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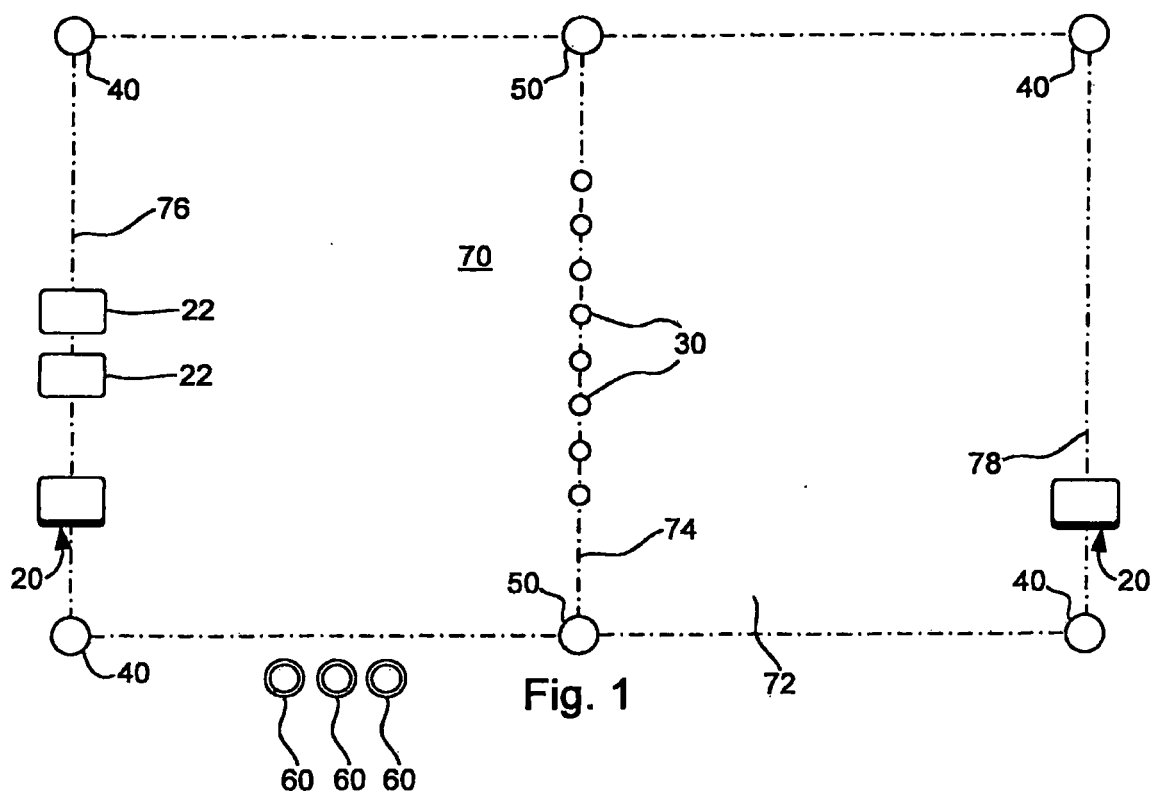
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(54) **Trading card game including spheres in the play pattern**

(57) A trading card game that includes a deck of cards (20) and a plurality of spheres (30) is disclosed. Each card (20) includes an identical back surface and a face surface with content thereon. The content of at least a first card is different than the content of other cards. In

some embodiments of the invention, at least some of the content of the first card corresponds to at least a first sphere. The content may be, for example, a depiction of the at least one sphere. Some embodiments of the invention provide card games such as Warball™ by Duncan Toys.



## Description

### CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

**[0001]** This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No. 61/046,112 filed on April 18, 2008, which is hereby incorporated by reference.

### STATEMENT REGARDING FEDERALLY SPONSORED RESEARCH OR DEVELOPMENT

**[0002]** Not applicable.

### BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

**[0003]** This invention relates to trading card games, specifically trading card games in which other objects are used in the play pattern.

**[0004]** Card games are a well known form of entertainment, and possibly competition, for both children and adults. Games such as blackjack, poker, euchre, and 'go fish' use a standard deck of 52 cards. The rules of games that use a standard deck of cards are typically simple, but strategies for playing the games may be rather complex.

**[0005]** Other types of games use a deck that is specific to a certain game, and cards can be collected and traded between players. Trading cards with other players may require strategy in addition to the strategy for playing the game itself. For example, a player may have to consider the usefulness and the level of rarity of certain cards while trading. Therefore, trading card games can be appealing if many types of cards with different levels of rarity are available.

**[0006]** Some trading card games, such as Bakugan®, include additional objects that are used during game play. Bakugan®, for example, includes mechanical devices that are rolled and transform into creatures during game play. Unfortunately, the devices are used in a physically limited manner (*i.e.*, gently rolled on a flat playing surface towards trading cards) because, as mechanical devices, they may be damaged by more extensive physical use. This and other trading card games can become tedious and boring due to their repetitive nature. Therefore, an improved trading card game is needed.

### SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

**[0007]** The present invention provides a trading card game that includes a deck of cards and a plurality of rigid spheres. Each card includes an identical back surface and a face surface with content thereon. The content of at least a first card is different than the content of other cards. In some embodiments of the invention, at least some of the content of the first card corresponds to at least a first sphere. The content may be, for example, a depiction of the at least one sphere. In addition, in some embodiments of the invention, the first sphere is different

than the other spheres due to at least one feature selected from the group of color, color pattern, size, a character on a surface of the first sphere, and a character inside the first sphere. Further still, in some embodiments of the invention, the first sphere has at least a first color, a second sphere has at least a second color, a third sphere has at least a third color, and a fourth sphere has at least a fourth color.

**[0008]** In some embodiments, the invention also provides a method of playing a card game. The method includes the steps of providing a deck with a plurality of cards, and each card has an identical back surface and a face surface, the face surface of at least a first card has different content thereon than the content of other cards; providing a plurality of spheres, and at least some of the spheres are arranged on a playing surface; and using at least a first sphere to attack at least a second sphere in response to the content of the first card when the first card is played.

**[0009]** The foregoing and other objects and advantages of the invention will appear in the detailed description that follows. In the description, reference is made to the accompanying drawings that illustrate a preferred embodiment of the invention.

### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

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**[0011]** Fig. 1 is a top view of a playing area of a card game of the present invention with cards and spheres placed on the playing area;

**[0012]** Fig. 2 shows a classic shot for shooting a sphere;

**[0013]** Fig. 3 shows a finger flick for shooting a sphere;

**[0014]** Fig. 4 shows a slide thrust for shooting a sphere;

**[0015]** Fig. 5 is a top view of a playing area of the card game of the present invention modified for four players;

**[0016]** Fig. 6 is a top view of a playing area for the game of Warball™ by Duncan Toys;

**[0017]** Fig. 7 is a top view of a playing area for the game of Warball™ modified for four players; and

**[0018]** Fig. 8 is an example card used in the game of Warball™.

### DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

**[0019]** The present invention provides a card game with various types of components. The card game according to the present invention requires each player to use both strategy and physical skills to succeed. Like most card games, the card game according to the present

invention includes a set of rules and objectives which may be used in game play, but alternate rules and objectives are also provided that can also be used so that game play is somewhat different. In addition, the card game of the present invention provides card games such as Warball™ by Duncan Toys. However, Warball™ is only an example of the present invention, and Warball™ should not be construed as limiting the present invention. In addition, the following description refers to 'spheres' which may include, for example, marbles, balls, orbs, or other similar objects. The number of spheres shown in the figures is intended as an example of the card game according to the present invention, and should not be construed as limiting the present invention. In addition, the following description also uses the term 'rigid' in some cases to describe the spheres. As used here, the term 'rigid' means that a sphere does not include mechanical parts that permit the sphere to transform from one shape to another shape.

**[0020]** Referring now to the figures, the present invention provides a card game with a deck of cards 20, a plurality of rigid spheres 30, eight of which are shown in Fig. 1, and a plurality of border markers 40, four of which are shown in Fig. 1. The cards 20 and spheres 30 may contain specific characteristics and are used in game play as discussed below. The cards 20 used in the card game are preferably each unique, although some identical cards 20 may be in the deck. The cards 20 have several color groups. Each card also includes content that specifies a certain type of action to use with a corresponding group of spheres or a specific sphere during game play. As used herein, the term "correspond" should be understood to mean that a card and one or more spheres 30 include at least one common characteristic, such as a color, letter, number, picture, internal character, or other symbol. This aspect of the cards 20 will be discussed in further detail below. Each sphere 30 preferably includes at least one common characteristic with other spheres 30, such as one of the several colors of the cards 20.

**[0021]** The border markers 40 may be generally flat disc components. The border markers 40 are placed on a playing surface 70 to define a playing area 72 that is preferably rectangular. The playing area 72 includes base lines 76 and 78 for two players. The card game may also include neutral markers 50 and stands 60. Neutral markers 50, if included, may be generally flat disc components like the border markers 40. Neutral markers 50 may be placed along edges of the playing area 72 to define a center line 74. Each stand 60, if included, is preferably configured to support a sphere 30 that is not on the playing area 72. This may prevent spheres 30 that are not in the playing area 72 from rolling away or being lost. Alternatively, the stands 60 may support the spheres 30 during game play; this may be useful if the spheres 30 roll easily on the playing area 72.

