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(54) **TABLE GAME STARTER AND METHOD**

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(75) **Inventor: Graham R. Bowe, Yardley, PA (US)**

(57) **ABSTRACT**

Correspondence Address:  
**PANITCH SCHWARZE BELISARIO & NADEL LLP**  
**ONE COMMERCE SQUARE, 2005 MARKET STREET, SUITE 2200**  
**PHILADELPHIA, PA 19103**

A game table for playing a game with a gamepiece where a first player defends a first goal to block the gamepiece from entering the first goal. The game table includes a playing surface, a first endwall and a second endwall. The gamepiece is movable along the playing surface through the application of gaming forces and the first endwall extends generally perpendicularly from the playing surface and includes the first goal. The second endwall extends generally perpendicularly from the playing surface and is located at an opposite side of the playing surface from the first endwall. A first starting mechanism is in communication with the first goal through a gamepiece channel that moves the gamepiece from the first goal to the first starting mechanism when the gamepiece enters the first goal. The first starting mechanism moves the gamepiece to the playing surface upon actuation by the first player.

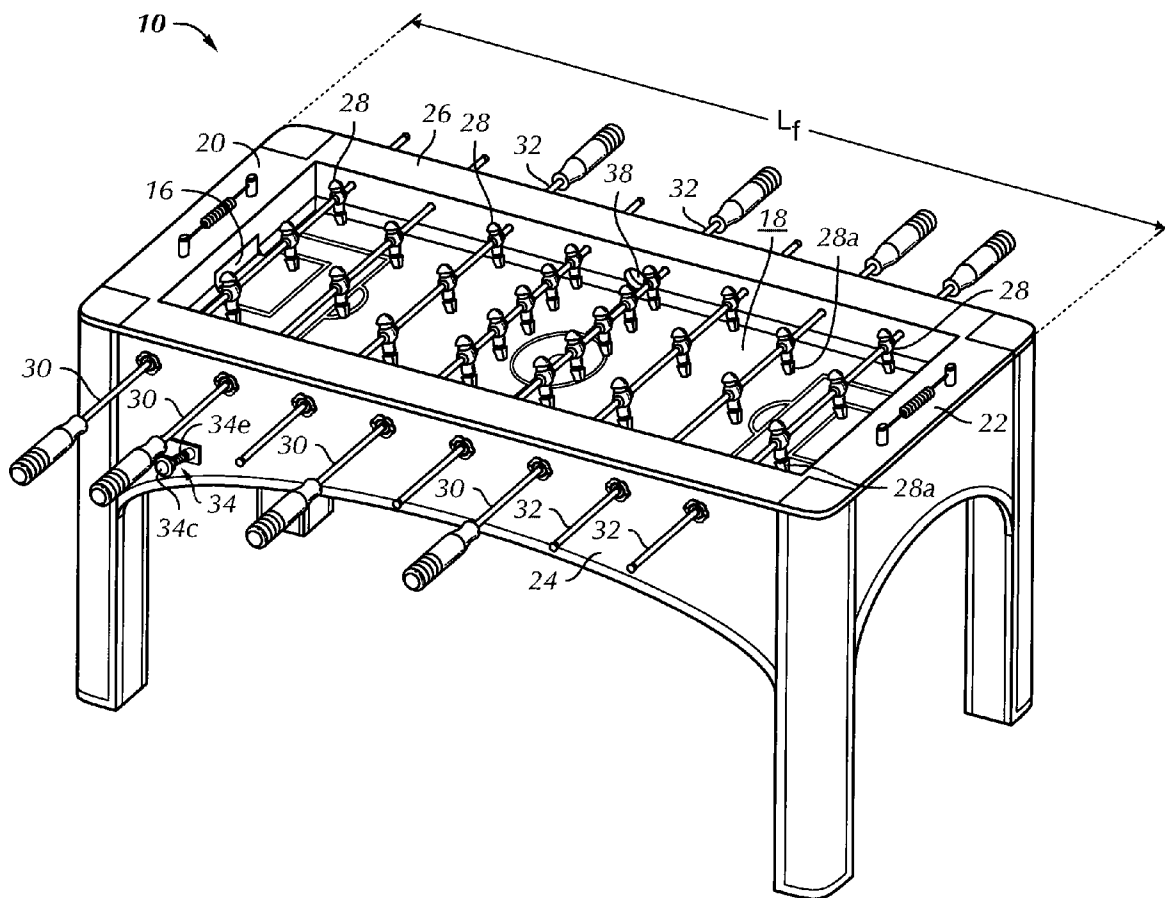
(73) **Assignee: DMI SPORTS, INC., Fort Washington, PA (US)**

