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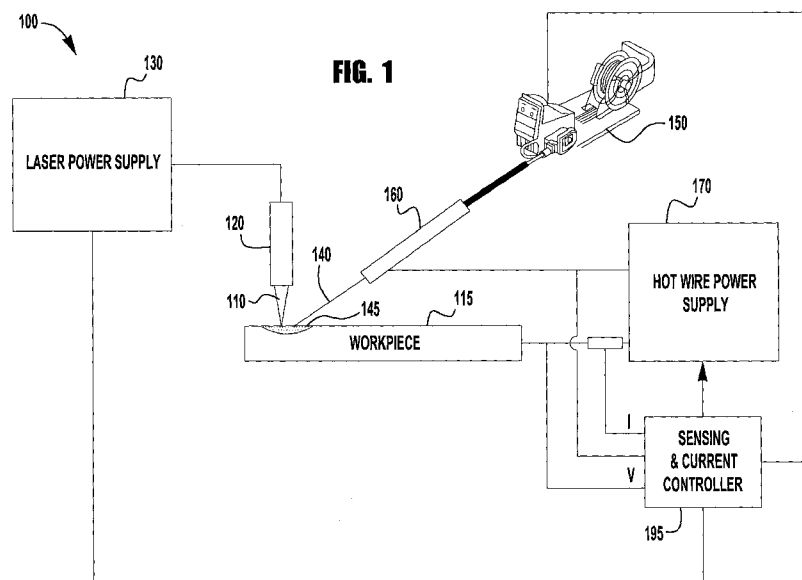
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(54) Title: HOT-WIRE CONSUMABLE TO PROVIDE SELF-LUBRICATING WELD OR CLAD



(57) Abstract: A filler wire (140, 140A, 140C) (consumable) for depositing self-lubricating materials in a system (100, 1400) for any of brazing, cladding, building up, filling, hard-facing overlaying, welding, and joining applications. The filler wire (140, 140A, 140C) is composed of a base filler material (141) consistent with commonly known compositions. For example, the base filler material (141) can comprise standard materials used in many standard mild steel wires (140, 140A, 140C). In addition to the base filler materials (141), the consumable (140, 140A, 140C) includes self-lubricating materials. The self-lubricating materials include at least one of graphite particles (142) and graphite powder (143), and can include other self-lubricating materials.



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HOT-WIRE CONSUMABLE TO PROVIDE SELF-LUBRICATING WELD OR CLAD

[001] The present application claims priority to U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 61/673,562, which is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[002] The invention is related to a filler wire (consumable) used in any of brazing, cladding, building up, filling, hard-facing overlaying, welding, and joining applications according to claim 1. More particularly, certain embodiments relate to a system and method that uses a filler wire to deposit self-lubricating material in a system for any of brazing, cladding, building up, filling, hard-facing overlaying, joining, and welding applications.

TECHNICAL BACKGROUND

[003] In traditional arc welding or surfacing (cladding, etc.) operations a filler wire may be used to deposit material into the joint using a high temperature arc. Heat from the arc melts the filler wire and the melted filler wire droplets are added to the weld puddle. However, because of the presence of the arc the composition of the filler wire can be limited as certain materials and compositions do not transfer easily, or at all, with the use of an arc. This can be due to a number of reasons, including the high temperature of the arc or due to the arc/plasma dynamics present in the arc. However, it is very desirable to have some of these components deposited into a surfacing operation or weld joint and as such there is a need to be able to use filler wires with various compositions and components therein.

[004] Further limitations and disadvantages of conventional, traditional, and proposed approaches will become apparent to one of skill in the art, through comparison of such approaches with embodiments of the present invention as set forth in the remainder of the present application with reference to the drawings.

DESCRIPTION

[005] It is an object according to the invention to overcome these limitations and disadvantages. This problem is solved by a hot-wire consumable according to claim 1. Preferred embodiment of the invention are subject of the subclaims. Embodiments of the present invention comprise a system and method to use at least one filler wire (consumable) to deposit self-lubricating material in a system for any of brazing, cladding, building up, filling, hard-facing overlaying, welding, and joining applications. The filler wire is composed of a base filler material consistent with commonly known consumable compositions used in various brazing, cladding, building up, filling, hard-facing overlaying, welding, and joining applications. For example, the base filler material can comprise standard materials such as iron, carbon, silicon, nickel, chromium, copper, sulfur, etc., used in many standard mild steel solid wires such as, for example, ER70S-6. In addition to the base filler materials, the consumable of the present invention includes self-lubricating materials. The self-lubricating materials include at least one of graphite particles and graphite powder, or other materials that can decrease the surface friction of a weld joint or cladding layer as it wears, including but not limited to copper, tin or molybdenum disulfide.

[006] The system includes a high intensity energy source which heats at least one workpiece at least while using a laser or a hot-wire power supply to heat at least one filler wire (consumable) that is consistent with the present invention. The method includes applying energy from a high intensity energy source to at least one workpiece to heat the at least one workpiece at least while using a laser or a hot-wire power supply to heat at least one filler wire (consumable) that is consistent with the present invention. The high intensity energy source may include at least one of a laser device, a plasma arc welding (PAW) device, a gas tungsten arc welding (GTAW) device, a gas metal arc welding (GMAW) device, a flux cored arc welding (FCAW) device, and a submerged arc welding (SAW) device.

