed previously. Generally, circular billiard or pool tables are disclosed, for example, in United States patent Nos. US 3,700,235; US 3,801,097 and US 4,610,450 as well as in United Kingdom patent application GB 2 130 104 A. Polygonal tables are disclosed in United States patent Nos. US 2,262,610 and US 3,801,097. Elliptical pool tables are disclosed in United States patent Nos. 3,029,078; US 3,315,960 and US 3,463,489.

It is an aim of a preferred embodiment of the present invention to provide a new table game apparatus upon which a novel game, which is disclosed hereinafter, can be played.

Summary of the Invention

According to the present invention in a first aspect, there is provided a table game apparatus comprising a table having a playing surface and a border upstanding from and extending around the playing surface, the table comprising at least one opening; in which the table further comprises a discrete bumper in the playing surface, separate from the border.

The invention provides an apparatus for playing a new table game. The bumper within the playing surface may be located to prevent playing a piece directly from one side of the playing surface to the other.

Suitably, the playing surface is substantially planar.

The border of the table game apparatus may be circular at its internal face, adjacent the playing surface. This provides a further new feature to the game to be played on the game apparatus, in that there are no corners to the border.

The at least one opening in the table may be in the border. There may be a plurality of openings. Preferably, the opening or openings in the game apparatus border constitute one or more conventional "pockets" as generally used on snooker and pool tables. Preferably, there are three pockets. Preferably, the pockets are equally spaced in the border. Preferably, different indicia differentiate each pocket. Preferably, the pockets are colour

coded.

The border upstanding from the playing surface of the table game apparatus may be cushioned. This allows playing pieces to hit the border and rebound.

The bumper may be located anywhere within the playing surface of the table game apparatus. Preferably, the bumper is at the centre of the playing surface. Preferably, the bumper is substantially circular.

The bumper in the playing surface may be cushioned preferably along the entirety of its perimeter. This allows a playing piece to hit the bumper and rebound.

The table game apparatus may be provided with means to support the apparatus. Alternately, the table game apparatus may be provided as the table only which may be suitable for placing on supporting means in order to play a game.

The table game apparatus may further comprise a plurality of playing pieces. Preferably, the playing pieces are balls preferably all of the same size. Preferably, the balls are in sets, preferably each set being of corresponding markings or colours. Preferably, each set of balls has a different colour, each set of balls having a colour corresponding to a coloured pocket. The table game apparatus may further comprise a cue ball. The table game apparatus may further comprise a bonus ball.

The table game apparatus may be used to play a new snooker or pool-type game as described hereinafter.

According to the present invention in a second aspect, there is provided a method of playing a game, substantially as described hereinafter.

Brief Description of the Drawings

The present invention will now be described, by way of example only, with reference to the drawings that follow; in which:

Figure 1 is a plan view of a table game apparatus according to an embodiment of the present invention.

Figure 2 is a perspective side view of the table game apparatus shown in Figure 1.

Figure 3 is a plan view of the table game apparatus shown in Figures 1 and 2 with the playing pieces set up for a two player game.

Figure 4 shows the table game apparatus as shown in Figures 1 and 2, with the playing pieces set up for a three player game.

Description of a Preferred Embodiment

Referring to Figures 1 and 2, there is shown a rigid circular table 10 having a planar circular playing surface 12. Upstanding from and surrounding the playing surface 12 is a cushioned border 14 (which effectively defines the perimeter of playing surface 12). The border

14 is essentially circular at its exterior and interior edges, the former of which forms the outer perimeter of the circular table 10.

Three pockets 16 are provided in the border 14 at the inner side 18 of the border 14 adjacent the playing surface 12. The pockets 16 are equally spaced 120 degrees apart. The pockets 16 are substantially similar to those found on snooker, billiard or pool tables. The border 14 at its cushioned inner side 18 between the pockets 16 forms a substantially concave, smooth continuous face or inwardly facing edge surface for playing pieces to hit against and rebound.

The playing surface 12 and at least the inner side 18 of the border 14 are covered in a layer of baize 20.

The playing surface 12 has, at its centre, a cushioned, circular bumper 22 upstanding from the playing surface 12 and concentric with border 14. The bumper 22 is cushioned entirely around its outer perimeter. The bumper 22 may be provided with the table 10 or separately, and then fixed to the playing surface 12 of the table 10, for example by a screw fitting (not shown). As shown in Figure 2, the table 10 is provided with three legs 23.

