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(54) **BASKETBALL GAME**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

The present invention provides a method and visual cue located on the surface of a basketball court to assist a basketball player gauge his or her position relative to substantially the exact lateral position of the basket and, optionally, the backboard overhead.

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BASKETBALL GAME

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates to games, in particular, to basketball games. The present invention provides a method, a playing surface and visual cues, which provide improved play.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The game of basketball remains one of the most popular games played in the world at almost every level, from grammar school to the professional leagues. Perhaps one of the reasons the game captures the interest of both players and spectators is the constant jockeying, action and movement under and about the basketball goal, in which both defensive and offensive players seek to obtain a better position from which to either defend the "basket" or to make one, respectively.

[0003] One of the most important areas of the playing surface of a basketball court is "painted" area, extending from the baseline underneath the basket to the foul line located at the circular area, known as the "key," from which a player shoots free throws. The rules of basketball provide that an offensive player cannot remain in the painted area for more than three seconds without an attempt being made by the offensive team to make a basket.

[0004] In my view, the most spectacular moves that an offensive or defensive player can make are concentrated below the rim of the basket (and, obviously, above the rim of the basket in a college or professional basketball game). But especially in grammar and high school level games, players who are still learning or developing their skills often find that performing the most basic offensive moves, like executing a lay up, a "put back," or a "reverse" lay up, can be thwarted by finding oneself "too far" under the basket or being directly underneath the rim of the basket. From a defensive standpoint, it would also be useful for a defensive player to have some indication of substantially the exact lateral position of the basketball goal, which is located overhead, relative to the playing surface.

[0005] U.S. Pat. No. 5,882,271 describes painted circles on the floor of a court for the sole purpose of assisting a game official call offensive or defensive fouls, as prescribed by the rules of the collegiate or professional game. This patent makes no mention of assisting basketball players gauge their position under a basketball goal or for using predetermined marks on the basketball court for purposes other than assisting a referee.

[0006] Accordingly, the present invention seeks to provide information to assist both players on the court and spectators in the stands to judge the position of individual players on the court relative to the position of the basketball goal, including the backboard and the basket.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0007] Thus the present invention contemplates a method of assisting a basketball player gauge his or her position under a basketball goal, which basketball goal comprises a backboard and a basket, the basket in turn comprising a rim, the method comprising providing one or more marks on a playing surface of a basketball court underneath a basketball

goal, which provide a visual indication of substantially the exact lateral position of the basket overhead. The present invention also contemplates a method which further comprises providing one or more additional marks on the playing surface which provide a visual indication of substantially the exact lateral position of the backboard overhead. In a preferred embodiment of the invention, the one or more marks include a circular shape, a loop, a solid circle, a series of dots or dashes, crosshairs, or combinations thereof. In one embodiment of the invention, a loop is provided which comprises a hollow or solid ring having dimensions that substantially correspond to those of a vertical projection of a bottom surface of a rim of the basket.

[0008] The present invention also contemplates providing one or more marks including a rectangular shape. In a particular embodiment the rectangular shape comprises a hollow or solid bar having dimensions that substantially correspond to those of a vertical projection of a bottom surface of the backboard. In a related method of the invention, which can provide additional cash revenues for a host team, school or owner of a sports facility housing a basketball court, the one or more marks, e.g., the circular shape, includes a logo of a host team, a school, a conference, an affiliation, an association, a league, a corporate sponsor, or combinations thereof.

[0009] Another object of the invention is providing a playing surface of a basketball court which includes one or more marks underneath a basketball goal comprising a backboard and a basket to assist a basketball player gauge his or her position under the basketball goal, which one or more marks provide a visual indication of substantially the exact lateral position of the basket overhead. In a preferred embodiment of the invention, one or more additional marks are included on the playing surface which provide a visual indication of substantially the exact lateral position of the backboard overhead. As stated above, the one or more marks include but are not limited to a circular shape or a rectangular shape, including a circular line or a straight line.

[0010] Yet another object of the invention is providing a visual cue located on the surface of a basketball court comprising one or more marks placed underneath a basketball goal comprising a backboard and a basket, which one or more marks provide a visual indication of substantially the exact lateral position of the basket overhead. In a preferred embodiment of the present invention one or more additional marks are included to provide a visual indication of substantially the exact lateral position of the backboard overhead.

[0011] One of ordinary skill in the art would know a number of ways to provide the one or more marks of the present invention. Such ways may include, but are not limited to, affixing or painting the one or more marks on the playing surface. Alternatively, the one or more marks of the present invention can be projected on the playing surface. In still another embodiment, the one or more marks of the present invention can be integrated into the playing surface, itself, such as providing inlaid pieces or segments in the flooring material, which is typically wood.