[007] These and other features of the claimed invention, as well as details of illustrated embodiments thereof, will be more fully understood from the following description and drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[008] The above and/or other aspects of the invention will be more apparent by describing in detail exemplary embodiments of the invention with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

[009] FIG. 1 illustrates a functional schematic block diagram of an exemplary embodiment of a combination filler wire feeder and energy source system for any of brazing, cladding, building up, filling, hard-facing overlaying, welding, and joining applications;

[0010] FIGS. 2A-B illustrate exemplary embodiments of filler wires that can be used in the system of Figure 1;

[0011] FIGS. 3A-B illustrate exemplary embodiments of filler wires that can be used in the system of Figure 1;

[0012] FIG. 4 illustrates an exemplary embodiment of a filler wire that can be used in the system of Figure 1;

[0013] FIG. 5A illustrates a cross-sectional view of an exemplary weld that can be formed using the exemplary embodiments of filler wires illustrated in Figures 2A and 3A;

[0014] FIG. 5B illustrates a cross-sectional view of an exemplary weld that can be formed using the filler wires illustrated in Figures 2B and 3B;

[0015] FIG. 6 illustrates a cross-sectional view of an exemplary weld that can be formed using the filler wires illustrated in Figure 4;

[0016] FIG. 7 illustrates a functional schematic block diagram of an exemplary embodiment of a combination filler wire feeder and energy source system for any of brazing, cladding, building up, filling, hard-facing overlaying, welding, and joining applications; and

[0017] FIGs. 8A and 8B depict exemplary cladding layers depicting use of embodiments of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0018] Exemplary embodiments of the invention will now be described below by reference to the attached Figures. The described exemplary embodiments are intended to assist in the understanding of the invention, and are not intended to limit the scope of the invention in any way. Although much of the following discussions will reference “welding” operations and systems, embodiments of the present invention are not just limited to joining operations, but can similarly be used for cladding, brazing, overlaying, etc. – type operations. Like reference numerals refer to like elements throughout.

[0019] For purposes of the present invention and application it is noted that the term “self-lubricating” refers to a material or materials that reduces the surface friction of a weld joint or cladding layer as the weld or cladding layer wears.

[0020] Welding/joining operations typically join multiple workpieces together in a welding operation where a filler metal is combined with at least some of the workpiece metal to form a joint. In such operations, the filler material may not be of the exact composition as the workpieces. Accordingly, it is not uncommon for the joint to have properties that are different as compared to the rest of the workpiece. For example, the surface friction of the joint may be very high, whereas the surface friction

of the workpiece is very low. In such cases, it would be desirable to have the joint composed of self-lubricating materials (for example, graphite) that produce a surface friction that is inline with the workpiece. Further, it may be beneficial to use the weld joint and/or the surfacing or cladding to provide a reduced friction surface, regardless of the surface friction of the workpiece. However, because the traditional methods use an arc to transfer the filler material, the ability to add such self-lubricating materials to the filler material may be limited as the self-lubricating materials may get consumed in the arc, rather than being deposited in the weld puddle. As described below, exemplary embodiments of the present invention can deposit self-lubricating materials into the weld and provide significant advantages over existing welding technologies.

[0021] It should be noted that although the majority of the following discussion, discusses using graphite or graphite powder as the lubricant, this is intended to be exemplary and other low friction materials can be used in embodiments of the present invention, and substituted in the following discussions. Such materials can include copper, tin, and molybdenum disulfide, as well as other known friction reducing materials.

[0022] FIG. 1 illustrates a functional schematic block diagram of an exemplary embodiment of a combination filler wire feeder and energy source system **100** for performing any of brazing, cladding, building up, filling, hard-facing overlaying, and joining/welding applications. The system **100** includes a high energy heat source capable of heating the workpiece **115** to form a weld puddle **145**. The high energy heat source can be a laser subsystem **130/120** that includes a laser device **120** and a laser power supply **130** operatively connected to each other. The laser **120** is capable of focusing a laser beam **110** onto the workpiece **115** and the power supply **130** provides the power to operate the laser device **120**. The laser subsystem **130/120** can be any type of high energy laser source, including but not limited to carbon dioxide, Nd:YAG, Yb-disk, YB-fiber, fiber delivered, or direct diode laser systems. Further, even white light or quartz laser type systems can be used if they have sufficient energy. For example, a high intensity energy source can provide at least 500 W/cm².