**[0022]** Setup before game play preferably is as follows: the players determine which color of the cards 20 and

the spheres 30 each player will use during the game. Each player preferably uses colors that are unique from the colors of the other player so there is no confusion regarding which spheres 30 each player is using. The cards 20 are distributed among the players, or alternatively, each player has a separate deck of cards 20. In either case, each player uses cards 20 that match the colors of his or her spheres 30. In addition, the playing area 72 is preferably set up as shown in Fig. 1 before the game begins. As such, each player places his or her cards on one of the base lines 76 and 78 of the playing area 72. The spheres 30 of each player are preferably placed on the center line 74, although other configurations are also possible. In either case, the spheres 30 may be placed one at a time by the players taking turns, although placing the spheres 30 in a predetermined pattern is also possible.

**[0023]** Game play preferably is as follows: on the first player's turn, the player takes several cards 20, preferably four, from the deck to form a hand. If a card has a corresponding sphere (e.g., the sphere matches the color of the card) in the playing area 72, the card is placed face-up on the base line 76 as a playable card 22. If a card does not have a corresponding sphere in the playing area, the card is discarded to the bottom of the deck 20 (except for possible "hex" cards, as described below). The player next uses or plays each playable card 22 by, one at a time, selecting a corresponding sphere to use in an attack on the opponent's spheres. Appropriate actions which constitute an attack on the opponent's spheres will be discussed in further detail below. However, as used herein, the term "attack" means performing an action to move a first sphere in an attempt to collide with one or more stationary spheres in the playing area 72 and thereby cause the stationary sphere to exit the playing area 72. Any attacking sphere that leaves the playing area 72 as a result of an attack is returned to the center line 74. Any attacked sphere that leaves the playing area 72 as a result of an attack is eliminated from the game, or 'captured' by the attacking player. After an attack, the played card is returned to the bottom of the deck 20. After the player has played all the playable cards 22 on the base line 76, the other player's turn begins. The other player proceeds through the same steps as the first player, but places playable cards on the base line 78. The players continue taking turns until one player has captured a certain number of the opponent's spheres, at which point the game ends.

**[0024]** As discussed above, different types of attacks may be used by each player. In addition, the content of certain cards 20 may include instructions that require a player to use specific actions in the attack. Referring to Figs. 2-4, there are three basic types of attacks such as the classic thumb shot, the finger flick, and the slide thrust. Before performing any attack, the player first removes the stand 60 from below the attacking sphere 30 if the stands 60 are being used. Referring to Fig. 2, the classic thumb shot is the type of shot used in the tradi-

tional game of marbles. Specifically, the classic shot involves holding the sphere between the thumb and the forefinger and resting the sphere on the bend of the second finger. The sphere is shot by moving the thumb forward quickly. Typically, one of the player's knuckles must be on the ground for a legal classic shot. Alternatively, one of the player's knuckles must be within one inch of the ground for a legal classic shot. Referring to Fig. 3, the finger flick involves placing the sphere in front of the nail of the forefinger. The sphere is shot by moving or 'flicking' the forefinger forward quickly. The player's thumb must be within one inch of the ground for a legal finger flick. Referring to Fig. 4, the slide thrust involves holding the sphere between the thumb and the forefinger. The sphere is shot by releasing the sphere as the hand is moved forward quickly. The sphere must be touching the playing surface before moving the hand and the hand must not move more than two inches for a legal slide thrust. Any shot that is not legal results in the attack sphere being captured by the opposing player. Any sphere that is hit by an attack sphere from an illegal shot may be placed anywhere on the center line 74. The player using the attacked sphere chooses this position on the center line 74. In addition, the stand 60 is replaced below the attacking sphere 30 if the stands 60 are being used.

**[0025]** As discussed above, the content of certain cards 20 may require a player to use a specific special attack instead of a basic shot or any other type of shot. Special attacks may include, but are not limited to, throwing, bouncing, dropping, rolling, blind tossing, shooting the sphere between the legs, or using an 'attack tube'. It should be noted, however, that the objective of any special or basic attack is to capture the opponent's spheres. In addition, if a special shot is not done appropriately, the shot is considered illegal.

**[0026]** Referring now to Fig. 5, the game according to the present invention may be played with four players. This embodiment of the invention is similar to the two player embodiment of the game. However, this embodiment includes two additional base lines 80 and 82 and additional neutral markers 50 defining a second center line 84 on which spheres 30 may be placed. The players should take turns to choose the colors of their cards 20 and spheres 30 and for placement of the spheres 30 on the playing area 72. During game play, the players may take turns by proceeding in a clockwise manner. The game ends when a player has captured a certain total number of the opposing players' spheres. In the four player embodiment of the card game, any illegal shot results in the attacking sphere being removed from the game, but it is not considered 'captured' by any player. As another alternative, the two player embodiment of the game may be modified to include two teams of two players. In this alternative, each player has at least one color of cards 20 and spheres 30.

**[0027]** As discussed above, the card game of the present invention provides games such as Warball™ by Duncan Toys. Warball™ includes the aspects and com-

ponents of the embodiments described above as well as additional rules and components. Therefore, Warball™ will now be discussed in greater detail. It should also be noted that Warball™ is a coined term for certain play pieces for use in the game Warball™.

