

# The Patented History of Foosball

by Kathy Brainard, Associate Director

Who invented the first foosball table? Most foosball historians agree that the first tables probably appeared in France and/or Germany in the 1880-1890s. While several have claimed the honor, no one has yet been able to produce irrefutable evidence of the exact time and place of the birth of our sport.

However, a search of patents in Europe and the US can give us some interesting, documented facts about the evolution of the game of table soccer. The majority of the information that follows was provided by John O'Reilly of Ireland and researcher Tim Baber of England. (Tim used the British National Library system to find these fun foosball facts for us. Many thanks to both of them!)

As you can scan the list of patents on page 12, note that the existence of a United Kingdom (UK) patent does not necessarily mean that the patented item is of British origin. For instance, the 1933 UK patent no. 394582 refers to a table invented in Switzerland. It simply means that the item was also patented in the UK.

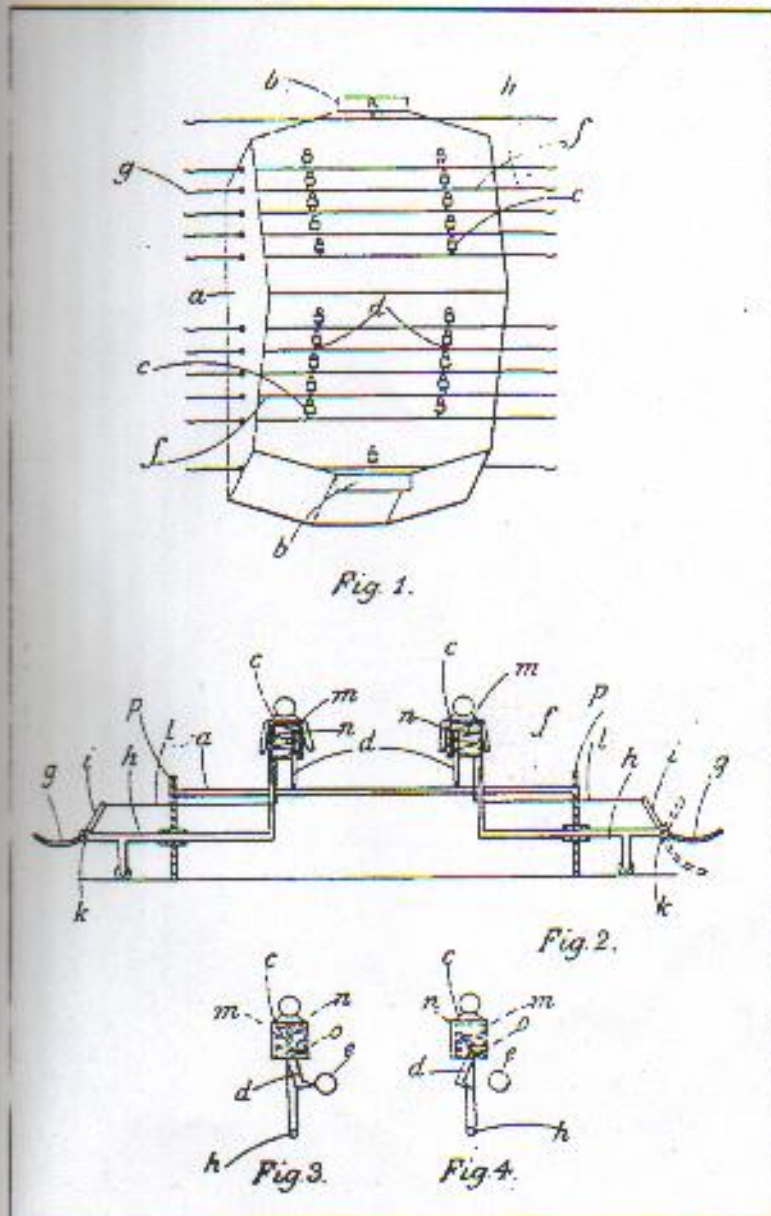
A search of the US Patent Office online produced 25 patents from 1977 to 1998. Earlier patents were not listed. Of these 25, 15 were

American patents, with 9 of those belonging to Ed McCloud for the Tornado table (1983-1997), one to Lee Peppard (1978) for the Tournament Soccer table and two to Bob Furr and Bob Hayes for the Tornado table (1977). (Note: dates may vary by one to two years, depending on whether or not you go by the date of the application or by the date the patent was granted.)

