

[54] **DEVICE FOR COLLECTING, CONTAINING AND DISPENSING MARKERS FOR GAMES**

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[22] Filed: **Aug. 21, 1973**

[21] Appl. No.: **390,199**

[52] U.S. Cl. **133/5 A, 150/37**

[51] Int. Cl. **A63f 9/00**

[58] Field of Search **221/307-310; 133/1 R, 1 A, 5 A; 150/37, 34**

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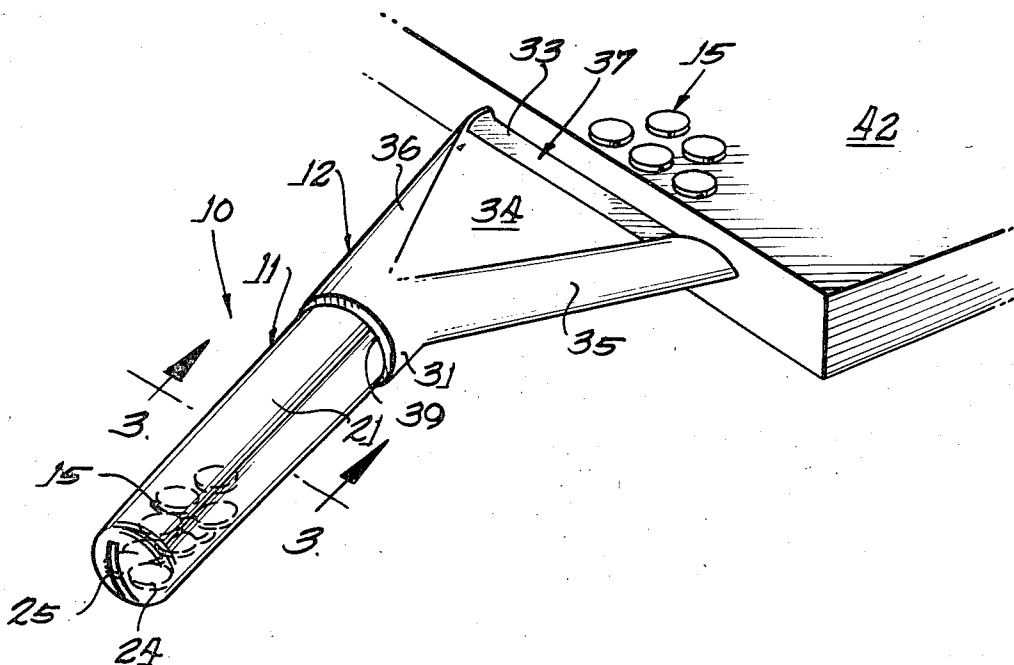
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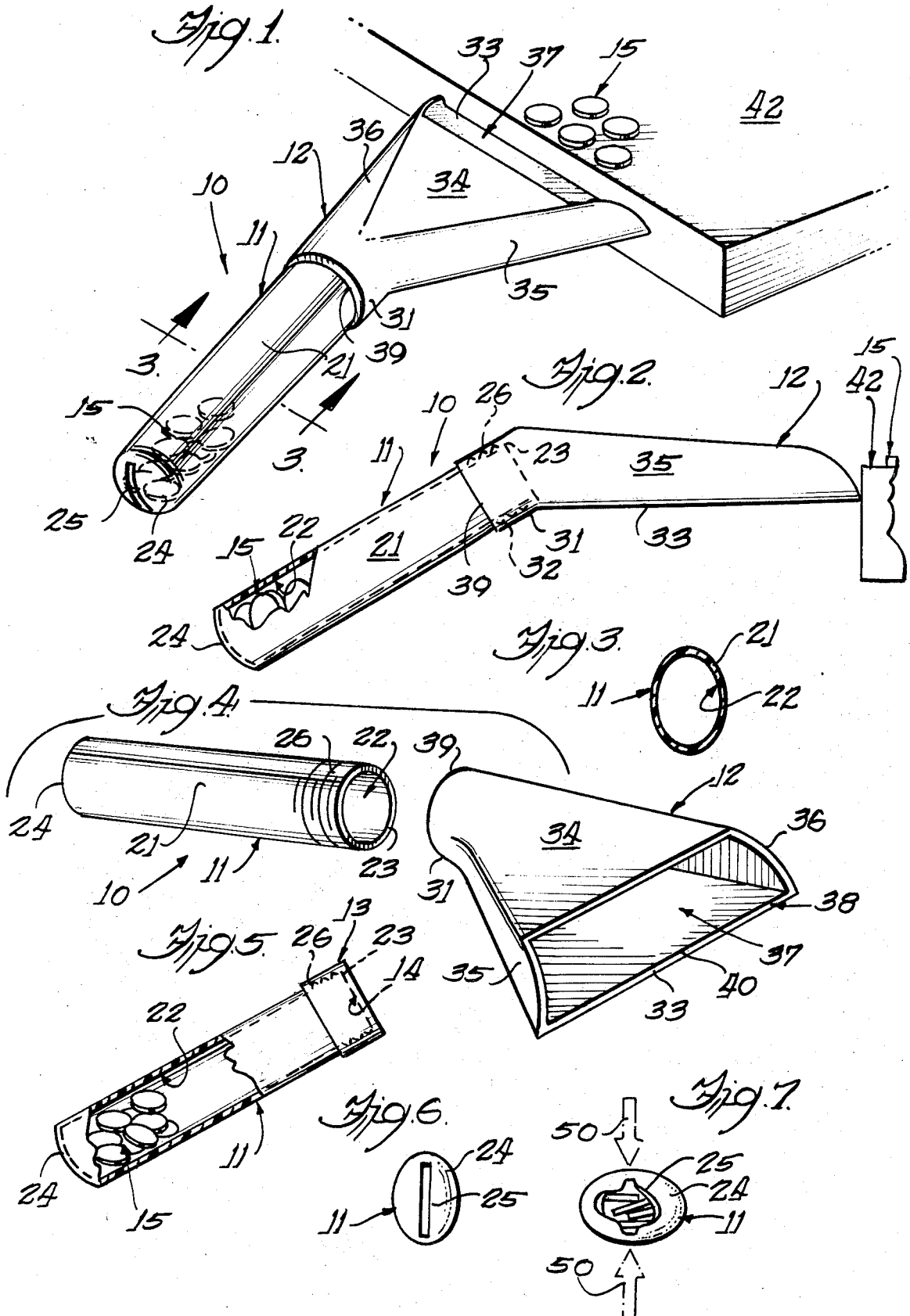
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[57] **ABSTRACT**