[0023] The following specification will repeatedly refer to the laser subsystem **130/120**, beam **110** and laser power supply **130**, however, it should be understood that this reference is exemplary as any high intensity energy source may be used. For example, other embodiments of the high energy heat source may include at least one of an electron beam, a plasma arc welding subsystem, a gas tungsten arc welding subsystem, a gas metal arc welding subsystem, a flux cored arc welding subsystem, and a submerged arc welding subsystem. It should be noted that the high intensity energy sources, such as the laser device **120** discussed herein, should be of a type having sufficient power to provide the necessary energy density for the desired welding operation. That is, the laser device **120** should have a capability to modify the energy from the laser power supply (or other source) to create and maintain a stable weld puddle throughout the welding process, and also reach the desired weld penetration. For example, for some applications, lasers should have the ability to "keyhole" into the workpieces being welded. This means that the laser should have sufficient power to penetrate (fully or partially) into the workpiece, while maintaining that level of penetration as the laser travels along the workpiece. Exemplary lasers should have power capabilities in the range of 1 to 20kW, and may have a power capability in the range of 5 to 20kW. In other exemplary embodiments, the power density can be in the range of 10^5 to 10^8 watts/cm². Higher power lasers can be utilized, but can become very costly.

[0024] The system **100** also includes a hot filler wire feeder subsystem capable of providing at least one resistive filler wire **140** to make contact with the workpiece **115** in the vicinity of the laser beam **110**. Of course, it is understood that by reference to the workpiece **115** herein, the molten puddle, i.e., weld puddle **145**, is considered part of the workpiece **115**, thus reference to contact with the workpiece **115** includes contact with the puddle **145**. The hot filler wire feeder subsystem includes a filler wire feeder **150**, a contact tube **160**, and a hot wire power supply **170**. In accordance with an embodiment of the present invention, the hot wire welding power supply **170** is a direct current (DC) power supply (that can be pulsed, for example), although alternating current (AC) or other types of power supplies are possi-

ble as well. The wire **140** is fed from the filler wire feeder **150** through the contact tube **160** toward the workpiece **115** and extends beyond the tube **160**. During operation, the extension portion of the filler wire **140** is resistance-heated by an electrical current from the hot wire welding power supply **170**, which is operatively connected between the contact tube **160** and the workpiece **115**. Prior to its entry into the weld puddle **145** on the workpiece **115**, the extension portion of the wire **140** may be resistance-heated such that the extension portion approaches or reaches the melting point before contacting the weld puddle **145** on the workpiece **115**. Because the filler wire **140** is heated to at or near its melting point, its presence in the weld puddle **145** will not appreciably cool or solidify the puddle **145** and the wire **140** is quickly consumed into the weld puddle **145**. The laser beam **110** (or other energy source) serves to melt some of the base metal of the workpiece **115** to form the weld puddle **145** and complete the melting of the wire **140** onto the workpiece **115**. However, the power supply **170** provides the energy needed to resistance-heat the filler wire **140** to or near a molten temperature.

[0025] The system **100** also includes sensing and control unit **195**. The sensing and control unit **195** can be operatively connected to the power supply **170**, the wire feeder **150**, and/or the laser power supply **130** to control the welding process in system **100**. US Patent Application No. 13/212,025, titled "Method And System To Start And Use Combination Filler Wire Feed And High Intensity Energy Source For Welding" is incorporated by reference in its entirety, provides exemplary startup and post-startup control algorithms that may be incorporated in sensing and control unit **195** for operating system **100**.

[0026] Unlike most welding processes, the present invention melts the filler wire **140** into the weld puddle **145** rather than using a welding arc to heat, melt and transfer the filler wire **140** into the weld puddle **145**. Because no arc is used to transfer of the filler wire **140** in the process described herein, the filler wire can include materials that normally would be consumed in, or interact with the arc in such a manner as to not exist in the puddle following solidification. For example, the filler wire **140** may include self-lubricating materials, such as graphite, in order to reduce the

surface friction of the weld. These structures, due to heating or chemical activity in the arc, may change their structure, composition, and/or properties. It should be noted that the term "self-lubricating" is intended to mean materials or compositions that generally have a low friction level and are typically used to reduce the level of friction between mechanical components, including but not limited to graphite. Accordingly, the following description also uses the term "low friction" to describe the particles described herein. In either case these terms are intended to describe a material having a friction level less than that of either the workpiece and/or the solidified puddle **145**.

[0027] In some exemplary embodiments of the present invention, the self-lubricating material is composed of small graphite particles. As shown in Figure 2A, the filler wire **140** is composed of the base filler material **141**, which can be any standard filler material that is appropriate for the weld process. For example, the base filler material **141** can comprise standard materials such as iron, carbon, silicon, nickel, chromium, copper, sulfur, etc., used in many standard mild steel solid wires such as, for example, ER70S-6. In addition to the base filler materials, the consumable of the present invention includes self-lubricating materials. For example, embedded in the base filler material **141** are graphite particles **142** that can have a nominal diameter of, for example, in the range of 5 microns to 200 microns, in other embodiments the particles are larger and can have a nominal diameter in the range of 200 to 400 microns. Of course, other particle sizes can be used without departing from the scope of the present invention, so long as the particles can be deposited and provide the desired performance. In some embodiments, the graphite particles are large enough such that they do not react/mix with the puddle matrix too quickly. For example, in some instances the graphite will react with oxides (such as iron oxide) and give off CO, which can be disadvantageous. The density of the graphite particles **142** in filler material **141** will depend on environment that the workpiece will see. For example, the density of graphite particles **142** in filler material **141** will be higher for a workpiece that is exposed to an environment where other objects or materials are sliding on its surface than for a workpiece that is in a less abrasive environment. In exemplary embodiments of the present invention, the volume percent of