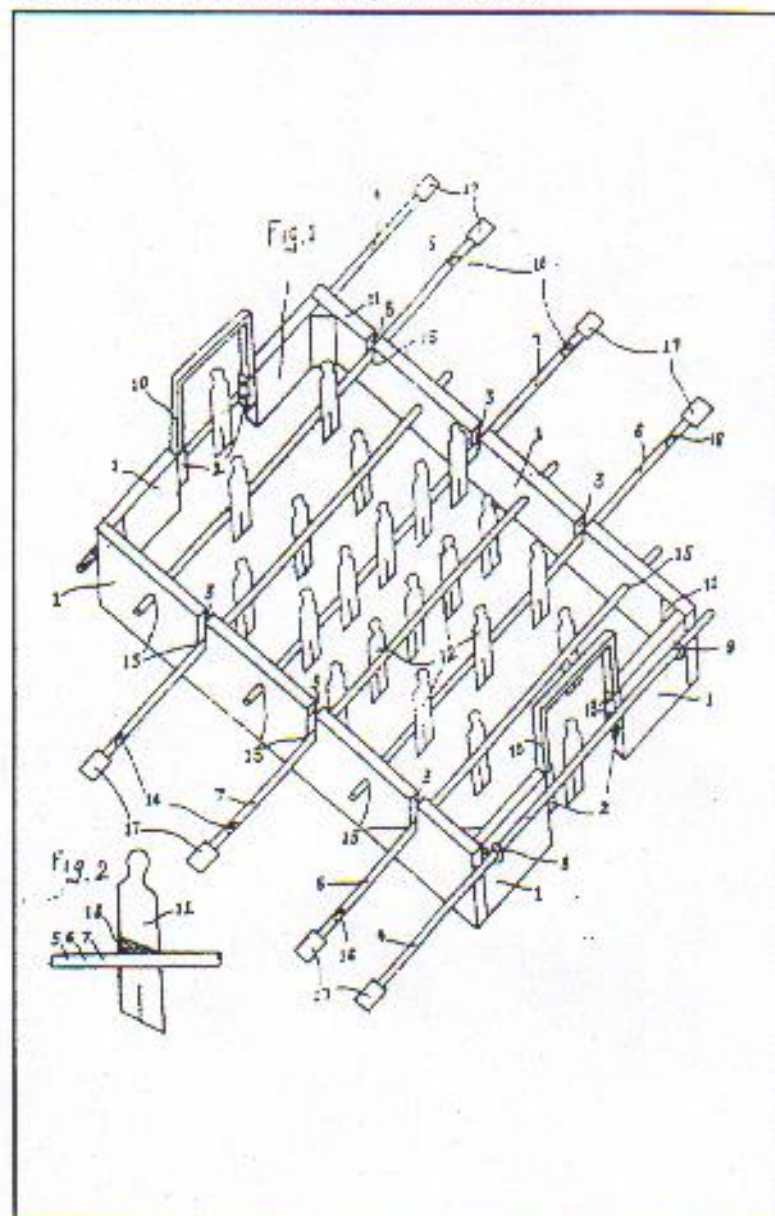
An online search of the European Patent site produced 136 table soccer patents spanning the last thirty years from thirteen countries, but again none of them were from the early days of our sport.

A patent is a right of ownership, usually of an invention, although there are also patents of addition for improvement on previous inventions. Patents are issued by the government and are granted for a limited time period. In the US, the term is 17 years. After that time period, anyone else may manufacture and sell the product. Each year in the US, there are more than 100,000 patent applications submitted and more than 50,000 patents granted.

The first known patent was granted in Florence, Italy in 1421. The first known patent in North America was granted in 1641. In 1884, several nations joined together to sign an international agreement to assure worldwide protection for patent holders.

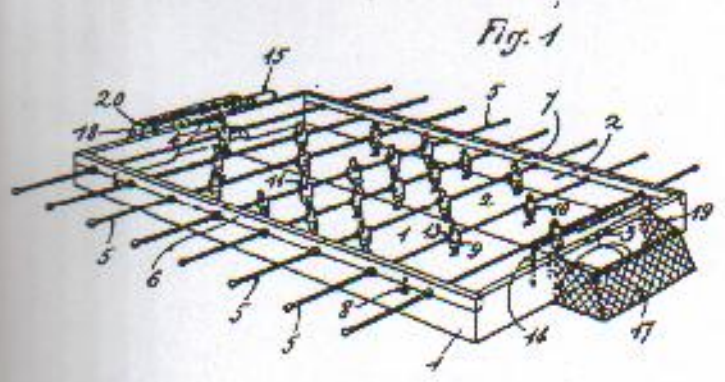


United Kingdom 1908.