[0012] Other objects of the invention will become apparent to those of ordinary skill after consideration of the present disclosure.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE
PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS OF THE
INVENTION

[0013] One of the greatest difficulties faced by a young player (usually of short stature) is determining his or her position on the basketball court relative to the basket overhead. Most frequently, the young player will dribble toward a basket on a fast break only to pick up his or her dribble too far from the basket or too far under the basket. If the player picks up the dribble too far from the basket, the player winds up attempting a jump shot instead of a lay up. If the player picks up the dribble too far under the basket, the player winds up attempting an awkward shot, frequently just skimming the surface of the backboard rather than bouncing a shot off of the backboard and into the basket. In either case, the player frequently misses the attempt. If on the other hand, the player is provided with some visual indication of substantially the exact position of the basketball goal, chances are that the player will pick up the dribble at an opportune position on the basketball court to attempt a shot. Whether the play involves a fast break sequence, a post up move, a pick and roll, an offensive rebound and a "put back" basket, set play, or just "making things happen" the individual player and his or her team mates stand to benefit from the presence of the visual cues of the present invention. But the present invention's benefits are not limited to assisting offensive players. Members of a team playing defense can better position themselves to protect the baseline or the immediate area around the basket with the visual cues of the present invention.

[0014] Accordingly, the one or more marks on the playing surface of a basketball court are positioned underneath a basketball goal, such that a player can gauge substantially the exact position of the basket overhead. If additional one or more marks are provided on the playing surface, the player would be able to also gauge substantially the exact position of the backboard. Hence, one could project vertically substantially the exact position of the rim of the basket onto the playing surface and mark that spot on the playing surface to provide a visual indication of substantially the exact lateral position of the basket overhead. By the term "substantially the exact position" is meant that the one or more marks of the invention be located on the playing surface such that a player need not have to make an approximation of, or guess as to, the lateral position of the basket or backboard overhead; that is, the player can reasonably rely on the location of the visual cues to inform the player that the basket or backboard is positioned substantially directly overhead. Thus, a variation of no more than about six inches, preferably a variation of less than about four inches, or more preferably a variation of less than about two inches or less between the location of the one or more marks on the playing surface and the true vertical projection of that portion of the basketball goal sought to be "marked" or "visually indicated" can be tolerated.

[0015] The mark may include a trace of the rim of the basket or a solid circle representing the interior space of the rim. The size of the trace or circle can be smaller or larger than the size of the rim itself, but preferably about the same size as the rim. The trace, circle, or whatever mark one chooses can be brightly colored or subdued, but preferably should stand out sufficiently from the rest of the playing surface of the painted area to provide maximum contrast.

The process of providing the one or more marks corresponding to the position of the backboard is similar to that of establishing the one or more marks for the basket. For example, a rectangular bar can be provided which corresponds to a vertical projection of a bottom surface of the backboard. Alternatively, a pair of marks can be established on the playing surface, which provides a visual indication of substantially the exact lateral positions of only the far ends of the backboard.

[0016] One of ordinary skill in the art can contemplate any number of types of marks of various shapes and configurations, which would suit the objectives of the present invention. For example, one might conceive of utilizing a series of dots, spots, dashes, lines, stars and the like (even light or lights) in various sizes, shapes, colors and shades of brightness. One can establish or apply the one or more marks on the surface of the basketball court by using paint, an adhesive strip, a circular sticker, or the like. One can also integrate the one or more marks into the material comprising the playing surface. For instance, the one or more marks can be incorporated into the design of the wood or composite laminate comprising the playing surface.

[0017] A further illustration of the invention is provided by the following working examples, which should not be construed to limit the invention in any way.

EXAMPLES

5.1. Use of a Circular Mark on the Playing Surface

[0018] A circular solid area is painted on the playing surface at a spot directly underneath the rim of the basket. The size of the circular solid area corresponds to substantially the same area inside the rim or the size may differ, optionally being larger to accommodate a logo, for example, or smaller but still apparent. The color is chosen to provide a contrast from the color of the "paint," the shaded area around the basketball goal in which an offensive player can commit a 3 second violation. Hence, if the shaded area is red, the circular solid mark might be painted green.

[0019] While the game is played, players maneuvering under the basket are provided with a visual indication of substantially the exact position of the basket overhead. Hence, an offensive player can pick up his or her dribble at a desired location under the basket without having to look up to check his or her relative position to the basket. By the same token, a defensive player might have a better indication of when an offensive player dribbling the ball might pick up his or her dribble to attempt a shot. Also, a defensive player might be in a better position using the visual cues provided by the invention to gauge when and where a lob pass might be thrown to set up a lay up or "alley oop" dunk.