graphite particles in the wire **140** will be in the range of 5%-30%, while in other embodiments the range can be 5 to 50%. However, embodiments have a different density depending on the environment for the completed workpiece. In other exemplary embodiments, such as that shown in Figure 2B, graphite powder **143** is mixed with the filler material **141** to produce the filler wire **140**. The graphite powder **143** is finer than the graphite particles **142** and the graphite powder **143** can have a nominal diameter in the range of 5 to 200 microns, and in other embodiments have a nominal diameter in the range of 20 to 100 microns. In addition, the volume percentage of graphite powder in the wire **140** can be in the range of 5% to 50%. Of course, the filler wire **140** may include a combination of graphite particles **142** and graphite powder **143** and the combined volume percentage being in the range of 5% to 50%. It is noted that the previously stated ranges are the same regardless of the self-lubricating materials used, for example, copper, tin or molybdenum disulfide, or other materials. The filler wire **140**, with the embedded graphite particles **142** and/or graphite powder **143**, may be manufactured using known methods such as combining the graphite particles or graphite powder with filler metal powder and then sintering them. It should be noted that although the following discussion often refers to "graphite" this is merely intended to be exemplary as other low friction materials can be used, such as those referenced previously. Additionally, a mixture of self-lubricating materials can be used. For example, the consumable may use a combination of different types of self-lubricating materials, including two or more of any of graphite, copper, tin, or molybdenum disulfide, or other low friction materials. The combinations can use any ratio of the different materials, for example the materials can have a 1 to 1 ratio such that 50% of the self lubricating materials is of one type and the other 50% is of a another type. Of course embodiments can use other ratios, and can include any mixture of particle and powder size for each respective material utilized. However, regardless of the mixture of components and materials the combined volume percentage should remain in the range of 5 to 50% as discussed above.

[0028] In the above embodiments, the graphite particles **142** and/or graphite powder **143** are mixed or embedded in the base filler material **141** composition and manufactured similar to that of a solid-type filler wire. However, in some embodi-

ments of the present invention, the filler wire is cored. As shown in Figures 3A and 3B, filler material **141** forms a sheath around a core filled with flux **144**. In this exemplary embodiment, the graphite particles **142** and/or graphite powder **143** can be mixed or embedded in the flux **144** instead of (or in addition to) the filler material **141**. In other embodiments of the present invention, the flux **144** is not included in the wire **140A**, and only the graphite particles **142** and/or the graphite powder **143** are present in the core material. The core material can be manufactured similar to flux materials used in arc welding cored electrodes. For example, the core can be a granular flux having a composition similar to that of existing flux cored electrodes, except that the wear low friction particles and/or powder is also added to the flux material. In further exemplary embodiments, the construction of the wire **140A** is similar to that of a metal cored wire where each of the sheath **141** and the core are solid, but the core has a solid composition including the low friction particles (e.g., graphite) as described herein. Furthermore, exemplary embodiments of the present invention are not limited to the configurations shown in the figures, such that the flux with the low friction particles can be an outer layer of the wire **140A** which is deposited over a solid core portion. This construction is similar to that of self-shielding stick electrodes, which have a flux coated on an outer surface of a solid core.

[0029] Figure 5A illustrates a cross-sectional view of a weld wire **140C** with self-lubricating material that was deposited using the filler wires illustrated in Figures 2A or 3A. Similarly, Figure 5B illustrates a cross-sectional view of a weld with self-lubricating material that was deposited using the filler wires illustrated in Figures 2B or 3B. As shown in Figures 5A and 5B, the self-lubricating materials are found throughout the weld. Thus, as the hot-wire consumable **140A-C** is deposited into the weld puddle the low friction particles are distributed throughout the molten puddle and when the puddle solidifies the particles are distributed throughout. It is noted that although Figures 5A and 5B show a typical weld joint embodiments of the present invention are not limited in this regard as the wires can also be used for cladding/surfacing operations, and can be used in other weld joint types. These figures are intended to be exemplary. For example, these figures depict exemplary weld joints and, of course, embodiments of the present invention can be used for cladding

or overlaying operations without departing from the spirit or scope of the present invention. With the distribution of the low friction particles throughout the joint, as the joint wears down through exposure, mechanical friction, etc. the joint/deposit will consistently expose additional layers of particles such that the low friction aspects of the joint/deposit is relatively consistent throughout its thickness. For example, if the filler is used in a cladding/surfacing operation as the cladding is worn away new particles are exposed, thus providing consistent low friction properties throughout the thickness of the cladding layer.

[0030] In other exemplary embodiments, processes can be used such that the wire **140A-C** is used at the end of the fill process such that only the top layer (i.e., the last pass of the weld bead) or layers will include the low friction materials.