**[0028]** Referring to Fig. 6, Warball™ includes a deck of cards 120, a plurality of rigid spheres or 'Warballs™' 130, border markers 140, neutral markers 150, and stands 160 that are placed on a playing surface 170 as described above. In addition, the border markers 140 define a playing area 172 with a center line 174 and base lines 176 and 178.

**[0029]** Referring to Fig. 8, the layout of an example of a card 120A used in Warball™ is shown. Each card in Warball™ is a creature or an effect, and an illustration 122 of the creature or effect is included on the card 120A. Each card includes a border of one of four colors: green, red, blue, or silver, and the content of each card includes several other types of information: first, a name 121 is used to identify the card; several example names 121 include "Platinaur", "Assassin Hawk" and "Cedar Spears". Each card includes a home 123 that represents the place from which each creature or effect comes; example homes 123 include "hills", "desert" and "badlands". Next, mutator information 124 indicates the environment that mutated the creature or effect on the card; example mutators include "platinum lode", "ice storm" and "cedar forest". Each card further includes a faction 125 that represents the group of creatures to which the creature or effect of the card belongs; example factions include "Metarok", "Zeduin" and "Korune". Some attacks and effect cards may only be used against cards with specific colors, homes 123, mutators 124, and/or factions 125.

**[0030]** Each card further includes a "type and demand" 126 that provides two forms of information: first, whether the card is a creature or an effect and second, a condition that must be met in order to play the card. If the card is a creature, a more specific type is provided, as discussed below. An example type is "savage", which also includes the example condition or demand "play if you have captured at least one Warball™". Next, power information 127 describes the special attack or action of the card and corresponding Warball™ 130 if such a special attack or action is available for that creature or effect. Examples of powers include "if you hit an enemy Warball™, your opponent puts this Warball™ anywhere on the field; shoot it again," and "shoot this Warball™ by rolling the Warball™ off this card and onto the playing surface," and "strike one enemy Warball™ with this card."

**[0031]** A Warball™ image 128 is provided only on some cards, for example, creature cards, and corresponds to a characteristic such as a color, letter, number, picture, internal character, or other symbol on the surface of a Warball™ 130 as discussed above. If a card with a Warball™ image 128 is played, the player may only use a Warball™ 130 with the same appearance as the image 128 in an attack. However, if a card does not include a

Warball™ image 128, a Warball™ 130 having at least one color that is the same color as the card may be used in an attack, or alternatively, any Warball™ 130 may be used in an attack. A collector number 129 indicates the number of the card in the series of Warball™ cards.

**[0032]** As discussed above, each card in a Warball™ deck represents a creature or an effect. During game play, a player can use at most a total of four creature and effect, or 'hex', cards in a single turn. A hex is similar to an attack, except hexes generally do not correspond to a specific Warball™ and do not require the player to perform an action to project a Warball™ 130. Instead, hexes are typically placed below a Warball™ and instruct the player that used the hex, for example, to "swap this enemy Warball™ in the playing area with a Warball™ you have captured." Other hexes include "move any Warball™ in the playing area to touch any Warball™ of yours," and "if this Warball™ hits an enemy Warball™ on your next action, you capture the enemy Warball™"

**[0033]** The spheres or Warballs™ 130 used in the game Warball™ are at least one of four colors like the cards 120: green, red, blue, or silver. In addition, individual Warballs™ 130 may include color patterns with additional colors to match the Warball™ image 128 on one or more cards. The Warballs™ 130 are also provided in three sizes: small (16mm diameter), medium (21mm), and large (28mm). These sizes also correspond to a specific type of creature, as discussed above. The small Warballs™, or "cores" 132, are arranged on the center line 174 as shown in Fig. 6, and three or four cores 132 are provided for each of the four colors. The cores 132 may or may not have a special attack described as the power 127 on a corresponding card. In general, the cores 132 are used and captured in the same manner described with the first embodiment of the invention.

**[0034]** The medium Warballs™, or "masters" 134, are arranged on the base lines 76 and 78 as shown in Fig. 6, and one or two masters 134 are provided for each of the four colors. The masters 134 belonging to each player are only arranged on his or her base line. In addition to including a special attack, a single master 134 may be used in a "free attack" after a player has played all the cards in his or her hand during a turn. However, only a basic shot may be used for the free attack; that is, the special attack of the master 134 cannot be used in the free attack. Like the cores 132, a master 134 may be captured by knocking it out of the playing area 172 in an attack. Similarly, a master 134 is returned to its previous position on a base line if it is used in an attack and leaves the playing area 172.

**[0035]** The large Warballs™, or "savages" 136, include an internal character, such as a miniature replica of a creature on a corresponding card. The savages 136 are arranged on the base lines 76 and 78 like the masters 134, and each player only has a single savage 136. A player's savage 136 is used in the same manner as the cores 132 unless the player does not have a master 134 in the playing area 172. If a player does not have a master

134 in the playing area 172, the other player may use the first player's savage 136 in a free attack on the first player's Warballs™ 130. Like the cores 132, a savage 136 may be captured by knocking it out of the playing area 172 in an attack. Similarly, a savage 136 is returned to its previous position on a base line if it is used in an attack and leaves the playing area 172.