A device for collecting, containing and dispensing markers for games, such as disc shaped bingo chip type markers as used in the playing of the games of bingo, the device consisting of an elongated hollow body member formed of elastic or resilient material and open at one end for receiving markers therein and having a dispensing opening at the opposite end for dispensing the markers therefrom, the body member being of a size and configuration adapted to be comfortably held in one hand of the user in a supportive and operative manner, a loading funnel adapted to be removably connected to the body member at the end for receiving markers therein, and a cover adapted for removable connection to the marker receiving end of the body in the same position as the loading funnel providing alternative use of either the loading funnel or of the cover member, the device providing for the rapid loading of markers therein from a playing surface or the like and adapted to retain the markers therein until a user squeezingly compresses the body member in a manner to open the slotted dispensing end to dispense as many markers as desired at any one time.

2 Claims, 7 Drawing Figures





DEVICE FOR COLLECTING, CONTAINING AND DISPENSING MARKERS FOR GAMES

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates generally to storage and dispensing apparatus and more particularly to a novel device adapted for collecting, containing, and dispensing markers for games, such as employed in playing bingo, in a rapid manner.

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE PRIOR ART

In the playing of games of chance, such as "bingo," "lotto," and the like, in which small discs, tokens, markers, and the like are placed on numbers or other characters on a playing surface or card in substantially quick succession, and in view of the quick pace at which each of these games are played, it is essential that the players always have a sufficient number of markers to play the game readily available so that the player can give full attention to the individual calling the game numbers without falling behind the caller.

In playing such games where it is necessary to place markers or the like on a card or on the playing surface of a game, it is difficult for an individual to hold the great number of extra markers in hand which will be required during the play of the game while the individual still accurately places one marker at a time on each card or playing surface, such placement requiring great accuracy in view of the rapid pace of the game while the individual still retains the additional markers in the one hand. It has been the regrettable experience of individuals that they are apt to drop one or more of the additional markers on the card or playing surface and then either disturb or forget which are the proper markers as games of this character, such as bingo, move very fast with an individual having to attend to numerous bingo cards while not falling behind the caller so that the individual does not have time to ponder but must act and move in a fast and sure manner. Thus, the mistaken or improperly deposited marker on the card or playing surface may lead to inaccuracies ruling out the player, this being both embarrassing to the player making the mistake while at the same time provoking the other players by slowing or stopping the game play due to the error of the mistaken player.