[0031] Of course, the self-lubricating or low friction materials (e.g., graphite) and the filler material need not be included in the same filler wire **140A-C**. (Reference herein to the wire **140** is intended to be inclusive of all of the embodiments, e.g., **140A/C**, of the wire disclosed herein.) Because an arc is not used to transfer the filler wire **140** (**140A**) to the weld puddle **145**, the feeder subsystem **150** can be configured to simultaneously provide more than one wire to the puddle at the same time, in accordance with certain other embodiments of the present invention. For example, a first wire may be used for depositing the self-lubricating materials (e.g., the graphite particles **142** or graphite powder **143**) to the workpiece **115**, and a second wire may be used to add structure to the workpiece. The first or second wire (or additional wires) may also be used for hard-facing and/or providing corrosion resistance to the workpiece **115**. In addition, by directing more than one filler wire to any one weld puddle, the overall deposition rate of the weld process can be significantly increased without a significant increase in heat input. Thus, it is contemplated that open root weld joints can be filled in a single weld pass. Further, in other exemplary multi-wire embodiments one of the wires (for example the leading wire) can deposit the matrix of the weld joint while any additional wires adds the wear resistant particles as described herein. Such embodiments can provide the ability to customize or tailor the bead profile or chemistry to provide a desired performance for specific conditions.

[0032] As discussed above, the filler wire **140 (140A)** is melted into the weld puddle **145** without an arc. Thus, the wire **140 (140A)** does not experience the extreme heat of the arc, which can be as high as 8,000° F. However, the melting temperature of the filler wire **140 (140A)** will vary depending on the size and chemistry of the wire **140 (140A)** and can exceed 1,500° F. Accordingly, in some exemplary embodiments of the present invention, the low friction particles are to have a melting/burning temperature higher than that of the remaining filler wire composition. For purposes of the present application, the burning temperature can be the vaporization or boiling temperature of the material. This aids in ensuring that the wire melts before the integrity of the low friction particles is compromised. However, to the extent the low friction materials are included in a filler wire having a melting temperature higher than that of the particles (or the puddle temperature will be higher than the melting/burning temperature of the particles) the particles within the filler wire **140A/C** may need to be protected based on the melting temperature of the filler wire **140A/C**.

[0033] For example, some exemplary embodiments discussed above use graphite as the wear resistant material. Graphite can burn in the presence of oxygen and form carbon dioxide. In air, which is about 21% oxygen, graphite will burn at about 1,550° F. Accordingly, in situations where the temperature of the weld puddle **145** and/or the melting point of the wire **140** exceeds the temperature at which graphite burns, care must be taken to not expose the graphite in the filler wire **140 (140A)** to oxygen.

[0034] In some exemplary embodiments, the filler wire **140 (140A)** can include a flux that protects the weld area from oxidation. In such embodiments, the flux may form a protective slag over the weld area to shield the weld area from the atmosphere and/or form carbon dioxide to protect the weld area. Such a flux coating is generally known and often used with self-shielding electrodes. In some exemplary embodiments, the flux is a coating (not shown) on the filler wire. In other embodiments, the flux is disposed in the core of the filler wire as illustrated in Figures 3A and 3B. The compositions of such fluxes are generally known and will not be discussed

herein. In other exemplary embodiments, the system **100** can include a shielding gas system which delivers a shielding gas to the puddle **145** during the operation to shield the operation from the atmosphere. The shielding gas can be an inert gas, such as argon, and can generally use known shielding gases that do not contain oxygen.

[0035] In still other exemplary embodiments, the low friction particles **142** may be coated to isolate the particles from any oxygen that may be present, or to isolate the particle from the heat of the puddle **145** and/or heating of the wire. Of course, the powder **143** can also be coated. For example, as illustrated in Figure 4, the particles **142** are coated or encapsulated using an appropriate coating **146**. In some exemplary embodiments, the coating **146** may be a metal alloy such as nickel or a nickel alloy. In exemplary embodiments, the coating thickness can be in the range of 1 to 30 microns, and in another exemplary embodiment be in the range of 5 to 30 microns, and the thickness can depend on the size of the particles being coated. Of course, the present invention can include coating thicknesses that fall outside this range. In some embodiments, the coating **146** is selected that its melting temperature is above the melting temperature of the filler material **141** and/or the weld puddle **145**. Accordingly, because the coating **146** will not melt in these embodiments, the particles **142** will not be exposed to the atmosphere during the welding process. Alternatively, in other embodiments, the coating **146** will melt only after the filler wire **140** (**140A**) makes contact with the weld puddle **145**, which is maintained at a temperature that is above the melting point of the coating **146**. Because the particles **142** are already in the weld puddle **145** before the coating **146** melts, the exposure to the atmosphere and thus any burning of the graphite is limited. Of course, flux and inert gas may also be used to further limit the particles' exposure to the atmosphere by displacing or consuming any oxygen around the weld puddle **145**.