**[0036]** As discussed above, the type and demand 126 provides a specific type of creature if a card is a creature. The specific types of creatures, like the different types of Warballs™ 130, are cores, masters, and savages. As such, only a core 132 may be used in an attack if a card with a type of "core" is played. Similar rules apply for attacks with masters 134 and savages 136.

**[0037]** Warball™ also includes other specific rules for game play and objectives that will now be described. Before beginning the game, the first player chooses a single color of cards and Warballs™ to use. The second player then chooses two colors of cards and Warballs™ to use, and the first player then takes the remaining color of cards and Warballs™. Each player's deck of cards 120 must include at least 20 cards, the deck can include at most three identical cards, and the deck must include at least one card corresponding to each Warball™ that is being used. In addition, before beginning the game, the border markers 140 are arranged to define a 3'x 4' playing area 172. Lastly, and like most card games, each deck of cards 120 is shuffled before playing the game.

**[0038]** The objective of Warball™ is to capture eight of the opponent's Warballs™ (cores, masters, and savages combined). However, the objective may be changed depending on the preferences of the players. For example, the objective may be to capture 12 of the opponent's Warballs™, although this alternative requires that each player begins the game with a total of 15 Warballs™. As another alternative, the game can be shortened by providing each player with only a single color of cards and Warballs™, and savages are removed from the game. The objective is to capture all of the opponent's Warballs™. Like traditional marbles, Warball™ can be played in a manner in which the Warballs™ are returned to the owner after the game. Alternatively, the game can be "for keeps" in which a player keeps any captured Warballs™ after the game, or the winning player chooses two of the losing player's Warballs™ after the game, or the players choose specific Warballs™ to risk on the outcome of the game. In any case, such a style of play should be agreed upon by the players before game play begins.

**[0039]** Referring to Fig. 7, Warball™ may be played with four players instead of two. In the four player version of the game, each player uses a deck of cards 120 and Warballs™ 130 of a single color. Game play proceeds generally as described in conjunction with the embodiment shown in Fig. 5 and as described in the two player version of Warball™. The objective is also to capture a total of six of the opponents' Warballs™. Alternatively, Warball™ may be played with two teams of two players as discussed above. The objective is to capture a total

of 12 of the opposing team's Warballs™.

**[0040]** The components of Warball™ are available in three package types, including the "battle box", the "skirmish pack", and the booster pack. The battle box includes components of each of the four colors. Each color includes one master Warball™, four core Warballs™, and about 15 cards; two savage Warballs™ are also provided, one savage being green and the other being silver. The battle box also includes a number of colorless components such as 24 stands, six field markers (used as both border and neutral markers), one ruler for measuring the field, one sphere bag, and a rulebook. The components included in the battle box are sufficient for playing any of the two player or four player games, except the two player game in which the objective is to capture 12 of the opponent's Warballs™. The skirmish pack includes components of one of the four colors: red, silver, green, or blue. The skirmish pack includes one master Warball™, four core Warballs™, one savage Warball™, 15 cards, six stands, six field markers, one ruler, one sphere bag, and a rulebook. The contents of two skirmish packs are sufficient for playing a two player game, and the contents of four skirmish packs are sufficient for playing a four player game. In addition to the battle box and skirmish packs, booster packs also provide components. However, some booster packs only provide several cards, and some booster packs only provide several Warballs™.

**[0041]** It is specifically intended that the present invention not be limited to the embodiments and illustrations contained herein, but include modified forms of those embodiments including portions of the embodiments and combinations of elements of different embodiments as come within the scope of the following claims.

## Claims

### 1. A trading card game kit, comprising:

a deck having a plurality of cards, each card having an identical back surface and a face surface, the face surface have content thereon, and the content of at least a first of the cards being different than the content of others of the plurality of cards; and  
a plurality of rigid spheres.

### 2. The kit of claim 1, wherein at least some of the content of the first card corresponds to at least a first of the spheres.

### 3. The kit of claim 2, wherein at least some of the content of the first card depicts a physical appearance of the first sphere.

### 4. The kit of any of the claims 1 to 3, wherein at least a first of the spheres is different than the other

spheres.

### 5. The kit of claim 4, wherein the first sphere is different than the other spheres due to at least one feature selected from the group of color, color pattern, size, a character on a surface of the first sphere, and a character inside the first sphere.

### 6. The kit of any of the claims 1 to 5, wherein at least a first of the spheres has a first size, at least a second of the spheres includes an internal character and has a second size, and the second size being greater than the first size.

### 7. The kit of any of the claims 1 to 6, wherein at least a first of the spheres has at least a first color, at least a second of the spheres has at least a second color, at least a third of the spheres has at least a third color, and at least a fourth of the spheres has at least a fourth color.