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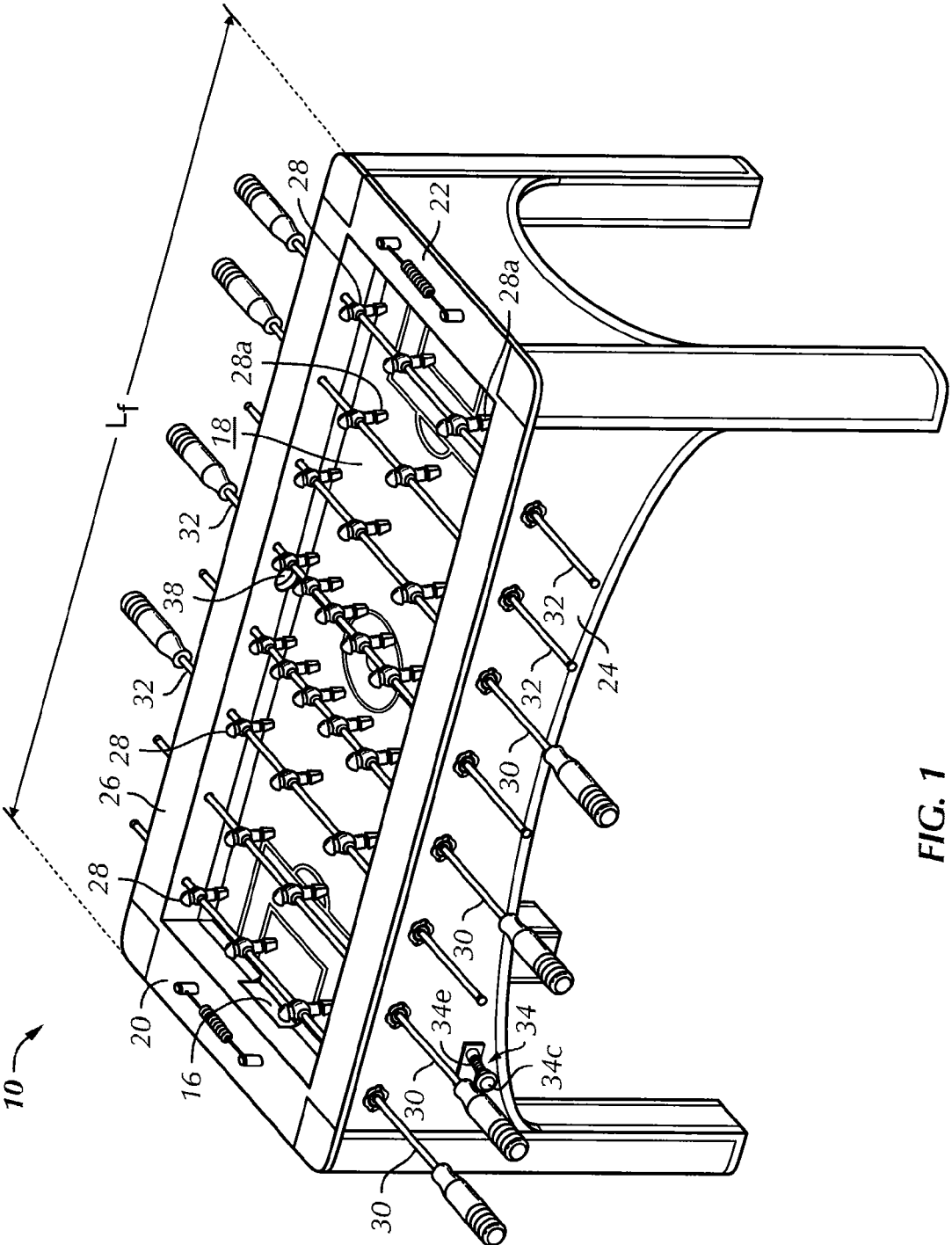