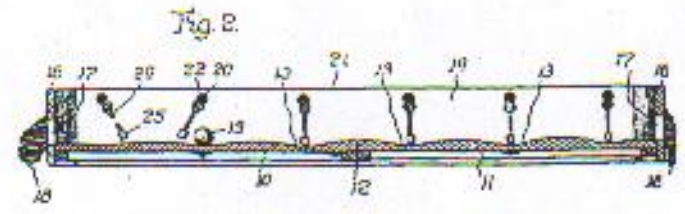
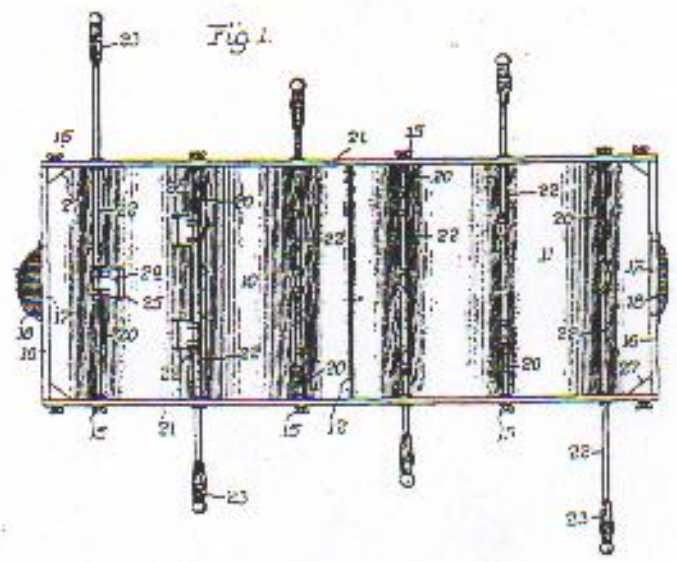
United Kingdom 1931.

Patented History



Switzerland 1933.

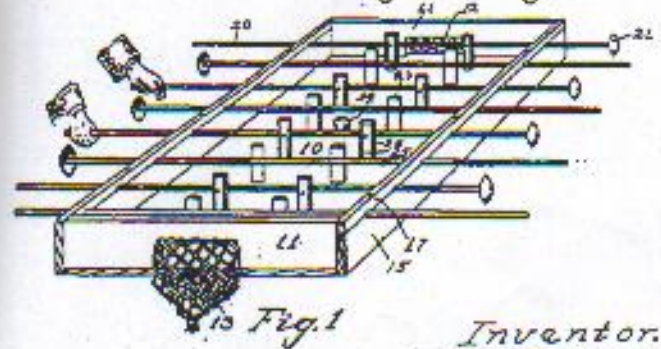
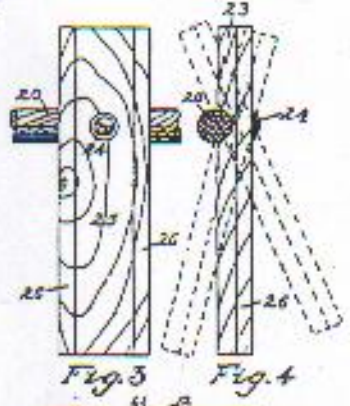
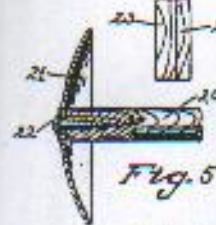
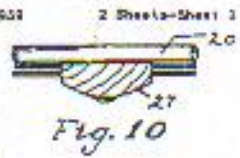
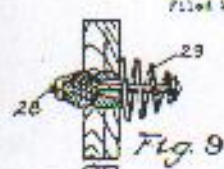
Nov. 7, 1933. T. N. SLOSSON  
 GAME  
 Filed May 17, 1933 1,934,381



Inventor:  
*Thos. N. Slosson*  
 By *Walter M. Kelly*

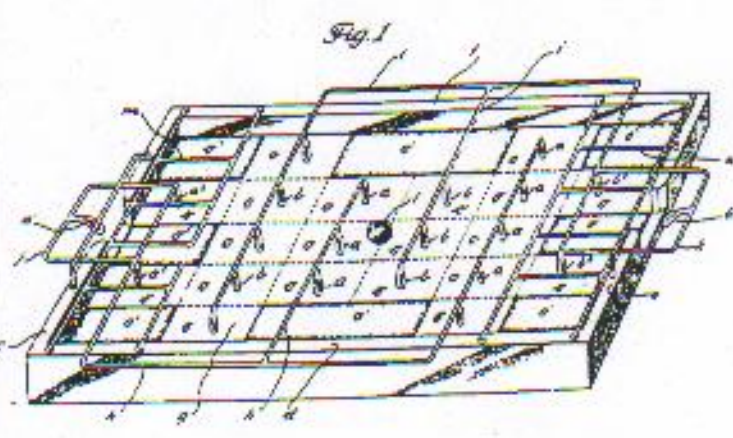
United States 1933.