[0036] Further, the coating acts as a thermal barrier to inhibit heat from the puddle **145** and the heating of the wire from reaching the particles. As such, the coating **145** can be a material and a thickness which provides a thermal barrier that protects the low friction particles. That is, in some embodiments the coating **146** can

be a composition that resists the transfer of heat such that the puddle cools and solidifies before the particles are destroyed by the heat. Further, the coating **146** can be of a thickness and composition such that least some of the coating **146** melts and is absorbed into weld puddle, but at least some of the coating **146** remains on the particles as the puddle cools. Thus, the coating **146** can be of a composition that is compatible with the puddle **145** but also inhibits the heat from the puddle and in the wire **140** from destroying the low friction particles. As stated above, such a material can be nickel or a nickel alloy which is deposited onto the particles before the particles are combined with the wire **140**. Various manufacturing methods can be used to coat the particles, including using vapor deposition, or other similar coating methods. Figure 6 illustrates a cross-sectional view of a weld with coated low friction material that was deposited using the filler wire illustrated in Figure 4.

[0037] In the above embodiments, the temperature of the wire **140(140A)** and/or the weld puddle **145** can be an important operational parameter depending on the type of self-lubricating material being deposited. Accordingly, in yet another exemplary embodiment of the present invention as illustrated in Figure 7, a system **1400** includes a thermal sensor **1410** that is utilized to monitor the temperature of the wire **140 (140A, 140C)**. The system **1400** is similar to the system **100** and, for brevity, only the relevant differences will be discussed. The thermal sensor **1410** can be of any known type capable of detecting the temperature of the wire **140 (140A)**. The sensor **1410** can make contact with the wire **140 (140A)** or can be coupled to the tip of contact tube **160** so as to detect the temperature of the wire. In a further exemplary embodiment of the present invention, the sensor **1410** is a type which uses a laser or infrared beam which is capable of detecting the temperature of a small object – such as the diameter of a filler wire – without contacting the wire **140 (140A)**. In such an embodiment the sensor **1410** is positioned such that the temperature of the wire **140 (140A)** can be detected at the stick out of the wire **140 (140A)** – that is at some point between the end of the tip of contact tube **160** and the weld puddle **145**. The sensor **1410** should also be positioned such that the sensor **1410** for the wire **140 (140A)** does not sense the temperature of weld puddle **145**.

[0038] The sensor **1410** is coupled to a sensing and control unit **195** such that temperature feed back information can be provided to the power supply **170**, the laser power supply **130**, and/or wire feeder **150** so that the control of the system **1400** can be optimized. For example, the power or current output of the power supply **170** can be adjusted based on at least the feedback from the sensor **1410**. That is, in an embodiment of the present invention either the user can input a desired temperature setting (for a given weld and/or wire **140 (140A)**) or the sensing and control unit **195** can set a desired temperature based on other user input data (type of self-lubricating material, coating of self-lubricating material, wire feed speed, electrode type, etc.) and then the sensing and control unit **195** would control at least the power supply **170**, laser power supply **130**, and/or wire feeder **150** to maintain that desired temperature.

[0039] In such an embodiment it is possible to account for heating of the wire **140 (140A)** that may occur due to the laser beam **110** impacting on the wire **140 (140A)** before the wire **140 (140A)** enters the weld puddle **145**. In embodiments of the invention the temperature of the wire **140 (140A)** can be controlled only via power supply **170** by controlling the current in the wire **140 (140A)**. However, in other embodiments at least some of the heating of the wire **140 (140A)** can come from the laser beam **110** impinging on at least a part of the wire **140 (140A)**. As such, the current or power from the power supply **170** alone may not be representative of the temperature of the wire **140 (140A)**. As such, utilization of the sensor **1410** can aid in regulating the temperature of the wire **140 (140A)** through control of the power supply **170**, the laser power supply **130** and/or wire feeder **150**.

[0040] In a further exemplary embodiment (also shown in Figure 6) a temperature sensor **1420** is directed to sense the temperature of the weld puddle **145**. In this embodiment the temperature of the weld puddle **145** is also coupled to the sensing and control unit **195**. However, in another exemplary embodiment, the sensor **1420** can be coupled directly to the laser power supply **130**. Feedback from the sensor **1420** can be used to control output from laser power supply **130**/laser **120**. That is,

the energy density of the laser beam **110** can be modified to ensure that the desired weld puddle temperature is achieved.

[0041] In Figures 1 and 7 the laser power supply **130**, hot wire power supply **170**, wire feeder **150**, and sensing and control unit **195** are shown separately for clarity. However, in embodiments of the invention these components can be made integral into a single welding system. Aspects of the present invention do not require the individually discussed components above to be maintained as separately physical units or stand alone structures.

[0042] Figures 8A and 8B depict exemplary cladding layers that can be created with embodiments of the present invention. Figure 8A shows a cladding layer on a workpiece with the particles distributed throughout the matrix. As shown, as the cladding layer is worn new particles are continuously exposed such that the cladding layer can provide lubrication throughout the entire thickness of the cladding layer. Similarly, Figure 8B shows a similar clad layer where the particles are covered by the particle protective layer (as described herein), and as the clad surface and protective layers are worn away the particles become exposed.

[0043] While the invention has been described with reference to certain embodiments, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that various changes may be made and equivalents may be substituted without departing from the scope of the invention. In addition, many modifications may be made to adapt a particular situation or material to the teachings of the invention without departing from its scope. Therefore, it is intended that the invention not be limited to the particular embodiments disclosed, but that the invention will include all embodiments falling within the scope of the appended claims.