FIG. 1

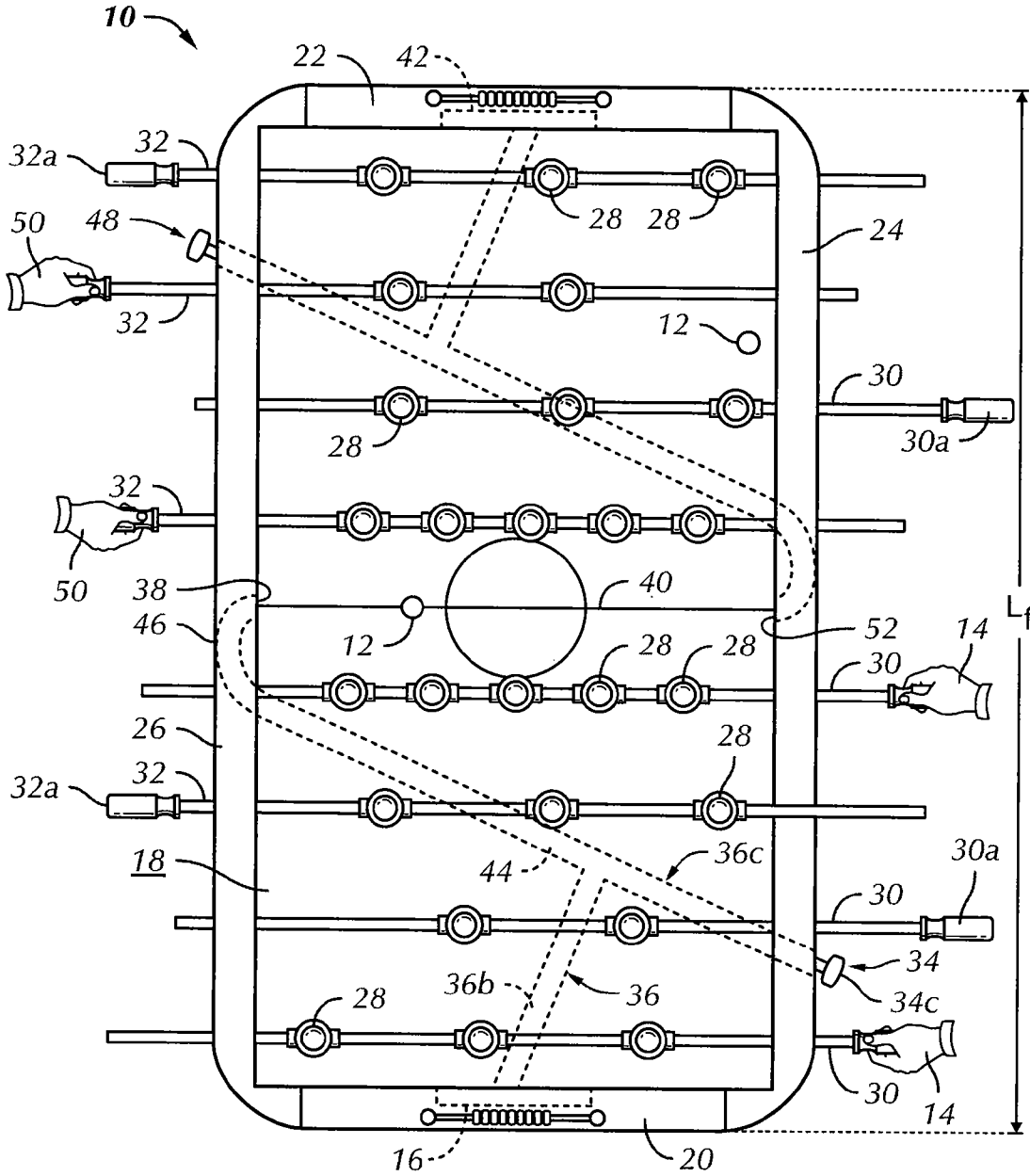


FIG. 2

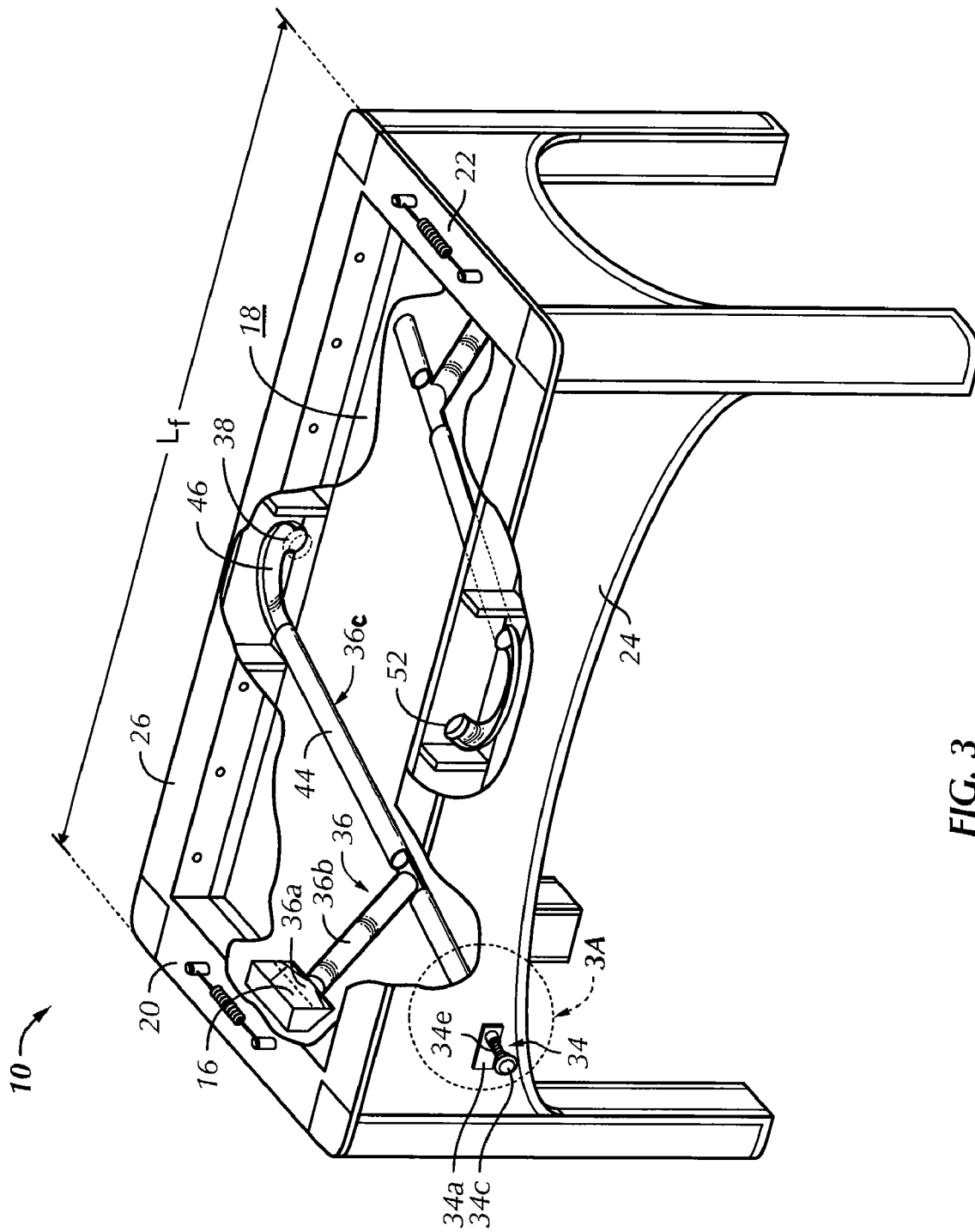
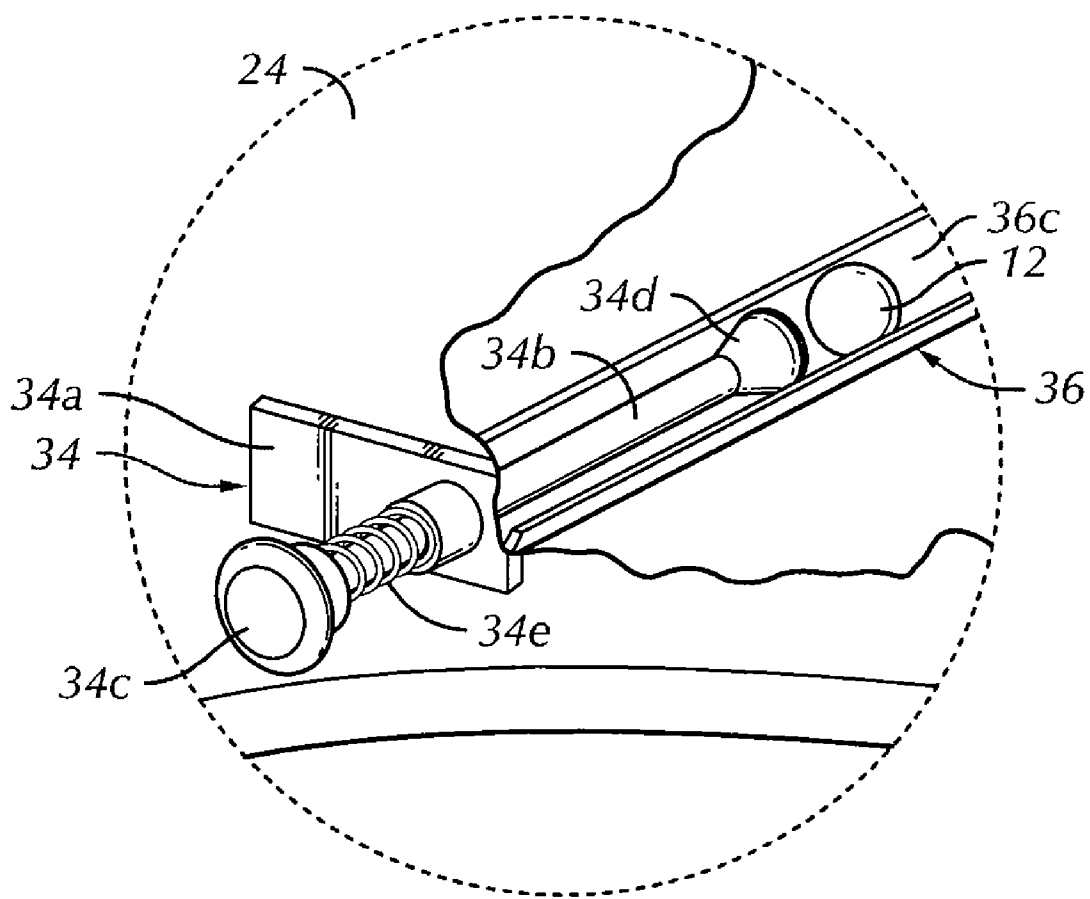