Sept. 24, 1940. C. C. CARTER 2,215,687  
 GAME APPARATUS  
 Filed May 17, 1933 2 Sheets-Sheet 1



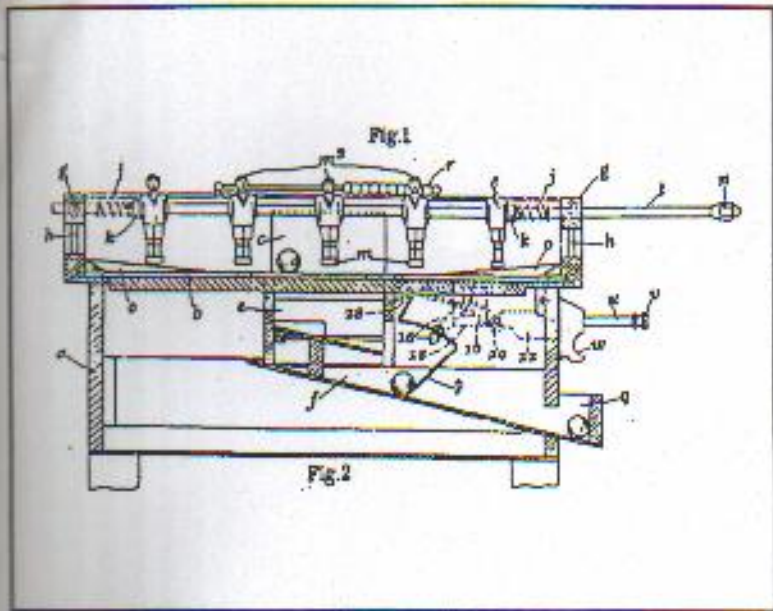
Inventor:  
*Charles C. Carter*  
 By *Orwig & Hague, Attys*

United States 1940.

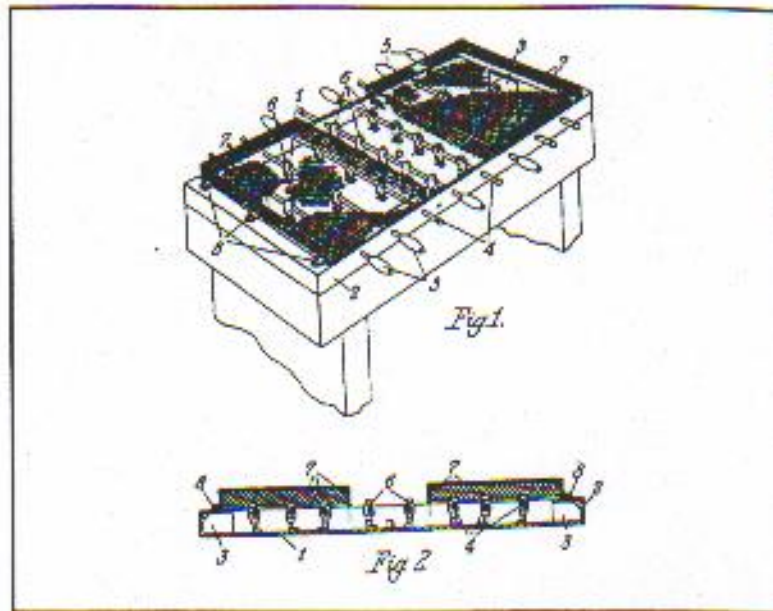


Swedish "Coathanger" 1936.