### 8. The kit of any of the claims 1 to 7, wherein the first sphere and the second sphere are larger than at least one other sphere.

### 9. The kit of any of the claims 1 to 8, wherein the first sphere and the second sphere each include an internal character.

### 10. The kit of any of the claims 1 to 9, further comprising at least one border marker.

### 11. A method of playing a game, comprising the steps of:

providing a deck with a plurality of cards, each card having an identical back surface and a face surface, the face surface of at least a first of the cards having different content thereon than the content of others of the plurality of cards;  
providing a plurality of spheres, at least some of the spheres being arranged on a playing surface; and  
using at least a first sphere to attack at least a second sphere in response to the content on the face surface of the first card when the first card is played.

### 12. The method of claim 11, further comprising the step of removing an attacked sphere from the game if the attacked sphere leaves the playing area.

### 13. The method of claim 11 or 12, comprising the steps of:

providing each player with a deck with a plurality of cards;  
providing each player with a plurality of spheres; and

using at least one sphere to attack at least one other sphere of another player in response to the content on the face surface of at least one played card.

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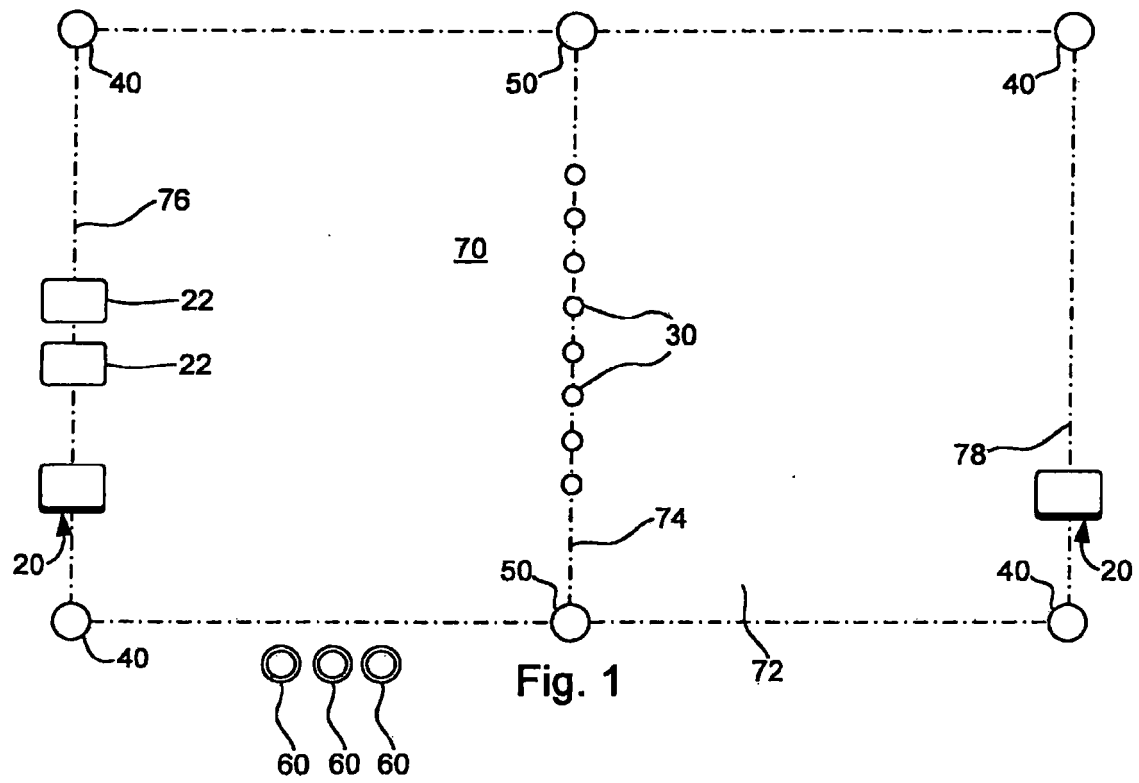