FIG. 3



**FIG. 3A**

**TABLE GAME STARTER AND METHOD**

**BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

[0001] The present application relates to a game table for playing a game with a gamepiece and, more particularly, to a foosball table having a starting mechanism that provides for relative consistent starting of the game and for each of the players to be prepared when the game is started.

[0002] Conventional game tables, such as a foosball table include goals wherein the gamepiece falls off of the playing surface when a goal is scored. Accordingly, it is necessary to place the gamepiece or ball back onto the playing surface prior to commencement of additional gameplay. Specifically, in a foosball game, a player who was scored upon typically urges the foosball through a hole in a sidewall of the foosball table to place the foosball back onto the playing surface for further game play. This starting method often results in inconsistent starts to the game because of the manner in which a player inserts the ball into the starting hole and skilled players may be able to manipulate the start of the game to provide an advantage to their own team. In addition, a player that is concentrating on starting the game may also be distracted from their own gameplay for a sufficient amount of time for their opponent to gain an advantage during the game. Specifically, in a foosball game, a starting hole is typically positioned proximate a midfield portion of the foosball table, the player's defenders are positioned proximate their own goal and are spaced from the midfield portion of the playing field. A player starting the game may have difficulty reaching their defensive players in a sufficient amount of time to effectively block their opponent, thereby placing the player who starts the foosball game at a disadvantage if the opponent is quick enough to strike the foosball and score a goal before the starting player has an opportunity to gain control of their defensive foosmen.

[0003] It would be advantageous to construct a game table wherein a starting mechanism is utilized that consistently starts game play and limits the advantages and disadvantages of one player relative to their opponent. Specifically, it would be advantageous to construct a foosball table wherein a starting mechanism permits generally consistent starting of the foosball game and permits a player who is starting the game to control their defensive foosmen or players prior to game play.

**BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION**

[0004] Briefly stated, the present application is directed to a game table for playing a game with a gamepiece where a first player defends a first goal to block the gamepiece from entering the first goal. The game table includes a playing surface, a first endwall and a second endwall. The gamepiece is movable along the playing surface through the application of gaming forces and the first endwall extends generally perpendicularly from the playing surface. The first endwall includes the first goal. The second endwall extends generally perpendicularly from the playing surface and is located at an opposite side of the playing surface from the first endwall. A first starting mechanism is in communication with the first goal through a gamepiece channel that moves the gamepiece from the first goal to the first starting mechanism when the gamepiece enters the first goal. The first starting mechanism moves the gamepiece to the playing surface upon actuation by the first player.

[0005] In another aspect, the present application is directed to a game table for playing a game with a gamepiece wherein a first player defends a first goal to block the gamepiece from entering the first goal. The game table includes a playing surface and the gamepiece is movable along the playing surface through the application of gaming forces. A first endwall extends generally perpendicularly from the playing surface and includes the first goal. A second endwall extends generally perpendicularly from the playing surface and is located at an opposite side of the playing surface from the first endwall. A midfield boundary is located on the playing surface generally midway between the first and second endwalls. A first starting mechanism is in communication with the first goal through a gamepiece channel. The gamepiece channel moves the gamepiece from the first goal to the first starting mechanism when the gamepiece enters the first goal. The first starting mechanism has an outlet proximate the midfield boundary and moves the gamepiece to the playing surface along a starting chute upon actuation of the first starting mechanism by the first player.