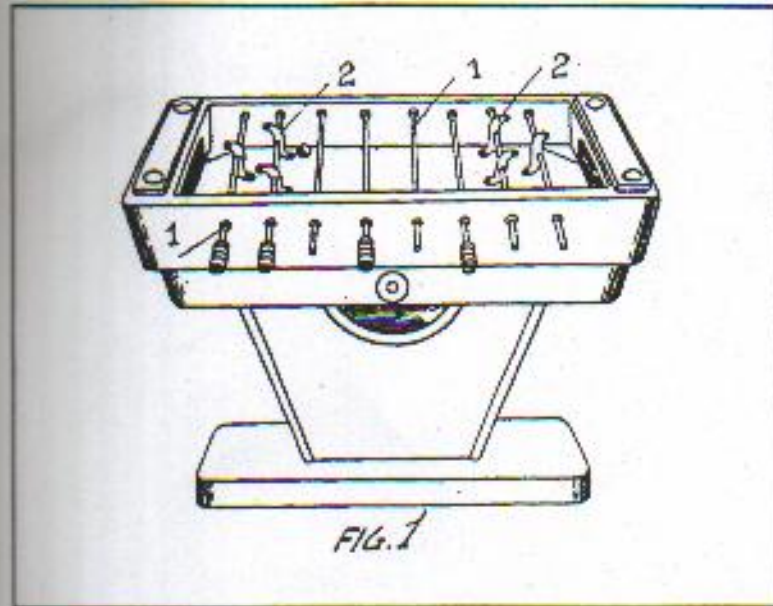
Patented History



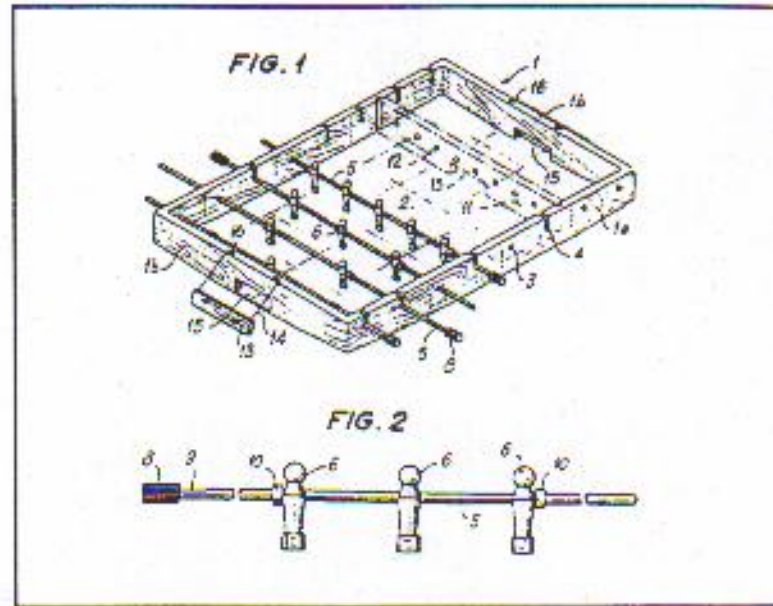
United Kingdom 1940.



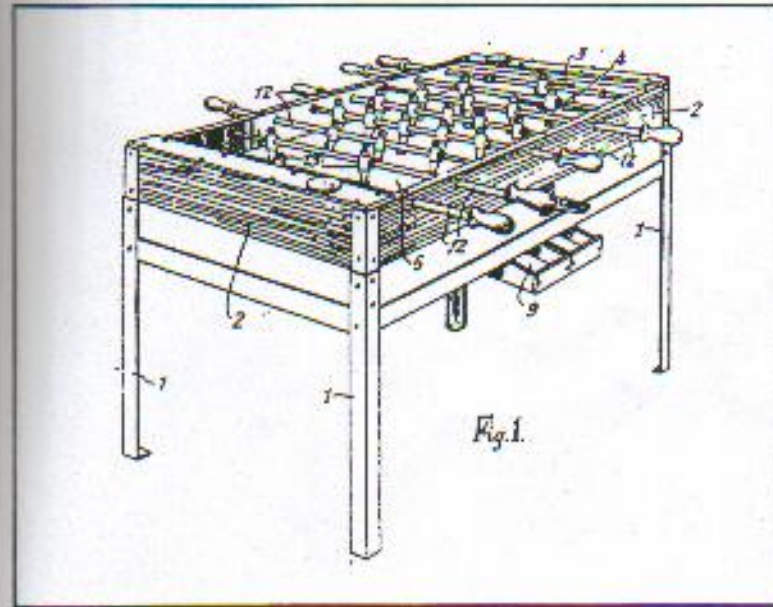
United Kingdom 1953.



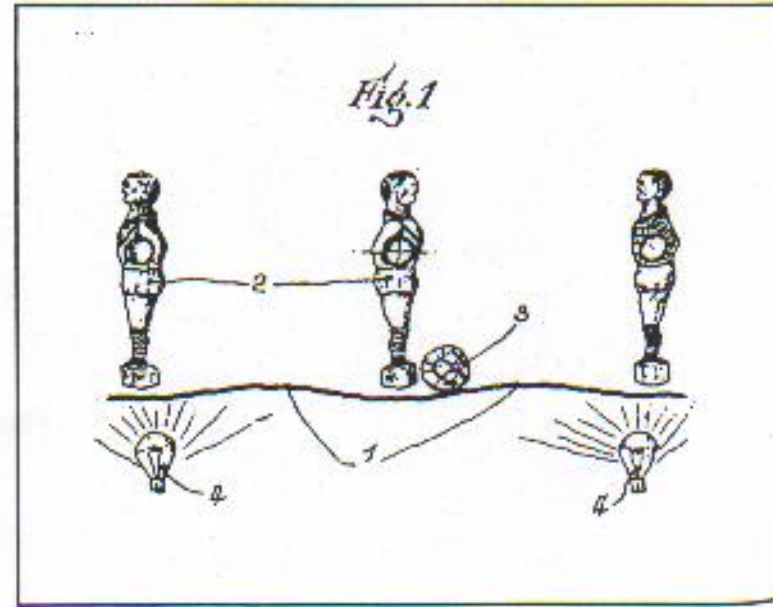
Italy 1954.



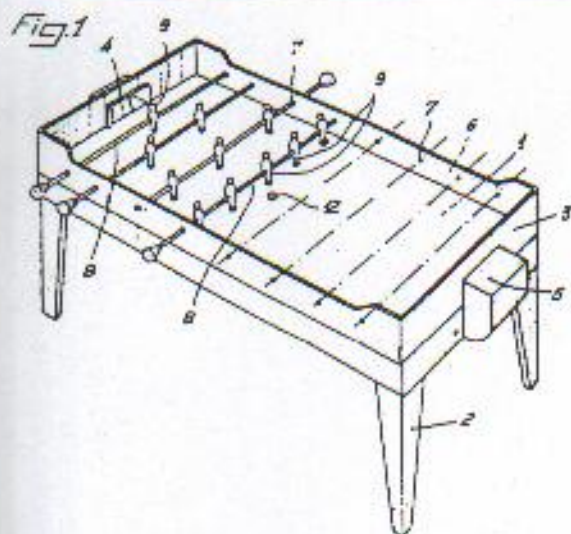
Switzerland 1954.