As a bingo player often plays a number of cards simultaneously, each card having on its face 24 numbered squares, with it being required that as numbers are called by the game caller the player must place a marker in each square corresponding to the number called on each card, and as the caller moves quite rapidly it is essential that the player have a source of markers conveniently available while at the same time not affecting the skill and dexterity required of the player to police and maintain all of the cards.

While it has been known in the prior art to provide dispensers for game markers, such dispensers have all failed to meet with popular acceptance due to difficulty to load, failure to operate at all times, failure to dispense properly at all times, require an undue amount of space on the playing surface normally not available to a player, obscure the player's view of the cards or playing surface, and require an undue amount of time in the loading, care, and usage of the device on the part of the player so that the same do not permit the player to keep up conveniently with the caller resulting in the

frustration and aggravation of the player whereas the game being played should be an enjoyable event.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

5 The present invention remedies and overcomes all of the foregoing deficiencies and disadvantages of presently available devices by providing a simple marker collecting, containing, and dispensing device which is operable in one hand of an individual to dispense any number of markers at any one time, in quick succession, and which is adapted to quickly recollect the used markers from the playing surface or cards in a rapid manner permitting the player to quickly prepare for the next round of the game.

15 It is a feature of the present invention to provide a bingo chip type collecting and dispensing device which may be quickly loaded by the player, and which is adapted to store and contain the markers therein during periods of non-usage by the player, such as during transport to and from the game, and the like.

20 A further feature of the invention provides a bingo chip type collecting and dispensing device eliminating the difficulties normally encountered when using the small disc shaped bingo chips enabling an individual to play the game of bingo much faster than is currently the case and with the elimination of the tedium that is generally encountered when collecting and distributing bingo chips.

25 Yet still a further feature of the present invention provides a collecting and dispensing device for markers for games having a minimum of separate parts with no mechanical mechanism or the like being utilized such that the device will always operate in the intended manner with no possibility of failure or operative difficulty.

30 Still a further feature of the present invention provides a bingo chip type collecting and dispensing device permitting the player to comfortably hold the same in one hand and to dispense as many markers as desired into the opposite hand for placing one at a time onto the game cards or playing surface in the usual manner, the player only having to retain but a few markers in the hand in which the markers are being placed onto the cards as more markers may be transferred from the dispensing device in one hand to the player's other hand in a rapid and positive manner such that the player always has an adequate supply of markers readily available to keep up with the caller while only having to retain in the one hand the number of markers which may be conveniently held therein without fear of dropping the same onto the cards or playing surface during the play of the game.

35 The provision of a device for collecting, containing, and dispensing markers for games, such as bingo chip type markers, as briefly outlined above and possessing the stated advantages, constitutes the principal features of the present invention. The provision of a device which is simple in its construction and which therefore may be readily manufactured at a low cost and by simple manufacturing methods; one having a minimum of separate parts; one which is rugged and durable and which therefore may be guaranteed by the manufacturer for many years of usage; one which is aesthetically pleasing and refined in appearance; one which is readily operated without any special instructions being required for the player; one which is conveniently sized for ease of carrying and transportation; and one which,

otherwise, is well adapted to perform the services required of it, are further desirable features which have been borne in mind in the production and the development of the present invention.

Other features and advantages of this invention will be apparent during the course of the following description.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

In the accompanying drawings forming a part of this specification, and in which like reference characters are employed to designate like parts throughout the same;

FIG. 1 is a perspective view illustrating the present invention in an operative loading situation relative to a playing surface;

FIG. 2 is a side elevational view of the body member having the loading funnel connected thereto and disposed adjacent a playing surface for collecting discs therefrom;

FIG. 3 is a cross-sectional view taken along Line 3—3 of FIG. 1;

FIG. 4 is an exploded perspective view illustrating the body member and the loading funnel of the present invention;

FIG. 5 is a side elevational view, partially broken away to illustrate the inner compartment, and showing the body member with the closure cap connected thereto;

FIG. 6 is an elevational end view of the dispensing slot opening of the body member in the normal inoperative position; and

FIG. 7 is the same as FIG. 6 illustrating the dispensing slot distorted into the open dispensing position by squeezing type compression forces exerted on the body member by the hand of the player.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Referring now to the drawings in detail, reference numeral 10 generally designates a device embodying the principles of the present invention and is comprised of three interchangeable component parts, namely a tube body member 11, a loading funnel 12 adapted to be connected to the body member 11, and a closure cap member 13 adapted to be connected to the body member in place of the loading funnel during transport and storage of the device 10.