[0006] The present application is also directed to a method of starting a game between first and second players on a game table having a playing surface, first and second endwalls, first and second sidewalls, a first goal in the first endwall, a midfield boundary extending between the first and second sidewalls and located generally midway between the first and second endwalls, a gamepiece, a first starting mechanism mounted to the first sidewall, a gamepiece channel for moving the gamepiece from the first goal to the first starting mechanism, a first starter chute and a first outlet in communication with the first starting mechanism through the first starter chute. The method includes the steps of positioning the gamepiece on the playing surface, directing the gamepiece into the first goal, urging the gamepiece to the first starting mechanism under the force of gravity from the first goal along the gamepiece channel and actuating the first starting mechanism such that the gamepiece is propelled onto the game table moving in a direction generally parallel to the midfield boundary. The second player directs the gamepiece toward the first goal and the first player attempts to block the gamepiece from entering the first goal. The first starting mechanism is actuated by the first player.

**BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWINGS**

[0007] The foregoing summary, as well as the following detailed description of a preferred embodiment of the invention, will be better understood when read in conjunction with the appended drawings. For the purpose of illustrating the invention, there is shown in the drawings an embodiment which is presently preferred. It should be understood, however, that the invention is not limited to the precise arrangements and instrumentalities shown. In the drawings:

[0008] FIG. 1 is a top perspective view of a game table in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present inventions;

[0009] FIG. 2 is a top plan view of the game table of the preferred embodiment of the present invention;

[0010] FIG. 3 is a partial fragmentary, top perspective view of the preferred game table of FIG. 1 showing portions of a preferred gamepiece channel of the game table; and

[0011] FIG. 3A is a magnified, fragmentary top perspective view of a portion of the preferred game table taken from within line 3A of FIG. 3, showing a preferred starting mechanism of the present invention.

#### DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0012] Certain terminology is used in the following description for convenience only and is not limiting. The words “right”, “left”, “lower”, and “upper” designate directions in the drawings to which reference is made. The words “inwardly”, “outwardly”, “up”, and “down” refer to directions toward and away from, respectively, the geometric center of the game table and designated parts thereof. The terminology used in the above-listed words, derivatives thereof and words of similar import.

[0013] Referring to the drawings in detail, where in like numerals indicate like elements throughout, there shown in FIGS. 1-3A, a preferred embodiment of a game table, generally designated 10, for playing a game with a gamepiece 12 in accordance with the present invention. In the preferred embodiment, the game table 10 is comprised of a foosball table 10 and the gamepiece 12 is comprised of a foosball 12. The game table 10 is not limited to foosball tables 10 and, likewise, the gamepiece 12 is not limited to foosballs 12 and the present invention may be adapted for various game tables 10 that utilize various types of gamepieces 12, as would be apparent to one having ordinary skill in the art. For example, the present invention may be adapted for use with an air hockey table, bubble hockey table or other like game tables.

[0014] In the preferred embodiment, the game table 10 includes a playing surface 18, a first endwall 20 extending generally perpendicularly from the playing surface 18 and a second endwall 22 extending generally perpendicularly from the playing surface 18 and located at an opposite side of the playing surface 18 from the first endwall 20. A first player 14 typically defends a first goal 16 located in or proximate the first endwall 20 to block the gamepiece 12 from entering the first goal 16.

[0015] The gamepiece 12 is movable along the playing surface 18 through the application of gaming forces. In the preferred foosball table 10, the gaming forces are typically applied to the gamepiece or foosball 12 through foosmen 28 mounted to a plurality of rods 30, 32 that are rotatably mounted between a first and sidewall 24 and a second sidewall 26. The plurality of rods 30, 32 extend across the playing surface 18 such that a foot 28a of each of the foosmen 28 is proximate the playing surface 18. Accordingly, when the rods 30, 32 are pivoted and the foosball 12 is positioned below the foosmen 28, the foot 28a swings to contact the foosball 12 and direct the foosball 12 as desired by the player. The present invention is not limited to a foosball table 10 or to the inclusion of the foosmen 28 and rods 30, 32 and may be comprised of nearly any type of game table as would be apparent to one having ordinary skill in the art.

[0016] Referring to FIGS. 1-3A, a first starting mechanism 34 is in communication with the first goal 16 through a gamepiece channel 36. The gamepiece channel 36 moves the gamepiece 12 from the first goal 16 to the first starting mechanism 34 when the gamepiece 12 enters the first goal 16. The first starting mechanism 34 is also able to move the gamepiece 12 to the playing surface 18 upon actuation of the first starting mechanism by the first player 14.

[0017] Referring to FIGS. 2-3A, in the preferred embodiment, the gamepiece channel 36 includes a first goal ramp

36a, a first goal pipe 36b and a first starter pipe 36c. The first goal ramp 36a, first goal pipe 36b and first starter pipe 36c are connected to each other and are continuously sloped from the first goal 16 toward the first starting mechanism 34. The first goal ramp 36a, first goal pipe 36b and first starter pipe 36c are preferably sloped toward the first starting mechanism 34 to automatically urge the gamepiece or foosball 12 to the first starting mechanism 34 by gravitational forces when a goal is scored in the first goal 16. The first goal ramp 36a, first goal pipe 36b and first starter pipe 36c are preferably constructed of a structural material such as wood, metallic, composite or polymeric materials that are able to take on the general shape and size of the first goal ramp 36a, first goal pipe 36b and first starter pipe 36c and withstand the normal operating conditions of these components. For example, the first goal ramp 36a may be constructed of a portion of a particle board and the first goal pipe 36b and first starter pipe 36c may be constructed of a PVC pipe having an inner diameter that is large enough to accept the foosball 12. However, these components are not limited to the above-described materials, shapes and/or sizes and may have nearly any configuration that permits the foosball 12 or other gamepiece 12 to be urged toward the first starting mechanism 34 after the foosball or gamepiece 12 is deposited into the first goal 16.