Fig. 2



Fig. 3



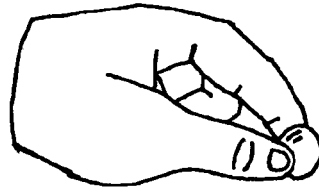
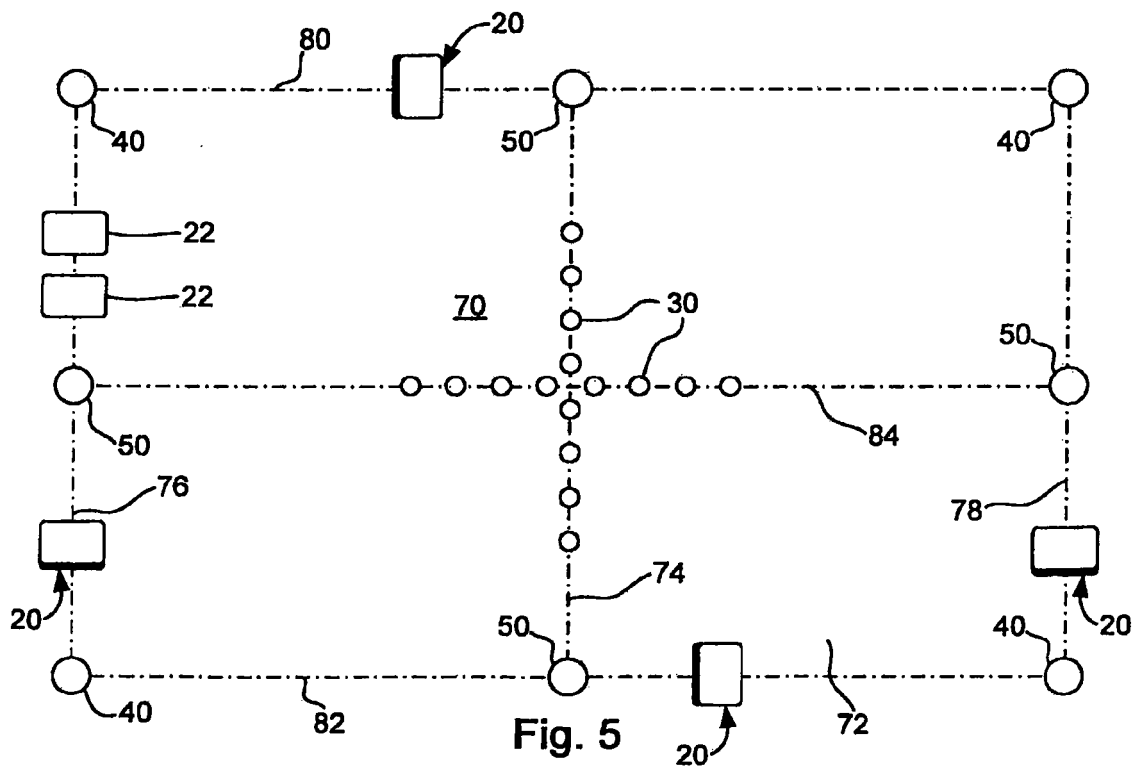
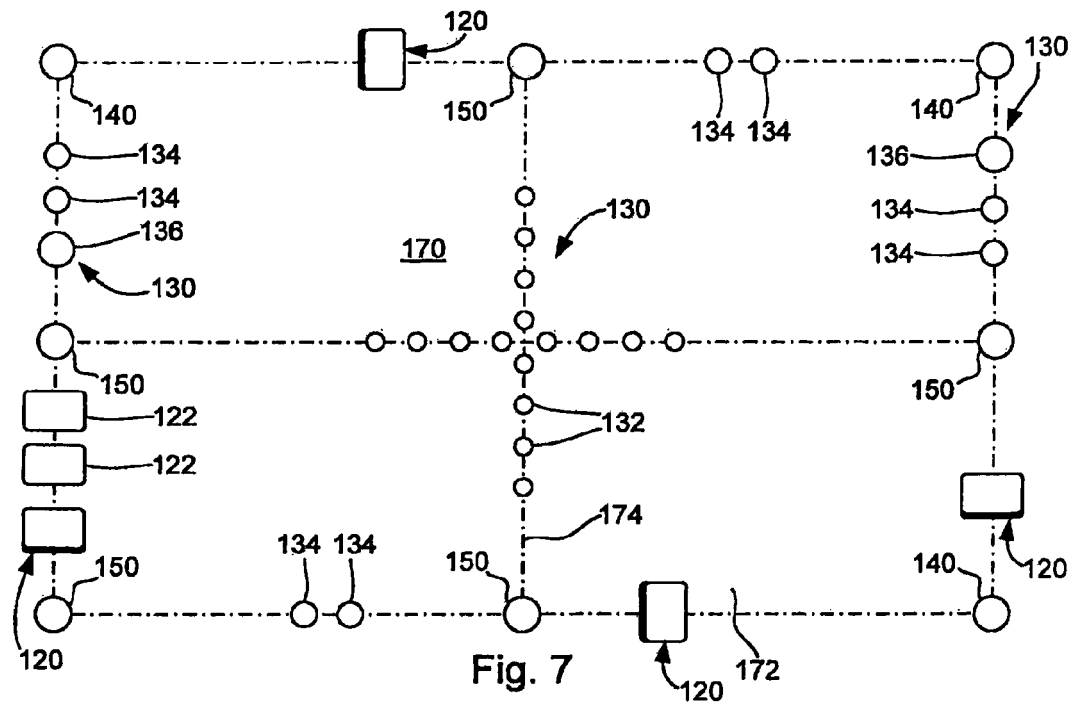
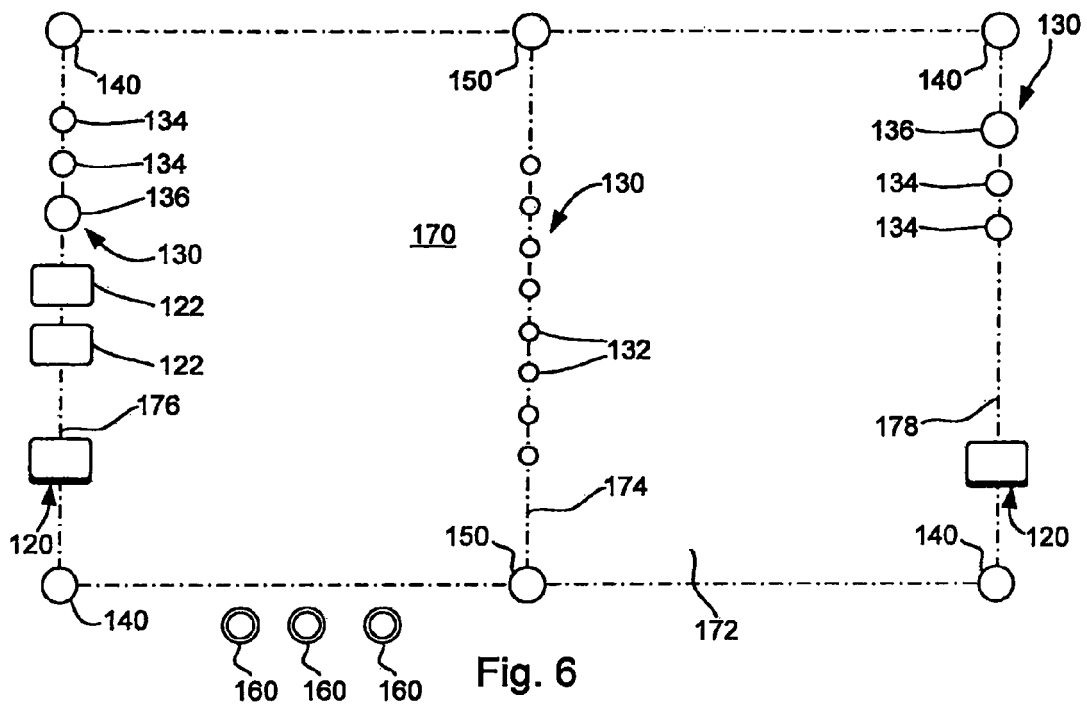