The body member 11 is formed of elastic or resilient material defining an elongated oval cross-section tube having side walls 21 defining inwardly thereof a hollow compartment 22 open at one end 23 for receiving disc shaped markers and the like 15 randomly in the compartment, and having an arcuately shaped dispensing end 24 closing the compartment 22. It is to be noted that the body member 11 tapers from the oval cross-section as illustrated in FIG. 3 to a circular cross-section at the end 23. The dispensing end 24 is provided with a slot 25 therein which is of a width narrower than the thickness of a single marker 15 and which is of an overall length greater than the diameter of a marker 15. Formed integrally on the outer circumference of side walls 21 adjacent end 23 are screw type threads 26, the use thereof which will be described hereafter. While the body member 11 is shown as having an oval cross-section, it is to be understood that any other cross-section which may be comfortably held in

the hand of a player is also envisioned within the scope of the present invention, such as a circular cross-section, rectangular or square cross-section, triangular cross-section, and the like.

The body member 11 may be formed of rubber, plastic, or any other suitable elastic or resilient material providing an aesthetically pleasing and refined appearance, with the preferred embodiment being formed of high density polyethylene in view of the high resiliency thereof, high durability, and ease of molding thereof. Further, such material permits fabrication of the present invention in a variety of transparent, translucent, or opaque colors providing a more desirable range of product selection available to the consumer.

The funnel 12 is manufactured out of metal, wood, rubber, plastic, or any other suitable satisfactory material and is provided with a hollow cylindrical neck end portion 31 of a diameter greater than the end 23 of body member 11 with the inside cylindrical walls of the neck portion being formed with threads 32 adapted to be threadedly engaged with threads 26 of the body member in a manner to removably retain the funnel thereon. The funnel is provided with a flat bottom surface 33, a tapered top surface 34, and opposed sloping side edge surfaces 35 and 36 defining therebetween a hollow disc receiving and funneling chamber 37 which extends from an enlarged rectangular cross-section area at the open chip receiving end 38 through the funnel to terminate in the cylindrical neck portion 31 of the funnel at end 39. Further, as seen in the drawings, the top surface 34 does not extend as far outwardly away from the neck portion 31 as the bottom surface 33 so that a ledge type portion is formed at the outermost end of the bottom surface for catching and receiving discs or markers 15 by playing the outermost edge 40 of the bottom surface 33 adjacent an edge of a playing surface 42 on which the discs 15 are resting and then by a pushing or scooping type movement of an individual's hand against the discs they are in turn shoved off of the playing surface 42 and onto the bottom surface 33 thus into the funnel 12 from whence they are directed into the body member 11.

For use in storing and transporting a plurality of markers 15 in the body member 11 there is provided a closure cap 13 having a threaded recess 14 defined therein and adapted to be threadedly engaged on threads 26 in place of the funnel 12 thus closing the bottom member 11 and maintaining the discs or markers 15 therein.

In operation, a plurality of discs 15 are first placed into the body member 11 in any convenient manner, such as when the device is first purchased, with the closure cap being threaded onto the body member to close the same. When arriving at the location where the game is to be played, and after obtaining the game cards and a playing position, a player then removes the cap 13 from the body member 11 and replaces the same with the funnel 12 in preparation for playing the games. Then, prior to the game caller calling the first number, such as when playing bingo, the player grasps the body member 11 comfortably in one hand with the funnel in an upward oriented direction to prevent the discs 15 from falling outwardly thereof, after which the player squeezes the body member in the one hand by applying pressure thereto in directions substantially parallel to the axis of the slot 25, such as illustrated by arrows 15 in FIG. 7, this effecting the distortion of the

slot to the general configuration as shown in FIG. 7 such that the slot is open to a width greater than a plurality of the markers and is still longer than the diameter of the markers such that a desired number of markers may be dispensed through the slot into the opposite playing hand of the player, the player only having to hold in the playing hand those number of markers that may be conveniently held without fear of dropping any of the markers onto the playing surface, it being obvious that should the player run out of markers in the playing hand at any time during the play of the game then the player may readily replenish the markers rapidly and quickly from the body member 11 without falling behind the game caller or having to pay any attention as to where the additional markers may be found, this providing a great convenience to the player in a manner to enhance the enjoyability of playing the game.

It is to be understood that in view of the elasticity and resiliency of the body member 11, that as soon as the player releases the compressive pressure about the side walls 21 of the body member that the slot 25 will immediately return to its normal position preventing any further dispensing of the markers 15 until further operation by the player.