[0018] Referring to FIGS. 1-3, in the preferred embodiment, the first sidewall 24 extends between the first and second endwalls 20, 22 and the first starting mechanism 34 is mounted to the first sidewall 24. In addition, the second sidewall 26 extends between the first and second endwalls 20, 22, resulting in a generally rectangular playing surface 18, which is typical for a conventional foosball table 10. The game table or foosball table 10 is not limited to having a generally rectangular playing surface 18 and may have nearly any size or shape playing surface 18 that is appropriate for a specific game. The first starting mechanism 34 is preferably mounted to the first sidewall 24 such that the first player 14 is positioned proximate the first starting mechanism 34 during game play and has relatively easy access to the first starting mechanism 34. In addition, the gamepiece or foosball 12 is preferably urged to the first starting mechanism 34 when a goal is scored in the first goal 16 through the gamepiece channel 36. However, the preferred game table or foosball table 10 is not so limited and the gamepiece or foosball 12 may be urged toward nearly any location on or within the game table or foosball table 10 when a goal is scored in the first goal 16.

[0019] Referring to FIGS. 2-3A, the first starter chute 36c extends between the first starting mechanism 34 and a first outlet 38. The first outlet 38 is preferably located at the second sidewall 26. Accordingly, after the goal is scored in the first goal 16, the gamepiece or foosball 12 is urged to the first starting mechanism 34 by the first goal ramp 36a, first goal pipe 36b and first starter chute 36c and the first player 14 starts the game by actuating the first starter mechanism 34, thereby causing the gamepiece or foosball 12 to travel along the first starter chute 36c and out of the first outlet 38 back onto the playing surface 18 for further gameplay. The first outlet 38 is not limited to locations at or on the second sidewall 26 and may be located nearly anywhere on the game table or foosball table 10 wherein the gamepiece or foosball 12 is directed onto the playing surface 18 after the first player 14 actuates the first starting mechanism 34. For example, the first outlet 38 may be located in the playing surface 18, at or in the first sidewall 24 or at or in one of the first or second endwalls 20, 22.

[0020] Referring to FIGS. 1 and 2, in the preferred embodiment, a midfield boundary 40 extends on the playing surface 18 between the first and second sidewalls 24, 26 proximate a middle of a field length Lf of the playing surface or field 18. The first outlet 38 is preferably located proximate the midfield boundary 40 and urges the gamepiece or foosball 12 on to the playing surface 18 proximate the midfield boundary 40 to start the game. The first outlet 38 is not limited to urging the gamepiece or foosball 12 onto the playing surface 18 at a position proximate the midfield boundary 40 to start the game, but the location at the midfield boundary 40 is preferred to start to the game with the gamepiece or foosball 12 proximate the middle of the playing field 18 such that the gamepiece 12 must travel generally the same distance to each endwall 20, 22 a the start of gameplay.

[0021] Referring to FIGS. 2-3A, in the preferred embodiment, the first starting mechanism 34 includes a mounting plate 34a, a starter shaft 34b, a handle 34c mounted to a first end of the starter shaft 34b, a bumper 34d mounted to a second end of the starter shaft 34b and a spring 34e mounted between the starter shaft 34b and the mounting plate 34a. The mounting plate 34a preferably mounts the first starting mechanism 34 to the first sidewall 24 and anchors the starter shaft 34d and spring 34e to the game table 10. When the first player 14 pulls the handle 34c, a tension force is created in the spring 34e which drives the handle 34c, starter shaft 34b and bumper 34d toward the gamepiece 12 to urge the gamepiece 12 along the first starter chute 36c toward the first outlet 38. It will be apparent to one having ordinary skill in the art that the preferred first starting mechanism 34 is similar to a pinball-type starting mechanism for urging the gamepiece 12 toward and out of the first outlet 38. However, the first starting mechanism 34 is not limited to the pinball-type starting mechanism shown in FIG. 3A and described herein. For example, the first starting mechanism 34 may be comprised of a pneumatic starting mechanism, a hydraulic starting mechanism or nearly any mechanism that is able to urge the gamepiece 12 along the first starter chute 36c toward and out of the first outlet 38 and onto the playing surface 18 to start game play.

[0022] Referring to FIGS. 1-3, in the preferred embodiment, the plurality of rods 30, 32 include a plurality of first rods 30 each having first rod handles 30a positioned proximate the first sidewall 24 and a plurality of second rods 32 each having handles 32a positioned proximate the second sidewall 26. The plurality of first rods 30 include at least one first defender rod 30 positioned proximate the first goal 16 and at least one first offensive rod 30 positioned proximate a second goal 42 located in the second endwall 22. The first starting mechanism 34 is preferably positioned proximate the first rod handle 30a of the first defender rod 30 that is positioned proximate the first goal 16. It is preferred that the first starting mechanism 34 is positioned proximate the first defender rod 30 at the first sidewall 24 such that when a goal is scored in the first goal 16, the first player 14 is in control of starting gameplay by actuating the first starting mechanism 34. The first starting mechanism 34 is not limited to being positioned proximate the first defender rod 30 at the first sidewall 24 and may be positioned nearly anywhere on the game table 10 where a player may actuate the first starting mechanism 34.