REFERENCE NUMBERS

100	system	144	flux
110	laser beam	145	weld puddle
115	workpiece	146	coating
120	laser device	150	wire feeder
130	laser power supply	160	contact tube
140	filler wire	170	power supply
140A	wire	195	control unit
140C	wire	1400	system
141	filler material	1410	sensor
142	(graphite) particles	1420	sensor
143	(graphite) powder		

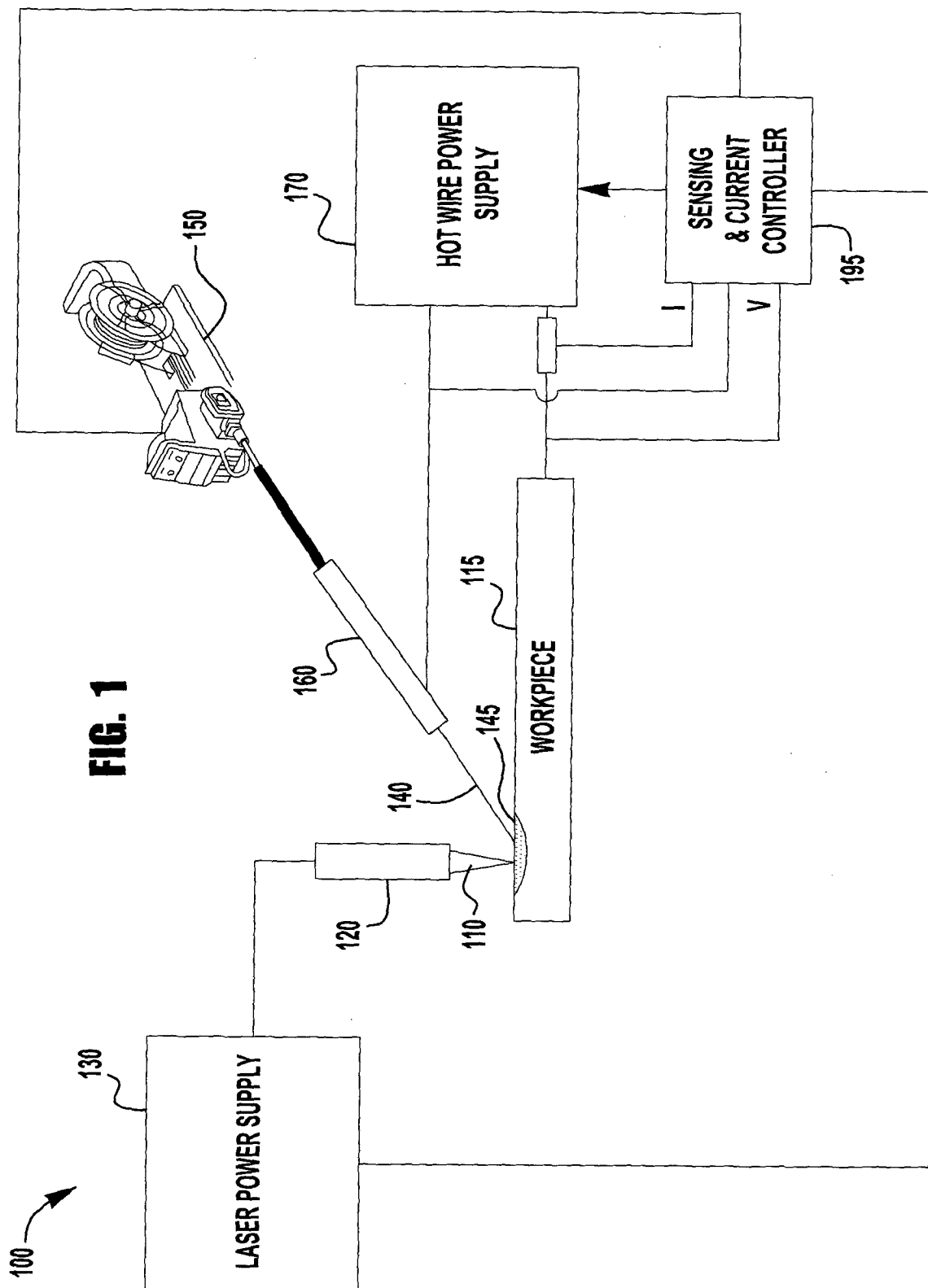
CLAIMS

1. A hot-wire consumable, the consumable comprising:
a base filler material (141), and
at least one of self-lubricating particles (142) having a nominal diameter in a range of 200 microns to 400 microns and self-lubricating powder (143) having a nominal diameter in a range of 4 microns to 200 microns.
2. The consumable of claim 1, wherein said at least one of said self-lubricating particles (142) and said self-lubricating powder (143) represents a combined volume percentage in said consumable in the range of 5% to 50%.
3. The consumable of claim 1 or 2, further comprising:
a flux disposed over said base filler material (141) to form an outer layer, said base filler material forming a solid core portion of said filler wire (140, 140A, 140C),
wherein said at least one of said self-lubricating particles (142) and said self-lubricating powder (143) is mixed with said flux (144) in said outer layer of said consumable.
4. The consumable of any of the claims 1 to 3, wherein said consumable is a solid-type wire (140, 140A, 140C), and
wherein said at least one of said self-lubricating particles (142) and said self-lubricating powder (143) is mixed with said base material (141) and said mixture is sintered to form said solid-type wire (140, 140A, 140C).
5. The consumable any of the claims 1 to 4, wherein said consumable is a cored-type wire (140, 140A, 140C), said base material forming a sheath around a core, and
wherein said core comprises said at least one of said self-lubricating particles (142) and said self-lubricating powder (143).

