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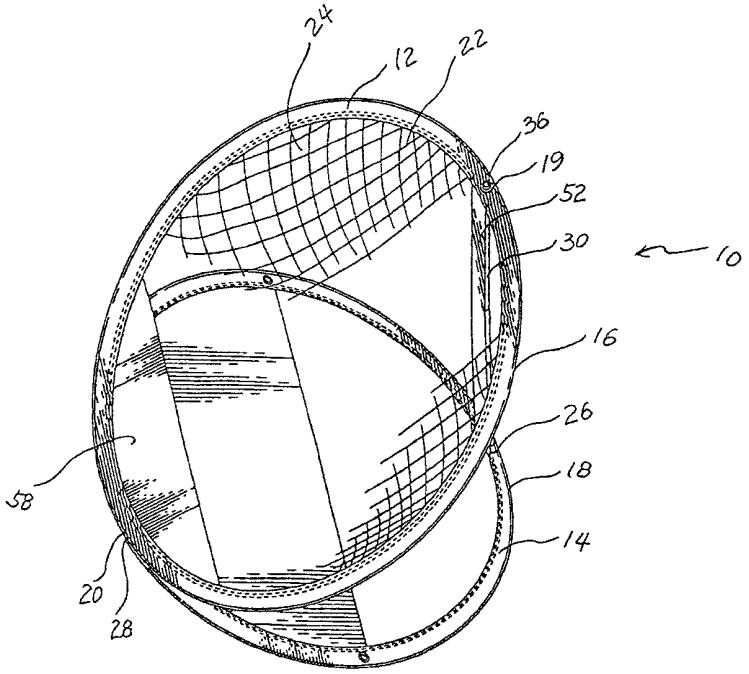
(54) Title: PORTABLE NET DEVICE



(57) Abstract: A portable net device (10) for stopping the flight of projectiles such as golf balls comprises a coilable main member (12) with a fabric portion (22) and a coilable base member (14) respectively formed in closed loops.

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PORTABLE NET DEVICE

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

This present invention relates to a net device. More specifically, this present invention relates to an improved portable net device which enhances portability and efficiently stops the flight of golf balls.

Various sports such as golf involve hitting or throwing projectiles such as golf balls toward a desired direction in a field. For practice purposes, it is desirable to capture the ball before it travels a large distance or strikes objects or people. Existing capturing structures include a net attached to the perimeter of a capturing frame and a rigid support frame attached to the capturing frame. The support frame is attached to the capturing frame and provides a base allowing the capturing structure to be disposed on the ground.

A disadvantage of such structure is that they cannot be easily folded and efficiently stored. This is because both the support frame and the capturing frame must be properly folded and placed in a container. Further use of a capturing frame and a supporting frame makes such

structures more expensive to manufacture and harder to carry due to increased weight.

There is, therefore, a need for a golf net device which can be easily folded and efficiently stored in a container. There is also a need for such a golf net to be easy to assemble and easy to carry. Preferably, such a golf net device should be easy to manufacture by using fewer parts, light in weight and less expensive.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is contrived to overcome the conventional disadvantages. Accordingly, it is an object of the present invention to provide a portable net device which facilitates assembly and disassembly by simplifying the construction.

Another object of the present invention is to provide a portable net device which enhances portability by adopting a pair of coilable members.

To achieve the above-described objects and other objects, the portable net device according to the present invention efficiently stops the flight of projectiles such as golf balls. The portable net device comprises a coilable main member forming a first closed loop, and a main sleeve substantially covering the coilable main

member. In an embodiment, the main sleeve has a top hole and a main node cross-opposing the top hole.

The net device further comprises a fabric portion radially extending from the main sleeve for flexibly stopping the flight of projectiles such as golf balls. There is also provided a coilable base member forming a second closed loop. The coilable base member can be substantially covered by a base sleeve. Here, the base sleeve has a bottom hole and a base node cross-opposing the bottom hole, wherein the main node of the main sleeve and the base node of the base sleeve are fixedly but foldably attached to each other. There is also provided a means for supporting the main member in a substantially erected but tilted position.

The support means can be formed by a support rod having an upper end and a lower end, wherein the upper end is detachably engaged in the top hole of the coilable main member and the lower end is detachably engaged in the bottom hole of the base member.

The upper end and the lower end of the support means can respectively have a protrusion extending from each tip thereof, wherein the protrusion is less in diameter than each of the upper and lower ends so as to stably support the main member and the base member.

In an improvement, the upper end and the lower end of the support means are respectively formed in a hook so as to be stably hooked into the corresponding top and bottom holes.

In an embodiment, the support means can comprise a first half, a second half, an elastic string, and a nut closure having a closed end and an open end, wherein the first half has a first inner end fixedly carried on the closed end of the nut closure and the second half has a second inner end detachably carried on the open end of the nut closure. The elastic string can be fixedly disposed through the first half and the second half of the support means so that the second half can be elastically disassembled from the first half of the support means.

The coilable main and base members can form overlapping loops by a slight manual enforcement thereon when the support means is detached from the respective coilable members for disassembly of the portable net device.