The present invention thus provides a device for collecting, storing, and dispensing markers in a manner which is very easy to load, has a large capacity, and from which markers are readily dispensed in a fast and reliable manner, the dispenser requiring very low pressure on the part of the user for dispensing so that the game is not tiring to operate with the dispenser of a simplified rugged construction which is very economical to produce.

It is to be understood that the form of this invention herewith shown and described is to be taken as preferred examples of the same, and that this invention is not to be limited to the exact arrangement of parts shown in the accompanying drawings or described in this specification as various changes in the details of construction as to shape, size, and arrangement of parts may be resorted to without departing from the spirit of the invention, the scope of the novel concepts thereof, or the scope of the sub-joined claims.

Having thus described the invention, what is claimed is:

1. A device for collecting, containing and dispensing disc shaped bingo chip type markers for use in the playing of the game of Bingo, the device comprising the combination of:

a longitudinally elongated hollow body member formed of a material having the qualities of elasticity and resiliency, the body having a closed dispensing end and a diametrically opposite open receiving end with a hollow compartment being defined interiorly of the body for receiving therein a plurality of markers in a random manner, said body member having side walls extending between said dispensing end and said receiving end defining an elongated tubular shape for said body member having an oval cross-section viewed through a plane taken normal to the longitudinal axis at the dispensing end of the body member with said cross-sectional area slowly changing in a graduated transition manner progressively along the body member in the direction of the receiving end until a circular cross-sectional area is defined at the open receiving end

of said body member, said body member adapted to be held in one hand of an individual in a comfortable and operative manner;

a dispensing opening for said markers formed integrally in said closed dispensing end of said body member, said opening being in the form of a rectangular slot extending radially to the axis of the body member, said slot being longer than the diameter of the individual markers and being of a lesser width than the thickness of the individual markers thus preventing any marker from passing through said slot when the slot is in the normal inoperative position, the side edges defining said slot being distortable upon an individual applying compressive pressure to the body member adjacent the dispensing end thereof by a squeezing type movement of the hand holding the body member thus distorting the dispensing end of the body member against the inherent elasticity and resiliency of the body member, this squeezing type movement exerting opposed forces generally axially of said slot to effect the distortion of said slot in a manner decreasing the overall length thereof while distortingly increasing portions of the width thereof to a width greater than that of a plurality of the markers for dispensing a selective number of markers there-through, said slot automatically returning to its normal inoperative undistorted position upon release of the squeezing pressure of the user due to the inherent elasticity and resiliency of the body member;

a hollow chip loading funnel member having one end detachably connected to the receiving end of said body member in communication with the interior of said body member, the funnel member being connected with the body member such that a cover member is interchangeable with the funnel member, said one end of the funnel member including a hollow cylindrical collar portion having an interior diameter to be snugly received in a telescopic manner over said receiving end of said body member, the opposite end of said funnel member being of an enlarged cross-sectional area relative to said collar portion, said opposite end including a hollow triangular portion connected at its apex to the collar portion and extending outwardly therefrom at an angle thereto relative to the longitudinal axis of the collar portion, said triangular portion including a top surface, a bottom surface, and opposed side surfaces defining a hollow marker receiving chamber therebetween, said bottom surface extending outwardly from a bottom edge of said cylindrical collar portion a distance greater than said top surface with said top surface overlying only a portion of said bottom surface, that portion of said bottom surface not overlapped by said top surface being exposed to define a lip portion having a forward-most free edge adapted to be placed adjacent the edge of a playing surface with the markers resting on the playing surface readily pushed by the individual user off the playing surface and onto the lip portion from whence they slide through the funnel into the attached body member, said body member and attached collar portion being disposed at a concave angle relative to said triangular portion; said cover member interchangeable with said funnel member for detachable connection to said receive-

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ing end of said body member to close said receiving end for containing the markers in the body during periods of transportation and storage between times of usage, said cover member being of a cylindrical shape having a flat top surface and depending cylindrical side walls defining an interior circular recess of a diameter adapted to be snugly received over the exterior surface of said body member receiving end to close said end;

screw threads disposed about the exterior of said body member side walls adjacent said receiving end thereof;

screw threads formed interiorly of said funnel member collar portion to engage threadingly with said body member screw threads for detachably con-

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necting the funnel member on said body member; and

screw threads formed interiorly of said cover member cylindrical side walls to threadedly engage with said body member screw threads for detachably connecting the cover member on said body member interchangeably with said funnel member.

2. The device for collecting, containing and dispensing disc shaped bingo chip type markers as set forth in claim 1 wherein said body member is formed of a transparent material such that the user thereof may know at a glance the quantity of markers contained within said body member.

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