[0023] Referring to FIGS. 2-3A, in the preferred embodiment, the first starter chute 36 includes a linear portion 44 and an arcuate portion 46. The linear portion 44 is secured to the first starting mechanism 34 and the arcuate portion 46 is secured to the first outlet 38. The arcuate portion 46 and the first outlet 38 preferably direct the gamepiece 12 onto the playing surface 18 such that it is generally moving parallel to

the midfield boundary 40. The first starter chute 36c is not limited to inclusion of the linear portion 44 and the arcuate portion 46 to direct the gamepiece 12 from the first sidewall 24 to the second sidewall 26 and onto the playing surface 18 in a direction generally parallel to the midfield boundary 40. However, the first starter chute 36c preferably urges the gamepiece 12 onto the playing surface 18 moving generally parallel to the midfield boundary 40 such that the foosmen 28 on the first and second rods 30, 32 have a generally equal opportunity to contact or gain control of the foosball 12 when the game is started, as will be apparent to one having ordinary skill in the art.

[0024] Referring to FIGS. 2 and 3, in the preferred embodiment, a second starting mechanism 48 is in communication with the second goal 42. The second starting mechanism 48 is able to move the gamepiece 12 onto the playing surface 18 upon actuation by a second player 50, preferably when a goal is scored in the second goal 42. The second starting mechanism 48 generally has a similar or the same configuration as the first starting mechanism 34, will not be described in further detail, but is not limited to a similar or the same configuration as the first starting mechanism 34. The second starting mechanism 48 is preferably mounted to the second sidewall 26 proximate the defender second rod 32 such that the second player 50 is positioned proximate the second starting mechanism 48 during game play to provide easy access to actuate the second starting mechanism 48 after a goal is scored in the second goal 42. In addition, the second starting mechanism 48 is preferably associated with chutes, pipes and ramps or other urging and channeling components to those associated with the first starting mechanism 34 and would be apparent to one having ordinary skill in the art. The game table 10 is not limited to the inclusion of the second starting mechanism 48 and the gamepiece 12 may be urged to the first starting mechanism 34 following a goal in either the first or second goals 16, 42 or may include multiple starting mechanisms located nearly anywhere on or around the game table 10.

[0025] Referring to FIGS. 1-3, a second outlet 52 is preferably located in the first sidewall 24 and the first and second outlet 38, 52 preferably face each other along the midfield boundary 40 or along a line of site generally parallel to the midfield boundary 40. Accordingly, when the first or second starting mechanisms 34, 48 are actuated by the first or second players 14, 50, the gamepiece or foosball 12 is urged onto the playing surface 18 such that the gamepiece 12 is moving in a direction generally parallel to the midfield boundary 40.

[0026] Referring to FIGS. 1-3A, in operation, the gamepiece or foosball 12 is positioned on the playing surface 18 and the second player 50 directs the gamepiece or foosball 12 toward the first goal 16 through the application to gaming forces. The first player 14 attempts to block the gamepiece or foosball 12 from entering the first goal 16. Specifically, the first player 14 preferably manipulates the first rods 30 to contact and urge the foosmen 28 to block the gamepiece 12 from entering the first goal 16 and attempts to direct the foosball 12 into the second goal 42. Likewise, the second player 50 manipulates the second rods 32 to direct the foosmen 28 to urge the foosball 12 into the first goal 16 and to block entry of the foosball 12 into the second goal 42. When the second player 50 is able to urge the gamepiece or foosball 12 into the first goal 16, the gamepiece or foosball 12 is urged down the first goal ramp 36a, down the first goal pipe 36b and down the first starter chute 36c to the first starting mechanism 34, preferably by the force of gravity.



[0027] When the first player 14, who was just scored upon in the first goal 16, is ready to again commence gameplay, the handle 34c is grasped and pulled away from the first sidewall 24. Pulling the handle 34c away from the first sidewall 24 loads a tension force into the spring 34e biasing the handle 34c and starter shaft 34b toward the second sidewall 26. The first player 14 releases the handle 34c, thereby driving the starter shaft 34b, bumper 34d and gamepiece or foosball 12 toward the second sidewall 26 along the linear portion 44 of the first starter chute 36c. As the gamepiece or foosball 12 is traveling along the first starter chute 36c, the first player 14 typically has sufficient time to grasp the selected handles 30a of the first rods 30 to prepare for continued gameplay. The gamepiece or foosball 12 eventually travels to the arcuate portion 46 to modify the travel direction of the gamepiece or foosball 12 out of the first outlet 38 in a direction generally parallel to the midfield boundary 40 onto the playing surface 18.

[0028] When a goal is scored in the second goal 42, the second player 50 is generally able to actuate the second starting mechanism 48 in a similar manner to that described above for the first starting mechanism 34 and the operation of the second starting mechanism 48 when a goal is scored in the second goal 42 and associated pipes, ramps and channels will not be described in greater detail.

[0029] It will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that changes could be made to the embodiments described above without departing from the broad inventive concept thereof. It is understood, therefore, that this invention is not limited to the particular embodiments disclosed, but it is intended to cover modifications within the spirit and scope of the present invention as defined by the appended claims.