The portable net device can further comprise at least one strap having two ends, the one end attached to the main member about the top hole and the other end attached to the base member about the bottom hole, wherein the strap longitudinally covers the support means. The strap may be preferably formed of an elastic material.

Further, the portable net device may have an arc support substantially covering less than about one-third of the main sleeve so that the projectiles stopped in the fabric portion can be maintained behind the arc support. The arc support can be formed of a fabric material.

The advantages of the present invention are numerous. First, the portable net device according to the present invention substantially improves portability by simplifying its structure. Second, a pair of coilable members are foldably connected to each other, thereby further facilitating storage, assembly and disassembly of the net device. Third, an angle between the coilable members is easy to adjust using the support means, thereby enhancing usability.

Although the present invention is briefly summarized, the fuller understanding of the invention can be obtained by the following drawings, detailed description and appended claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

These and other features, aspects and advantages of the present invention will become better understood with reference to the accompanying drawings, wherein:

Fig. 1 is a perspective view illustrating a portable net device according to a first embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 2 is a front view of the portable net device in Fig. 1;

Fig. 3 is a side view of the portable net device in Fig. 1;

Fig. 4 is a rear view of the portable net device in Fig. 1;

Fig. 5 is a top view of the portable net device in Fig. 1;

Fig. 6 is a side view illustrating another version of the first embodiment; and

Fig. 7 is a perspective view illustrating the portable net device according to a second embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

With reference to the accompanying drawings, a portable net device **10** according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention will now be described.

The portable net device **10** serves to stop the flight of projectiles such as golf balls. As shown in Figs. 1 through 5, the portable net device **10** comprises a coilable

main member **12** and a coilable base member **14** each of which forms a closed loop.

The coilable main member **12** is substantially covered by a main sleeve **16** and also the coilable base member **14** is substantially covered by a base sleeve **18**. The respective coilable members **12, 14** may be formed of an elastic material so as to facilitate the assembly and the coiled overlapping for disassembly.

The main sleeve **16** is substantially worn on and along the coilable main member **12**. The main sleeve **16** has a top hole **19** and a main node **20** cross-opposing the top hole **19** so that a distance between the top hole **19** and the main node **20** can approximately make a diameter of the circular main member **12**. The base node **28** is disposed at a lowermost point of the circular main member **12**.

A fabric portion **22** radially extends from the main sleeve **16** for flexibly stopping the flight of projectiles (not shown) such as golf balls. The fabric portion **22** forms a net fabrication, wherein threads are interwoven or knotted together to form a plurality of meshes **24**. Here, each of the meshes **24** may be formed smaller than a regular golf ball.

The base sleeve **18** surrounds and contains the coilable base member **14** and has a bottom hole **26** and a base node **28** cross-opposing the bottom hole **26**. The main

node **20** of the main sleeve **16** and the base node **28** of the base sleeve **18** are fixedly but foldably attached to each other. As a result, the circular main member **12** and the circular base member **14** hingedly overlap each other at the main and base nodes **20, 28**. The main node **20** and the base node **28** may be fixedly attached to each other by interweaving or sewing. Selectively, the main and base nodes **20, 28** can be connected by a hinge.

The main member **12** is supported by a means **30** for supporting the main member **12**. The main member **12** can be disposed at a substantial angle substantially less than ninety degrees. The support means **30** maintains the main member **12** at a substantially erect but tilted position. A preferable angle of tilt is about 30 to 35 degrees, but other angles of tilt can be used. The tilt allows the fabric portion **22** to be spaced apart from the main member **12** after installation to facilitate receipt and retention of projectiles. The net space **29** formed by this tilted construction of the main member **12** is best illustrated in Fig. 3. The support means **30** may be selected from a rod, a pipe, and other commonly known support means.

The support means **30** has an upper end **32** and a lower end **34** as shown in Fig. 3. The upper end **32** is detachably engaged in the top hole **19** of the coilable main member **12** and the lower end **34** is detachably engaged in the bottom

hole **26** of the base member **14**. The support means **30** may be adjustable to increase or decrease an angle between the main member **12** and the base member **14**.

The upper end **32** and the lower end **34** of the support means **30** respectively have a protrusion **36** extending from each tip thereof, wherein the protrusion **36** is less in diameter than each of the upper and lower ends **32**, **34** so as to stably support the main member **12** and the base member **14**.

For a better performance, the upper end **32** and the lower end **34** of the support means **30** are respectively formed in a hook so as to be stably hooked into the corresponding top and bottom holes **19**, **26**.

In further detail, the support means **30** comprises a first half **38**, a second half **40**, an elastic string (not shown), and a nut closure **42** having a closed end **44** and an open end **46**. The first half **38** has a first inner end **48** fixedly carried on the closed end **44** of the nut closure **42** and the second half **40** has a second inner end **50** detachably carried on the open end **46** of the nut closure **42**. The elastic string (not shown) is fixedly disposed through the first half **38** and the second half **40** of the support means **30** so that the second half **40** can be elastically disassembled from the first half **38** of the support means **30**.

According to the first embodiment, the coilable main member **12** and the coilable base member **14** form overlapping loops by a slight manual enforcement thereon. When the support means **30** is detached from the respective coilable members **12, 14** for disassembly of the portable net device **10**, the main member **12** rotates downward under the force of gravity and lies on top of the base member **14**.