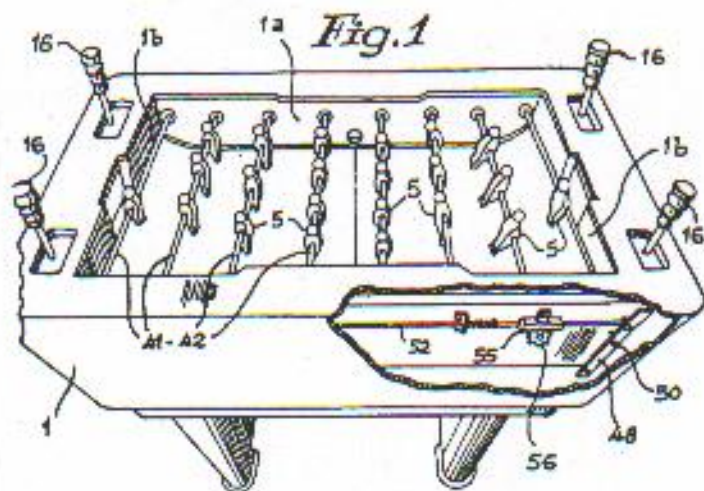
United Kingdom 1961.



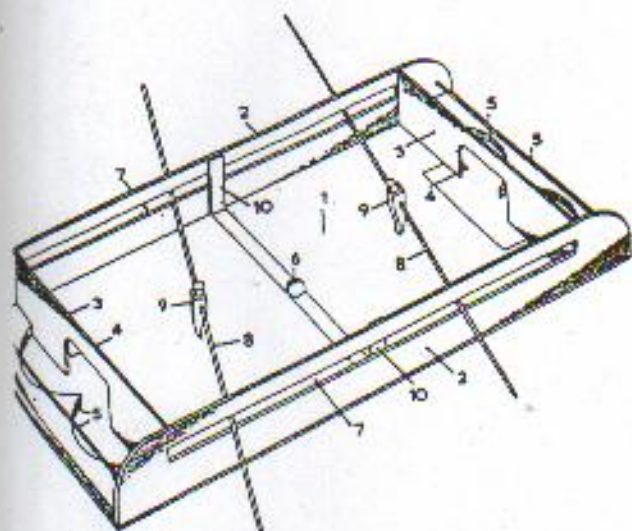
France 1961.



France 1964.

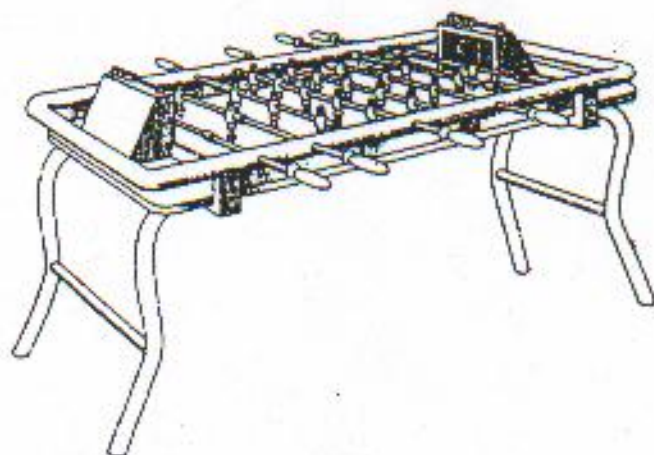


Italy 1965.



Netherlands 1967.

Fig. 1



France-United States 1968.

U.S. Patent Dec. 16, 1975 Sheet 1 of 2 3,926,432

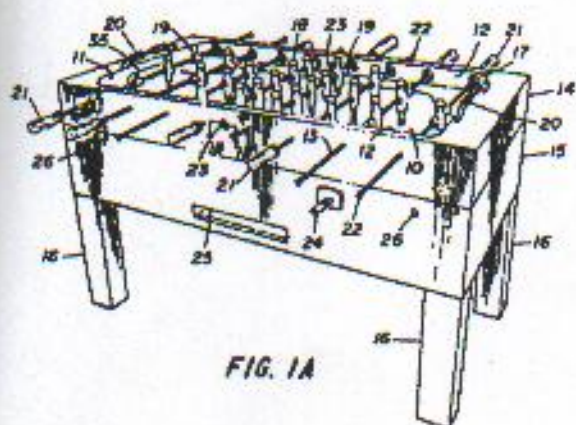


FIG. 1A

United States 1975 (Tornado).