5.2. Use of a Circular Mark with a Border

[0020] As in the previous example, a circular solid area is painted on the playing surface at a spot directly underneath the rim of the basket. The size of the circular solid area corresponds to about the area inside the rim or the size may differ, optionally being larger to accommodate a logo, for example, or smaller but still apparent. However, a border is provided to define and outline the circular solid area. The color of the border and that of the circular solid area are chosen to provide a contrast from the color of the "paint."

Hence, if the shaded area is red, the circular solid mark might be painted green and the border black. In a preferred embodiment, the dimensions of the border substantially reflect those of the rim of the basket.

[0021] While the game is played, spectators are provided with additional visual cues of the positions of the players maneuvering on the basketball court relative to the basket. Also, an offensive player who is able to snare an offensive rebound near the basket can become temporarily disoriented about his position relative to the basket overhead by the bumps and shoving that might be inflicted by defensive players, not to mention their mere presence, which can block his direct sight to the basket. If the offensive player elects to "put the ball on the floor" (i.e., to dribble), he may become even more disoriented about where he might advantageously pick up his or her dribble. If he or she looks up to find the basket, he or she could lose the ball to a defensive player. Using the visual cues provided by the present invention, a player can re-orient himself and his position relative to the substantially exact lateral position of the basket overhead without having to look up at the basket.

5.3. Use of a Circular Mark with a Border and Exhibiting a Logo

[0022] As in the previous example, a circular solid area is painted on the playing surface at a spot directly underneath the rim of the basket. The size of the circular solid area corresponds to about the area inside the rim or the size may differ, optionally being larger to accommodate on or more additional marks (in a trademark sense), for example, or smaller but still apparent. However, a border is provided to define and outline the circular solid area. Moreover, a logo is included and displayed inside the circular solid area. Any type of logo, name, or other commercial promotion can be incorporated into the circular area. The logo can be established in the form of a removable sticker, thus allowing the host team or sports facility the flexibility of changing logos with little or no advance notice.

[0023] Other embodiments of the invention should be evident to those of ordinary skill in the art. Hence, the descriptions provided herein serve simply to illustrate the present invention and its objectives and not to somehow limit the breadth of the invention. Any limitations of the invention are recited only by the accompanying claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A method of assisting a basketball player gauge his or her position under a basketball goal, which basketball goal comprises a backboard and a basket, the method comprising providing one or more marks on a playing surface of a basketball court underneath a basketball goal, which provide a visual indication of substantially the exact lateral position of the basket overhead.

2. The method of claim 1 which further comprises providing one or more additional marks on the playing surface which provide a visual indication of substantially the exact lateral position of the backboard overhead.

3. The method of claim 1 in which the one or more marks include a circular shape.

4. The method of claim 3 in which the circular shape comprises a loop.

5. The method of claim 3 in which the circular shape comprises a solid circle.

6. The method of claim 3 in which the circular shape comprises a series of dots or dashes.

7. The method of claim 3 in which the circular shape further comprises crosshairs.

8. The method of claim 4 in which the loop comprises a hollow or solid ring having dimensions that substantially correspond to those of a vertical projection of a bottom surface of a rim of the basket.

9. The method of claim 2 in which the one or more marks include a rectangular shape.

10. The method of claim 9 in which the rectangular shape comprises a hollow or solid bar having dimensions that substantially correspond to those of a vertical projection of a bottom surface of the backboard.

11. The method of claim 3 in which the circular shape includes a logo of a host team, a school, a conference, an affiliation, an association, a league, a corporate sponsor, or combinations thereof.

12. The method of claim 3 in which the circular shape is affixed or painted on the playing surface.

13. The method of claim 3 in which the circular shape is projected on the playing surface.

14. The method of claim 3 in which the circular shape is integrated into the playing surface.

15. A playing surface of a basketball court which includes one or more marks underneath a basketball goal comprising a backboard and a basket to assist a basketball player gauge his or her position under the basketball goal, which one or more marks provide a visual indication of substantially the exact lateral position of the backboard and basket overhead.

16. The playing surface of claim 15 in which the one or more marks include a circular shape.

17. The playing surface of claim 16 in which the circular shape includes a logo of a host team, a school, a conference, an affiliation, an association, a league, a corporate sponsor, or combinations thereof.

18. A visual cue located on the surface of a basketball court comprising one or more marks placed underneath a basketball goal comprising a backboard and a basket, which one or more marks provide a visual indication of substantially the exact lateral position of the backboard and basket overhead.

19. The visual cue of claim 18 in which the one or more marks include a circular shape.

20. The visual cue of claim 19 in which the circular shape includes a logo of a host team, a school, a conference, an affiliation, an association, a league, a corporate sponsor, or combinations thereof.

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