The portable net device **10** according to the present invention further comprises at least one strap **52** having two ends **54, 56** as shown in Fig. 4. The one end **54** is attached to the main member **12** about the top hole **19** and the other end **56** is attached to the base member **14** about the bottom hole **26**.

Also, the strap **52** may longitudinally cover the support means **30**. The strap **52** may be preferably formed of an elastic material.

The portable net device **10** may further have an arc support **58** substantially covering less than about one-third of the main sleeve **16** so that the projectiles stopped in the fabric portion can be maintained behind the arc support **58**. Here, the arc support **58** may be formed of a fabric material such as synthetic cloth or natural cloth.

As further shown in Fig. 6, a preferred version of the present invention may have a unitary support means **30**

which serves to lower the main member **12**, wherein the first half **38** is formed unitary with the second half **40**.

Referring to Fig. 7, the portable net device **10** according to a second embodiment of the present invention may include more than one support means **30**.

As discussed above, an overall structure of the portable net device **10** comprises a pair of coilable members **12, 14** and a support means **30**. For installation of the net device **10**, the net device **10** is removed from its storage bag (not shown). The net device **10** then springs into two members **12, 14** collapsed together. Next, the main member **12** is simply raised and hooked up by the support means **30**.

For disassembly of the net device **10**, the hooked-up support means **30** can be simply removed from the coilable members **12**. Then, automatically or elastically the main member **12** becomes collapsed upon the base member **14**. The removed support means **30** can be easily folded by slightly pulling the second half **40** of the support means **30** while holding the first half **38**.

Also, for storage of the net device **10**, the pair of collapsed coilable members **12, 14** can be twisted and coiled into a plurality of overlapping loops. Accordingly, the pair of coiled members **12, 14** and the folded support

means **30** can be easily stored in the storage bag (not shown).

The advantages of the present invention are numerous. First, the portable net device according to the present invention substantially improves portability by simplifying its structure. Second, a pair of coilable members are foldably connected to each other, thereby further facilitating installation and disassembly of the net device. Third, an angle between the coilable members is easy to adjust using the support means, thereby enhancing usability.

Although the present invention has been described in considerable detail with reference to certain preferred versions thereof, other versions are possible by converting the aforementioned construction. Therefore, the scope of the invention shall not be limited by the specification specified above and the appended claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A portable net device for stopping the flight of projectiles such as golf balls comprising:

a) a coilable main member forming a first closed loop;

b) a fabric portion radially connected to the coilable main member for flexibly stopping the flight of projectiles such as golf balls;

c) a coilable base member forming a second closed loop, wherein the coilable base member is rotatably attached to the coilable main member; and

d) a means for supporting the main member so that the main member is disposed at a substantial angle, wherein the substantial angle is substantially less than ninety degrees.

2. The portable net device of claim 1, further comprising:

a) a main sleeve substantially covering the coilable main member; and

b) a base sleeve substantially covering the coilable base member.

3. The portable net device of claim 2, wherein the main sleeve has a top hole and a main node cross-opposing

the top hole, wherein the base sleeve has a bottom hole and a base node cross-opposing the bottom hole, wherein the main node of the main sleeve and the base node of the base sleeve are rotatably attached to each other, and wherein the top hole and the bottom hole detachably receive ends of the support means.

4. The portable net device of claim 3, wherein the support means is a support rod and the respective ends of the support means form an upper end removably engaged in the top hole and a lower end removably engaged in the bottom hole, wherein the upper end and the lower end of the support means respectively have a protrusion extending from each tip thereof, and wherein the protrusion is less in diameter than each of the upper and lower ends so as to stably support the main member and the base member.

5. The portable net device of claim 4, wherein the upper end and the lower end of the support means are respectively formed in a hook so as to be stably hooked into the corresponding top and bottom holes.

6. The portable net device of claim 1, wherein the support means comprises a first half, a second half,

an elastic string, and a nut closure having a closed end and an open end, wherein the first half has a first inner end fixedly carried on the closed end of the nut closure and the second half has a second inner end detachably carried on the open end of the nut closure, wherein the elastic string is fixedly disposed through the first half and the second half of the support means so that the second half can be elastically disassembled from the first half of the support means.

7. The portable net device of claim 1, wherein the coilable main member and the base member respectively form overlapping loops by a slight manual enforcement thereon when the support means is detached from the respective coilable members for disassembly of the portable net device.

8. The portable net device of claim 1, further comprising at least one strap having two ends, the one end attached to the main member near the top hole and the other end attached to the base member near the bottom hole.

9. The portable net device of claim 8, wherein the strap is formed of an elastic material.

10. The portable net device of claim 1, wherein the angle between the main member and the base member is about 35 degrees.

11. The portable net device of claim 1, further comprising an arc support substantially covering less than about one-third of the main sleeve so that the projectiles stopped in the fabric portion can be maintained behind the arc support.