We claim:

1. A game table for playing a game with a gamepiece wherein a first player defends a first goal to block the gamepiece from entering the first goal, the game table comprising:

a playing surface, the gamepiece being movable along the playing surface through the application of gaming forces;

a first endwall extending generally perpendicularly from the playing surface, the first endwall including the first goal;

a second endwall extending generally perpendicularly from the playing surface and located at an opposite side of the playing surface from the first endwall; and

a first starting mechanism in communication with the first goal through a gamepiece channel, the gamepiece channel moving the gamepiece from the first goal to the first starting mechanism when the gamepiece enters the first goal, the first starting mechanism moving the gamepiece to the playing surface upon actuation by the first player.

2. The game table of claim 1 wherein the gamepiece channel includes a first goal ramp, a first goal pipe and a first starter pipe, the first goal ramp, first goal pipe and first starter pipe connected to each other and sloped from the first goal toward the first starting mechanism.

3. The game table of claim 1 further comprising:

a first sidewall extending between the first and second endwalls, the first starting mechanism being mounted to the first sidewall; and

a second sidewall extending between the first and second endwalls.

4. The game table of claim 3 further comprising:

a first starter chute extending between the first starting mechanism and a first outlet, the first outlet being located along the second sidewall; and

a midfield boundary extending on the playing surface between the first and second sidewalls, the playing field having a field length, the midfield boundary being located generally at a middle of the field length.

5. The game table of claim 3 wherein the first starting mechanism includes a mounting plate, a starter shaft, a handle mounted to a first end of the starter shaft, a bumper mounted to a second end of the starter shaft and a spring mounted between the starter shaft and the mounting plate.

6. The game table of claim 3 further comprising:

a plurality of first rods mounted to the first and second sidewalls and extending across the playing surface, the plurality of first rods each having first rod handles positioned proximate the first sidewall, the plurality of first rods including at least a first defender rod positioned proximate the first goal and a first offensive rod positioned proximate a second goal located in the second endwall, the first starting mechanism positioned proximate the first rod handle of the first defender rod, the gamepiece being comprised of a foosball.

7. The game table of claim 1 further comprising:

a first starter chute extending between the first starting mechanism and a first outlet at a second sidewall, the first starter chute including a linear portion and an arcuate portion, the linear portion secured to the first starting mechanism and the arcuate portion secured to the first outlet, the arcuate portion and the first outlet directing the gamepiece onto the playing surface generally parallel to a midfield boundary.

8. The game table of claim 1 further comprising:

first and second sidewalls extending between the first and second endwalls;

a second goal located in the second sidewall;

a second starting mechanism in communication with the second goal, the second starting mechanism moving the gamepiece to the playing surface upon actuation by a second player, the second starting mechanism mounted to the second sidewall.

9. The game table of claim 8 further comprising:

a midfield boundary extending between the first and second sidewalls approximately midway between the first and second endwalls;

a first outlet located in the second sidewall; and

a second outlet located in the first sidewall, the first and second outlets facing each other along a line of sight generally parallel to the midfield boundary.

10. A game table for playing a game with a gamepiece wherein a first player defends a first goal to block the gamepiece from entering the first goal, the game table comprising:

a playing surface, the gamepiece being movable along the playing surface through the application of gaming forces;

a first endwall extending generally perpendicularly from the playing surface, the first endwall including the first goal;

a second endwall extending generally perpendicularly from the playing surface and located at an opposite side of the playing surface from the first endwall, a midfield boundary located on the playing surface generally midway between the first and second endwalls; and

a first starting mechanism in communication with the first goal through a gamepiece channel, the gamepiece channel moving the gamepiece from the first goal to the first starting mechanism when the gamepiece enters the first goal, the first starting mechanism moving the gamepiece to the playing surface along a starting chute upon actuation by the first player, the starting chute having an outlet proximate the midfield boundary.

**11.** A method of starting a game between first and second players on a game table having a playing surface, first and second endwalls, first and second sidewalls, a first goal in the first endwall, a midfield boundary extending between the first and second sidewalls and being located generally midway between the first and second endwalls, a gamepiece, a first starting mechanism mounted to the first sidewall, a gamepiece channel for moving the gamepiece from the first goal to the first starting mechanism, a first starter chute and a first outlet in communication with the first starting mechanism through the first starter chute, the method comprising the steps of:

- a) positioning the gamepiece on the playing surface, the second player directing the gamepiece toward the first goal and the first player attempting to block the gamepiece from entering the first goal;
- b) directing the gamepiece into the first goal;
- c) urging the gamepiece to the first starting mechanism under the force of gravity from the first goal along the gamepiece channel; and
- d) actuating the first starting mechanism such that the gamepiece is propelled onto the game table moving in a

direction generally parallel to the midfield boundary, the first player actuating the first starting mechanism.

**12.** The method of claim **11** wherein the first player operates a first defender rod having a first rod handle proximate the first sidewall during gameplay, the first player being provided with sufficient time to grasp the first rod handle during step (d) between actuating the first starting mechanism and the gamepiece contacting the playing surface.

**13.** The method of claim **11** wherein in step (d) the first player grasps and urges a handle of the first starting mechanism away from the first sidewall and releases the handle.

**14.** The method of claim **11** wherein in step (d) the gamepiece is driven along the gamepiece channel from a position proximate the first sidewall toward the second sidewall along a linear portion of the gamepiece channel, along an arcuate portion of the gamepiece and out of a first outlet in the second sidewall toward the first sidewall.

**15.** The method of claim **14** wherein the gamepiece is driven along the gamepiece channel through a spring force generated by a spring associated with the first starting mechanism.

**16.** The method of claim **11** wherein in step (c) the gamepiece channel includes a first goal ramp, a first goal pipe and a first starter pipe that are sloped toward the first starting mechanism and the gamepiece is a foosball, the foosball rolling along the first goal ramp, the first goal pipe and the first starter pipe under the force of gravity.

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