The table baize 20 includes a circular line 25 concentric with bumper 22 and a radial line 26 from the circular lines 25 to the border 14. These lines are shown in Figures 3 and 4 only.

As shown in Figures 3 and 4, the table game apparatus further constitutes a plurality of sets of balls 24, each set of balls 24 comprising an equal number of balls of the same size. Each set of balls 24 has balls of a different colour from the other sets of balls 24. The balls of each set 24 are of such a size so as to fit within the pockets 16.

The table 10 illustrated in the drawings is particularly adapted to a novel game which will be described more fully hereinafter.

In a novel game, the table game apparatus as shown in the accompanying Figures, having three coloured pockets, is used. Each pocket is a different colour. In addition, each player or team of players is provided with a set of balls 24 of the same colour, there being a maximum of three sets of balls 24, each having a colour corresponding to one of the pockets 16.

For clarity, each corresponding coloured ball and pocket is designated in Figures 3 and 4 by the letters X, Y or Z, each letter corresponding to a different colour. These are the object balls. The cue ball is depicted in Figures 3 and 4 as the ball labelled C. Also present in Figures 3 and 4 is a bonus ball depicted by the letter B. The cue ball C and bonus ball B are clearly distinguished by colour and/or pattern from each other and from the coloured balls X, Y and Z.

The circular line 25 is the "centre line". The radial line 26 is the "break line".

The object of the novel game is to score the most points. The game is the same for two or more players or teams, with only the set up varying.

Points may be gained by a player or team potting one of their coloured balls X, Y or Z into a coloured pocket.

Balls are potted as in snooker or pool. A cue (not shown) is used to strike the cue ball C which then is intended to strike a coloured ball X, Y or Z to make it move. The aim is to pot a coloured ball in a correspondingly coloured pocket 16.

Figures 3 and 4 show the table game apparatus as may be set up for two or three players or teams respectively.

To set up the game for two people or two teams, as shown in Figure 3, the two chosen sets of coloured balls are placed alternating in a horseshoe configuration around and touching the periphery of the bumper 22 so that the balls form a contiguous loop around the bumper 22. The number of balls used may vary depending on the various dimensions. Currently twelve object balls is preferred. The bonus ball B is lined up with the break line. The cue ball C is played from anywhere on the break line.

To set up the game for three people or three teams, as shown in Figure 4, the three sets of coloured balls, 3X, 3Y, 3Z in order X, Y, Z, X, Y, Z, X, Y, Z must circle and be touching the central cushioned bumper 22. Between the first X ball and the last Z ball is positioned the bonus ball B, which is lined up with the break line. The cue ball C is played from anywhere on the break line.

For ease of explanation, the three player game will be described.

To start the game ("the break") the cue ball is struck towards the bonus ball. From the break, at least one object ball must hit the border otherwise a foul is committed. A foul is also committed if the bonus ball is potted on the break. If at the break an object ball is potted, that colour is adopted by the player. If more than one object ball is potted, the player may choose which of the potted colours to adopt.

If no object ball is potted then it is the turn of the next player, and this continues until an object ball is potted. After the successful pot of an object ball, that player has an opportunity to pot the bonus ball B in that player's own coloured pocket. The bonus ball is returned to the table after it has been potted to anywhere on the break line at the discretion of the player who potted it. Potted bonus and object balls score 25 points, but are doubled to 50 points when potted in the player's own pocket, ie a green ball in a green pocket scores 50 points. It is not compulsory to pot the bonus ball after an object ball (although this would normally be preferred to amass a higher score), instead another of the player's object balls may be potted. Once the bonus ball B has been potted, the steps of potting an object ball X, Y or Z, then, optionally, a bonus ball B are repeated. If a player fails to put their nominated ball or commits a foul, their turn is over and the next player has a turn.

Once a player's last object ball of the set is potted, the value of the bonus ball B is increased to one hundred

points to that player if potted in the player's pocket or fifty points if potted in an opponent's pocket. The game is then complete and the player with the highest score at that stage is the winner. In the event of a tie, the player who potted the last bonus ball is the winner.

Further features of the game are set out below:

1. Legal Shots

Failure to play a legal shot means 25 points is awarded to each opponent.

On all shots, the player must:-

- a) Pot an object ball, or
- b) After contact has been made between the cue ball and the object or bonus ball, any ball must then hit a cushion, unless a total snooker applies.