12. The portable net device of claim 11, wherein the arc support is formed of a fabric material.

FIG. 1

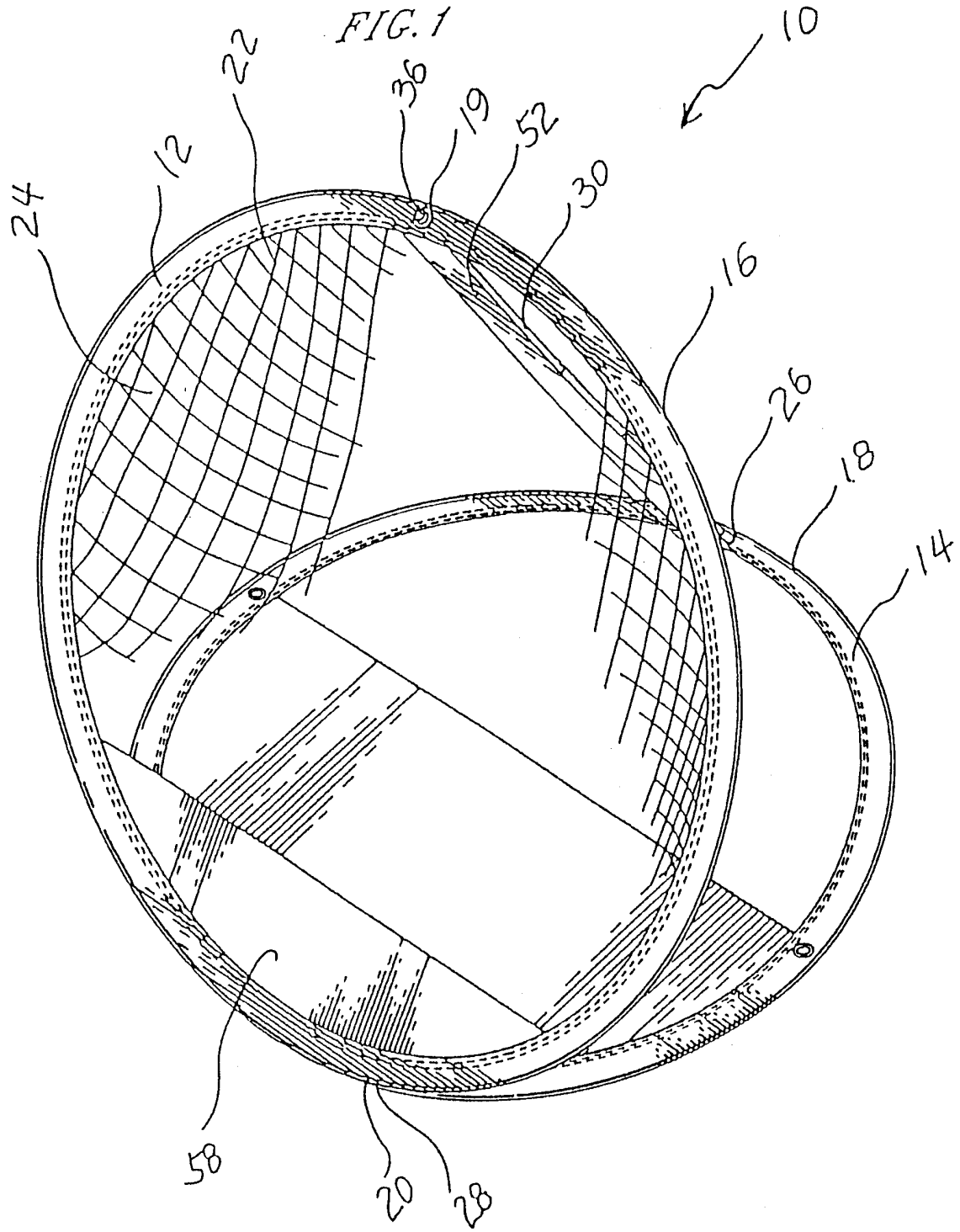


FIG. 2

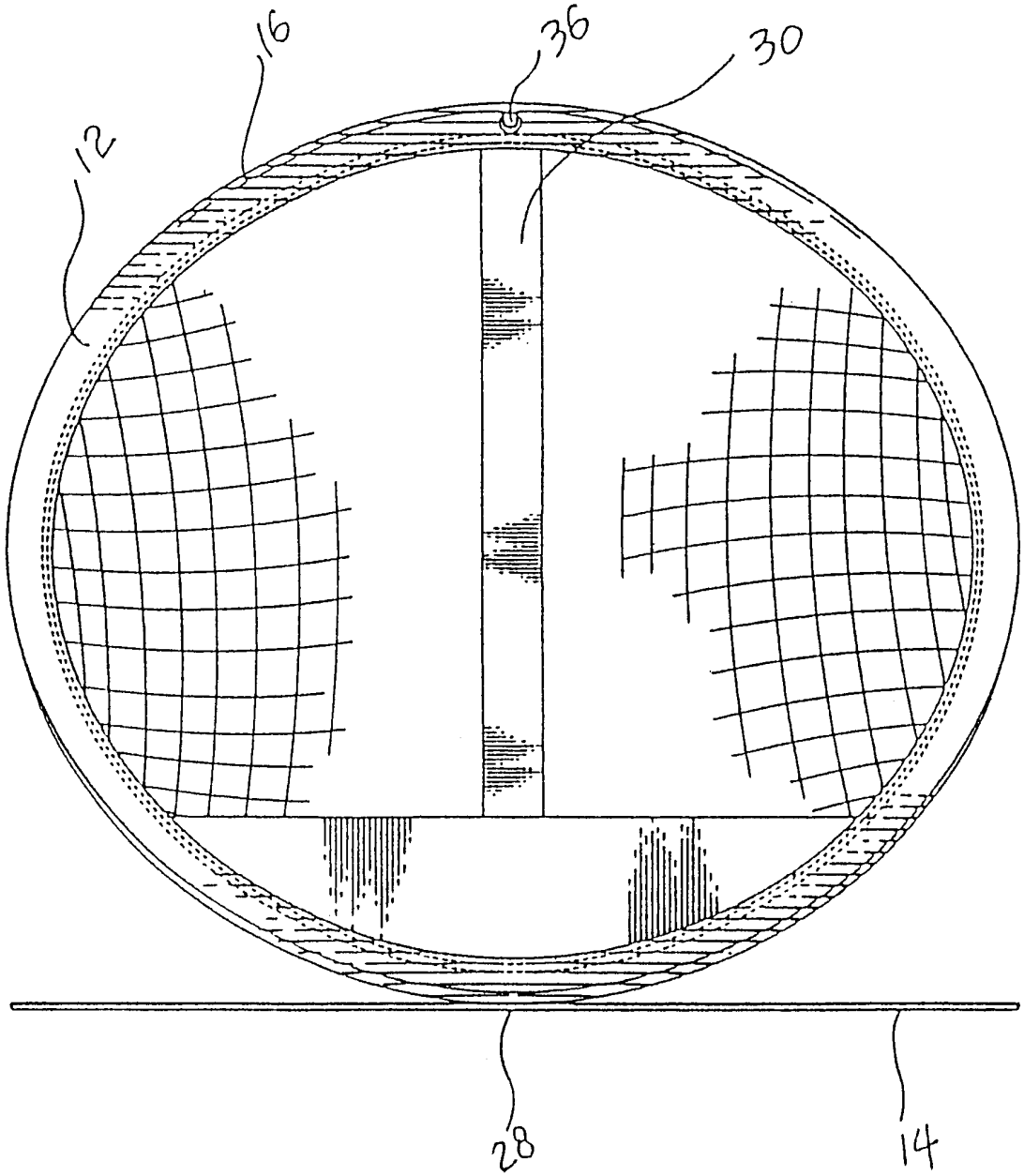


FIG. 3