U.S. Patent Dec. 16, 1975 Sheet 2 of 2 3,926,432

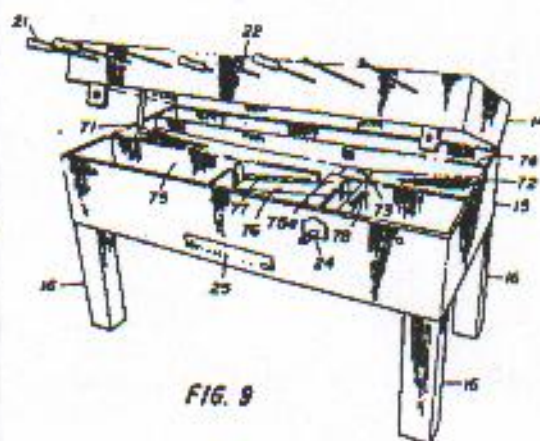
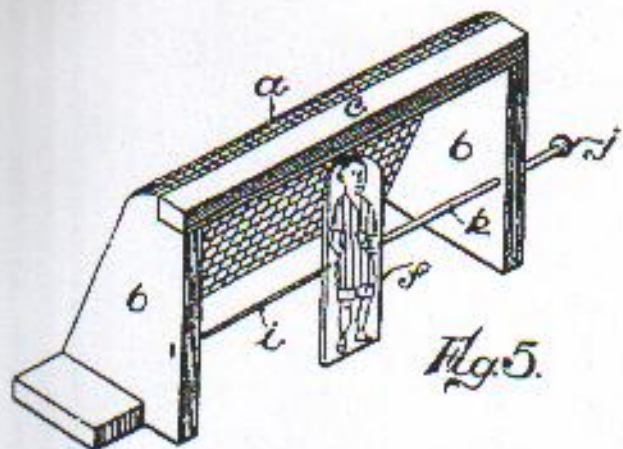


FIG. 9

United States 1975 (Tornado).

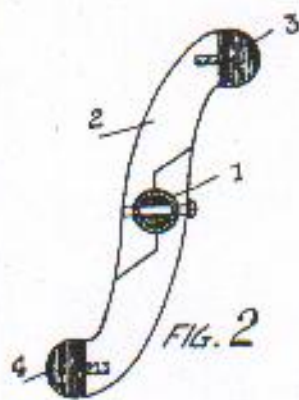
# EVOLUTION OF "FOOSMAN"



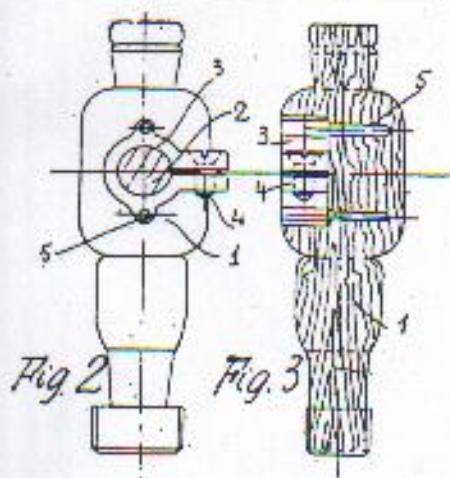
United Kingdom 1913.



Switzerland 1933.



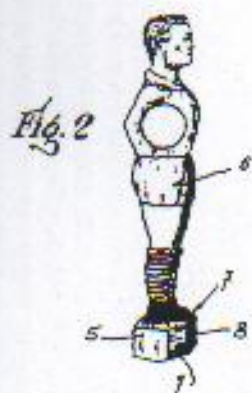
Italy 1954.



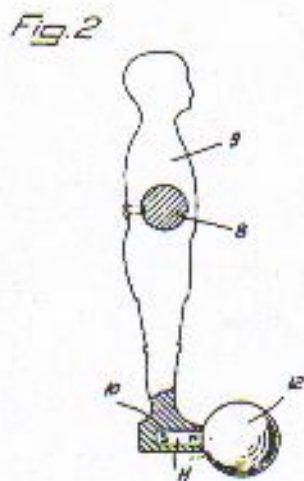
Italy 1954.



Italy 1955.



France 1961.



France 1964.



Germany-United States 1967.