2. Fouls

(All fouls score 25 points for each opponent)

Fouls are to be called as soon as they occur and the player who commits the foul loses his turn at the table. Each opponent receives 25 points.

Each of the following is a foul:

- a) Potting the cue ball.
- b) Potting an opponent's ball.
- c) Potting the bonus ball, when it is not the ball on.
- d) Any ball leaving the table and failing to come to rest on the playing surface other than a legal pot. (Any object ball(s) that do not come to rest on the table remain off the table and should be placed in a pocket.)
- e) Playing a shot before replacing the bonus ball.
- f) Playing a shot after neglecting to nominate a choice of colour when the right to do so existed.
- g) Playing out of turn.
- h) Failing to pot the bonus ball on a separate shot.
- i) Failure to perform a fair break.
- j) Failing to play a legal shot.
- k) Making contact with the opponent's ball or the bonus ball when it is not the intended ball.
- l) Accidentally touching any ball with the cue, clothing or body.
- m) Causing the cue ball to jump over any ball or cushion.

Following a foul, the next player to visit the table has three options.

- i) Play from where the balls lie.
- ii) A player can ask their opponent to play again from where the balls lie.
- iii) Replace the cue ball and the bonus ball anywhere on the Centre Line.

3. Serious Fouls

The following fouls will result in loss of the game.

- a) Deliberately playing at opponent's ball or bonus ball when it is not the intended ball on.
- b) Deliberately causing any ball(s) to move other than playing a legal shot.
- c) Any deliberate attempt by a player, to disrupt and prevent an opponent's play.
- d) Smoking, eating or drinking at the table.

4. Total Snookers

The definition of a total snooker is when it is impossible to play any part of any of the player's intended ball(s) by way of a straight line shot. If a total snooker exists, the player's obligation under the "legal shot" rule is relaxed as follows: - the player need only make contact with the intended ball(s) on (the player's requirement to drive a ball to a cushion after contact is waived).

5. Balls Falling

When a player touches the table they are in control and they are responsible for any ball(s) that subsequently fall into a pocket.

No push shots are allowed.

Clearly, the rules referred to above may be modified.

Although the novel table game apparatus has been described as being used to play the novel game set out above, the novel apparatus is not limited by the games played upon it. Also, the table game apparatus may be adapted to have more or less than three pockets or to have a different number of sets of playing balls.

The reader's attention is directed to all papers and documents which are filed concurrently with or previous to this specification in connection with this application and which are open to public inspection with this specification, and the contents of all such papers and documents are incorporated herein by reference.

All of the features disclosed in this specification (including any accompanying claims, abstract and drawings), and/or all of the steps of any method or process so disclosed, may be combined in any combination, except combinations where at least some of such features and/or steps are mutually exclusive.

Each feature disclosed in this specification (including any accompanying claims, abstract and drawings), may be replaced by alternative features serving the same, equivalent or similar purpose, unless expressly stated otherwise. Thus, unless expressly stated otherwise, each feature disclosed is one example only of a generic series of equivalent or similar features.

The invention is not restricted to the details of the foregoing embodiment(s). The invention extends to any novel one, or any novel combination, of the features dis-

closed in this specification (including any accompanying claims, abstract and drawings), or to any novel one, or any novel combination, of the steps of any method or process so disclosed.

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Claims

1. A table game apparatus comprising a table having a playing surface and a border upstanding from and extending around the playing surface, the table comprising at least one opening; in which the table further comprises a discrete bumper in the playing surface, separate from the border. 10
2. A table game apparatus according to claim 1, in which the bumper within the playing surface is located to prevent playing a piece directly from one side of the playing surface to the other. 15
3. A table game apparatus according to any preceding claim, in which the border of the table game apparatus is circular at its internal face, adjacent the playing surface. 20
4. A table game apparatus according to any preceding claim, in which the at least one opening in the table is in the border. 25
5. A table game apparatus according to any preceding claim, in which the at least one opening comprises a pocket, and there are three pockets. 30
6. A table game apparatus according to claim 5, in which the three pockets are equally spaced around the border. 35
7. A table game apparatus according to claim 5 or claim 6, in which different indicia differentiate each pocket. 40
8. A table game apparatus according to any preceding claim, in which the bumper is at the centre of the playing surface. 45
9. A table game apparatus according to any preceding claim, in which the bumper is substantially circular.
10. A table game apparatus according to any preceding claim, in which the bumper in the playing surface is cushioned preferably along the entirety of its perimeter. 50

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