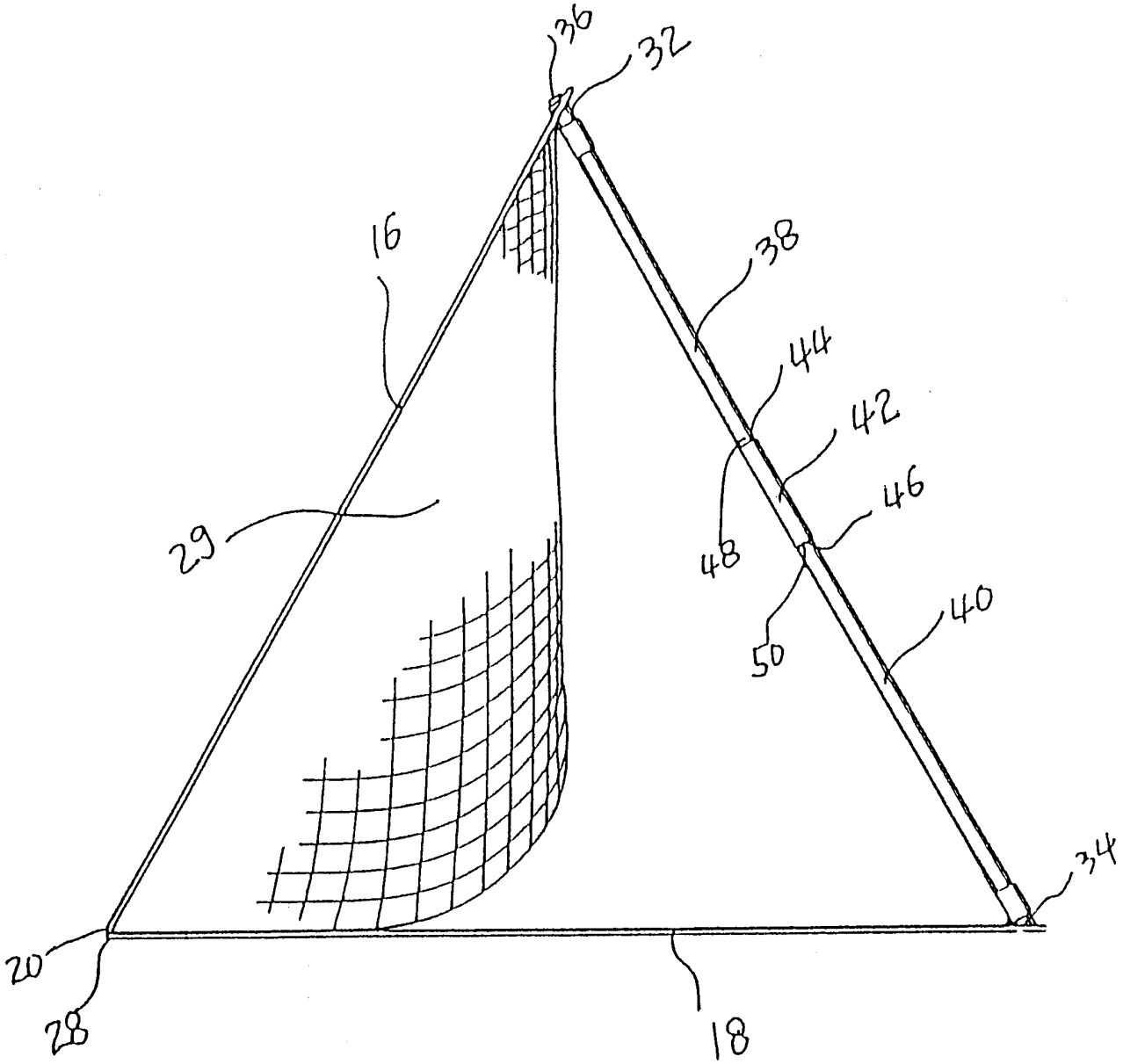


FIG. 4

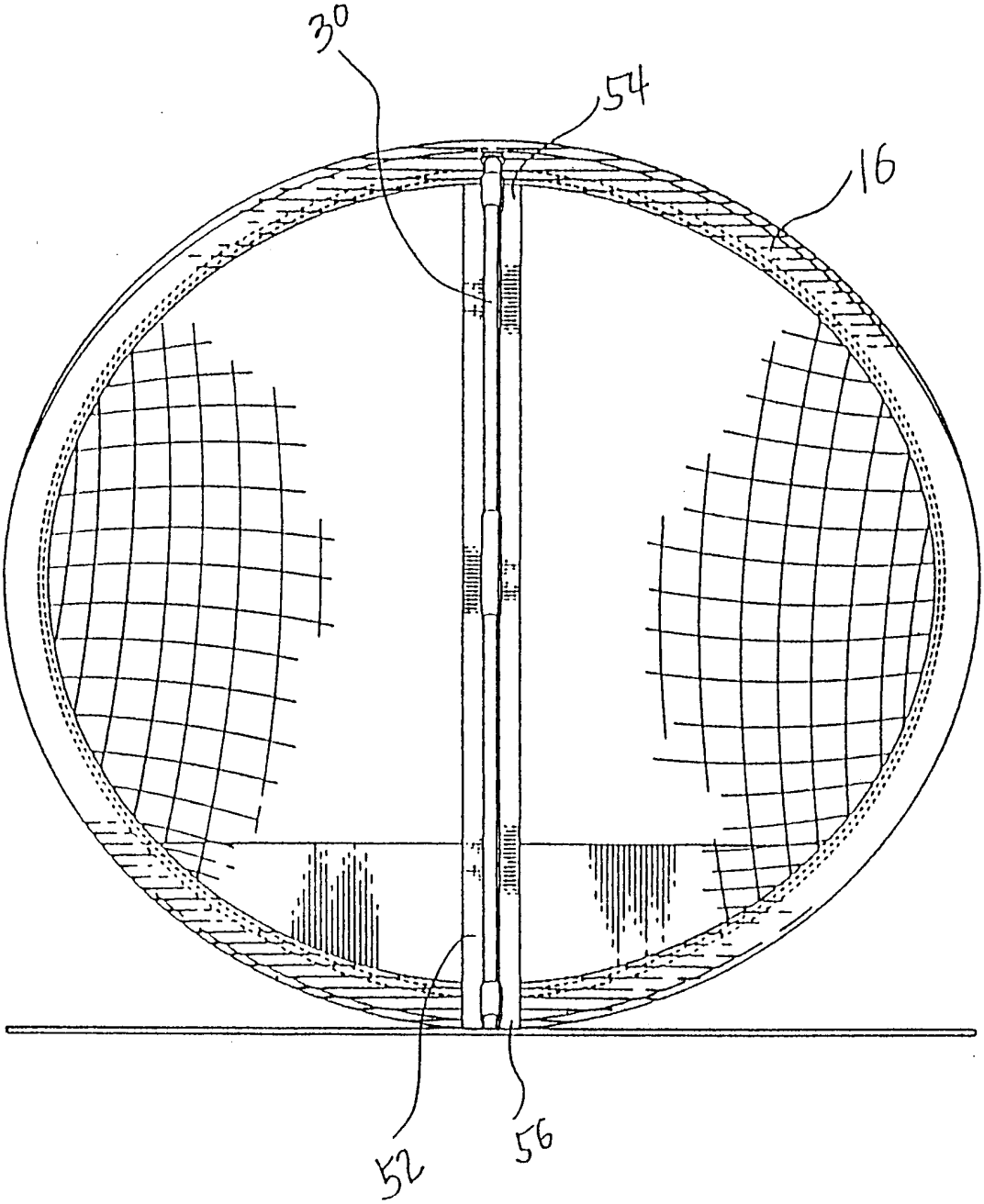


FIG. 5

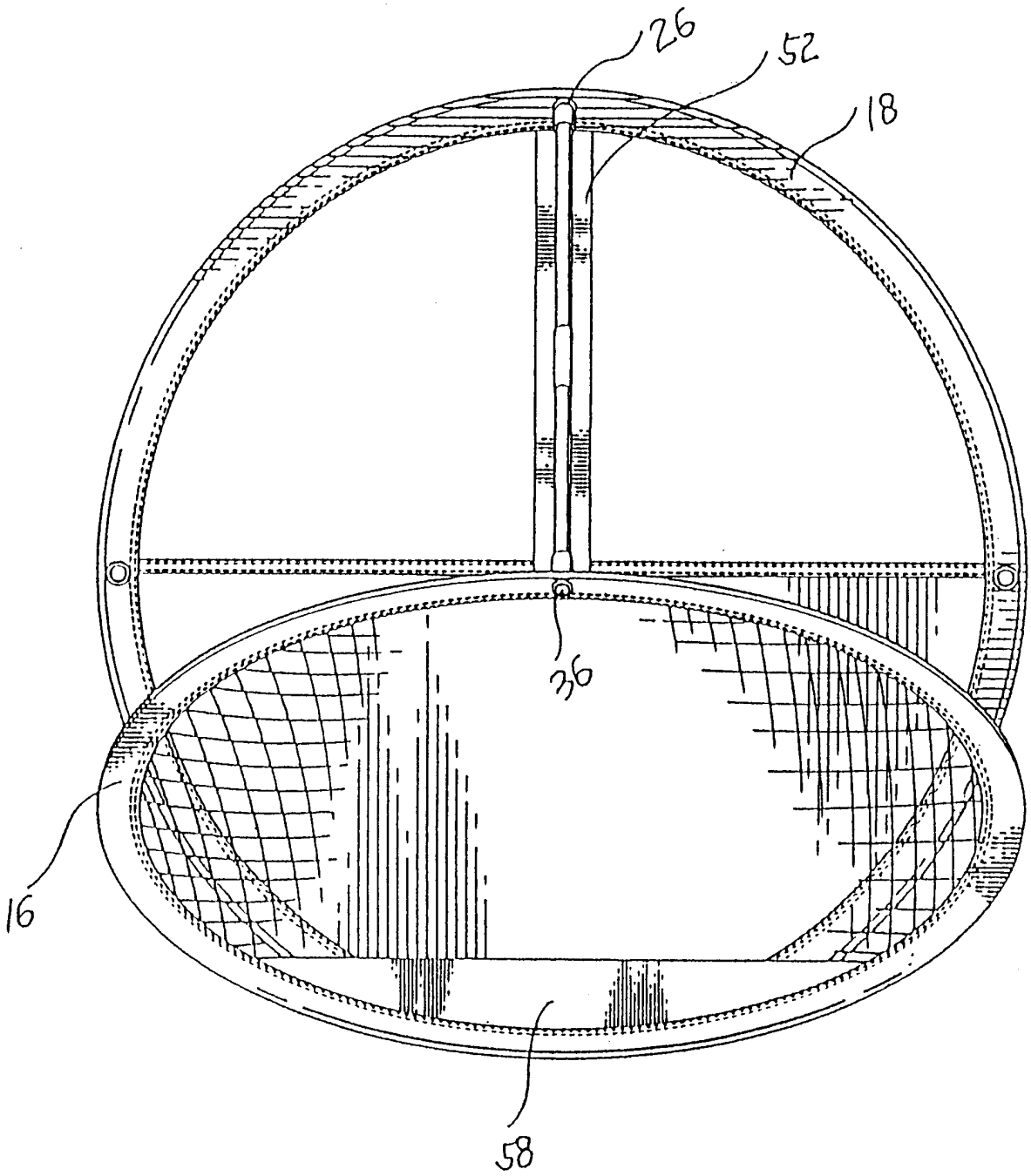


FIG. 6

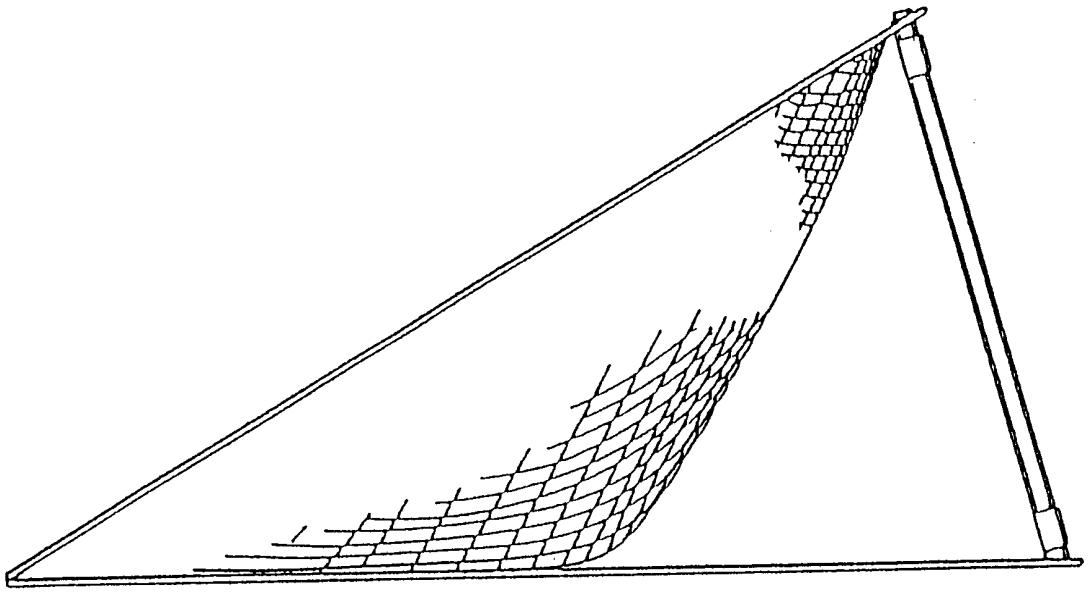
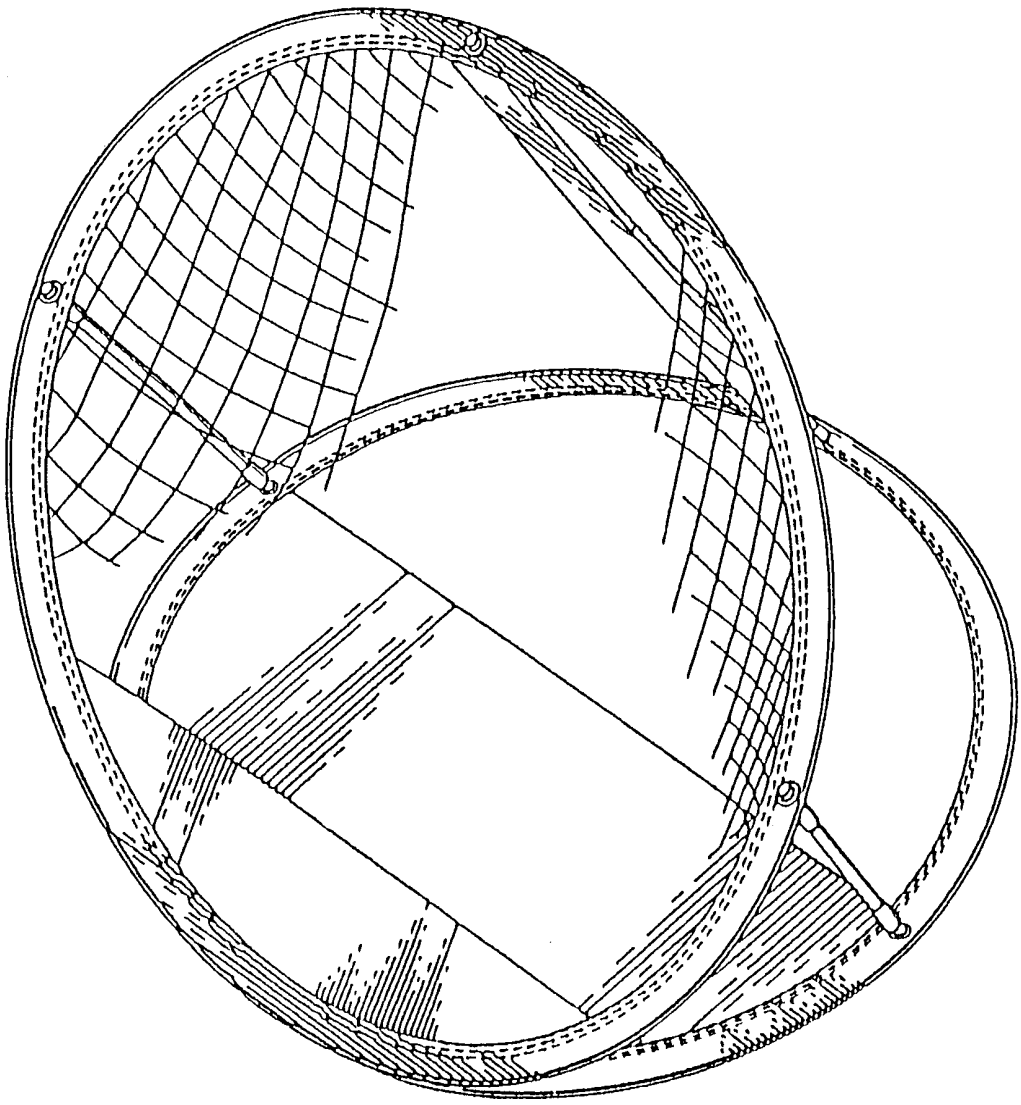


FIG. 7



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
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A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

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According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

U.S. : 473/197, 478; 273/398-401

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X --- Y	US 5,569,094 A *(MACALUSO)* 29 October 1996, See whole document.	1, 2, 7, 8 --- 9, 10
A	US 5,842,940 A *(MACALUSO)* 01 December 1998, See whole document.	1-12
A	US 3,918,711 A *(ZAK)* 11 November 1975, See whole document.	1-12

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