# Patented History

## SUMMARY OF TABLE SOCCER PATENTS (1890-1998)

YEAR	NATION	NO.	DESCRIPTION	YEAR	NATION	NO.	DESCRIPTION
1890	UK	1753	cannon effect of big and smaller balls like billiards	1970	USA	D217372	mounted playing figure, Patterson International
1890	UK	1742	blow football (later modified with tubes, bellows)	1970	USA	3653661	penalty goal spaces
1890-1913	UK	various	counters, dice, vertical spin men, etc., etc.	1970	USA	3870303	penalty goal table
1908	UK	24698	men on rods under table top	1971	USA	3724851	Cechetti removable bearing
1909	UK	5858	moving foot using lever	1971	UK	1274427	removable bearings
1910	UK	21367	another example of vertical spinning man	1972	UK	1288656	changeable colors for playing figure's shirt
1913	UK	27308	the goalie on horizontal shoulder rod	1973	USA	D229324	Canadian-designed "Michelin" fig
1917	UK	110526	man on wire underneath table	1974	UK	1344808	electromagnetic ball return and scorer
1919	UK	150058	man on long handle with kicking foot	1975	USA	3920244	figure designed by Robert Kaiser of Mirco Games, Inc. of Phoenix
1921	UK	189286	men on long lengthwise wires	1975	USA	3926432	bumpy surface and balanced men, designed by Bob Furr and Bob Hayes of Dallas (Tornado Table)
1923	UK	205991	the first modern table?	1975	USA	3976296	magnetic random "under table" effect
1925	UK	257722	modern table with telescoping rods	1975	USA	4025073	ball drop opening for biased roll by Furr
1931	UK	341564	modern table	1975	USA	4042239	rod and playing figure
1933	UK	394582	Swiss table	1976	USA	4046286	tamper-proof ball dispenser
1933	Switz.	160197	first Swiss patent for a soccer table	1977	USA	4046378	playing figure and surface design by Furr & Hayes
1933	USA	1934381	first U.S. soccer table patent, filed in Chicago by Theron Slosson	1977	USA	4065128	longitudinally moving electric man
1936	UK	4421219	Swedish "coathanger design" table	1977	USA	4146224	Swiss table soccer game
1939	USA	2215687	U.S. soccer table design, filed in Iowa by Charles Carter	1978	USA	4076244	rounded toe on playing figure, designed by Lee Peppard (Tournament Soccer table)
1939	UK	523882	"Lilliput" brand coin-operated table	1978	USA	4078797	graphite rods by Mark Bergee of Minnesota
1941	USA	2282846	US soccer table design	1978	USA	4127269	shock absorbers
1941	Belgium	505910	playing surface	1978	USA	4138110	playing figure design
1951	France	991038	playing surface	1978	USA	4170353	German table soccer game with actuating rods designed by Leonhart
1951	France	991037	playing figure	1978	UK	1497660	removable bearing
1952	France	1012694	bearing design	1980	UK	2049444	Rennler's electronic solenoids
1953	France	1034971	"bendy" feet design	1982	USA	4382598	bearing housing design by Ed McCloud of Fort Worth (Tornado table)
1953	UK	689305	Norwegian "coathanger design"	1984	USA	D276631	playing figure designed by McCloud
1953	UK	699496	table design by John Slater of Wales	1991	USA	5058892	table soccer ball by McCloud
1954	UK	719038	coin-operated table with telescoping rods	1991	USA	5071137	table soccer bumper structure by McCloud
1954	Italy	503033	Italian playing figure	1992	USA	5112047	French table soccer game by Monneret
1954	Italy	499723	Italian table design	1992	USA	5137276	playing figure for French table by Monneret
1954	Switz.	302183	Swiss table design	1994	USA	D346184	table soccer game by Ples
1954	Italy	504648	the "banana slug" playing figure	1994	USA	5333864	playing figure by McCloud
1954	USA	2769638	sloping table	1994	USA	D352071	French table soccer game by Monneret
1954	UK	739976	cork ball with weighted core	1995	USA	5377981	playing figure support rod and assembly by Monneret
1955	Italy	532808	man with scooping fin feet	1995	USA	5419555	playing figure by McCloud
1956	Switz.	322881	playing surface	1995	USA	5482272	ball cup by McCloud
1961	UK	870129	score counting table	1996	USA	5496031	method of manufacturing ball by McCloud
1961	UK	870130	telescoping rods	1996	USA	D376390	French table soccer game
1961	France	75147	undertable illumination	1996	USA	5582408	Swiss playing figure by Hofman
1964	France	1355361	transparent top cover	1997	USA	5641163	playing figure by McCloud
1964	France	1359795	magnetic man	1997	USA	5673912	soccer-type game called Bonk
1964	Canada	684876	a goal mouth "rubbish clearer" invented by Xavier Leonhart of Germany	1998	USA	5732951	Swiss playing figure
1965	Italy	686961	vertical control handles	1998	USA	D414526	ramp for table soccer game by K.
1965	Switz.	390764	man fitted on rod with screw				
1966	USA	3400930	table with external ball chute				
1967	USA	D208480	German-designed playing figure assigned to Patterson International Corp. of Cincinnati				
1967	Neth.	6515128	"free range" rods design				
1968	USA	3574350	renewal of previous table design				
1968	UK	1134464	"Lilliput" coin mechanism				
1968	USA	D211259	French table design assigned to Patterson International				
1969	USA	3627322	helmeted playing figure				