Fig. 4





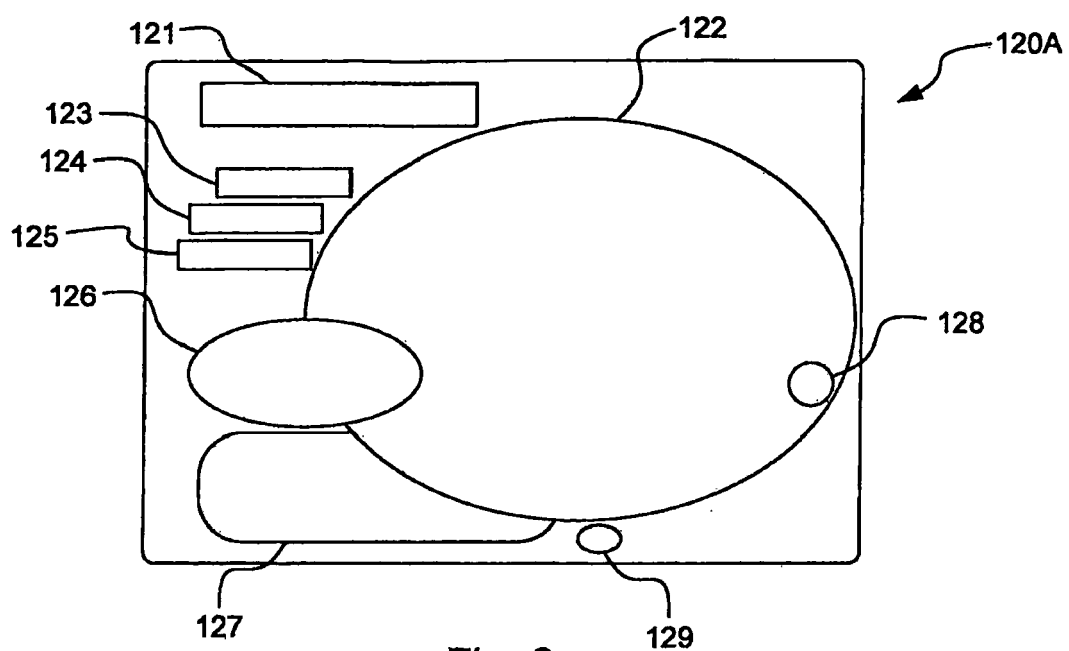


Fig. 8

**REFERENCES CITED IN THE DESCRIPTION**

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