6. The consumable of any of the claims 1 to 5, wherein said core comprises flux (144), and
wherein said at least one of said self-lubricating particles (142) and said self-lubricating powder (143) is mixed with said flux (144) in said core.
7. The consumable of any of the claims 1 to 6, wherein said consumable is a cored-type wire (140, 140A, 140C), said base material (141) and a portion of said at least one of said self-lubricating particles (142) and said self-lubricating powder (143) forming a sheath around a core.
8. The consumable of any of the claims 1 to 7, wherein said core comprises flux (144), and
wherein a remaining portion of said at least one of said self-lubricating particles (142) and said self-lubricating powder (143) is mixed with said flux (144) in said core.
9. The consumable of any of the claims 1 to 8, wherein said at least one of said self-lubricating particles (142) and said self-lubricating powder (143) is coated.
10. The consumable of claim 9, wherein said coating (146) comprises at least one of nickel and nickel alloy and a thickness of said coating is in a range of 1 to 30 microns.
11. The consumable of any of the claims 1 to 10, wherein a melting temperature or a burning temperature of said at least one of said self-lubricating particles (142) and said self-lubricating powder (143) is higher than a melting temperature of said base filler material (141).
12. The consumable of any of the claims 1 to 11, wherein said consumable comprises both of said self-lubricating powder (143) and said self-lubricating particles (142) and a combined volume percentage of said self-lubricating powder

and said self-lubricating particles in said consumable is in the range of 5% to 50%.

13. The consumable of any of the claims 1 to 12, where said at least one self-lubricating powder (143) and said self-lubricating particles (142) is graphite, or where said at least one self-lubricating powder (143) and said self-lubricating particles (142) is at least one of graphite, copper, tin, and molybdenum disulfide.
14. The consumable of any of the claims 1 to 13, where said at least one self-lubricating powder (143) and said self-lubricating particles (142) is a combination of at least two of graphite, copper, tin, and molybdenum disulfide.
15. The consumable of any of the claims 1 to 14, where said at least one self-lubricating powder (143) and said self-lubricating particles (142) is a combination of graphite and one of copper, tin, and molybdenum disulfide, and wherein said combined volume percentage of said consumable of said self-lubricating powder (143) and said self-lubricating particles (142) in said consumable is in the range of 5% to 50%.



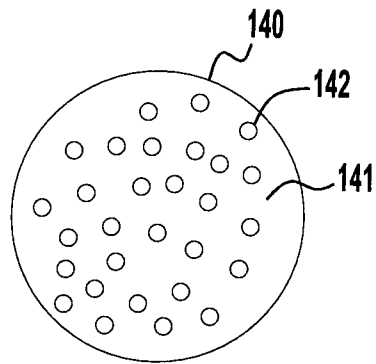


FIG. 2A

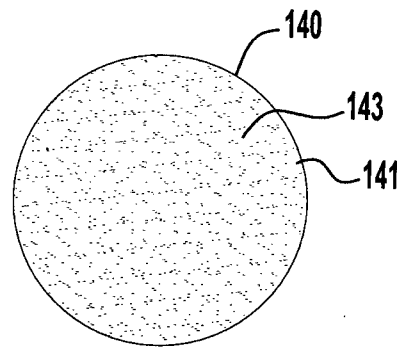


FIG. 2B

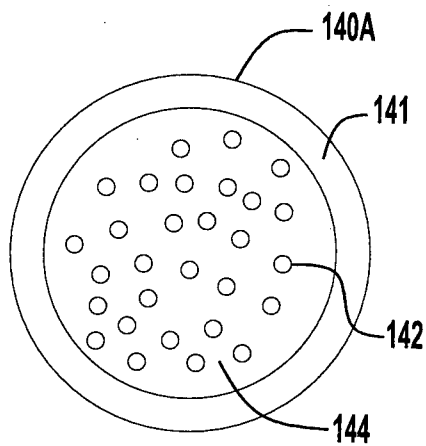


FIG. 3A

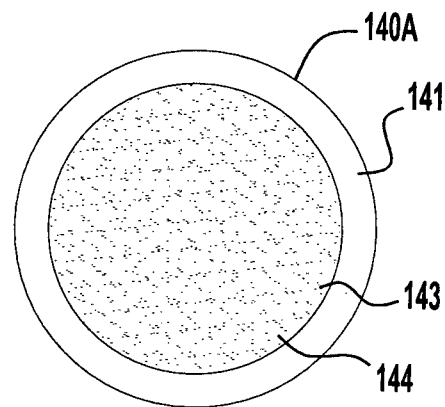


FIG. 3B

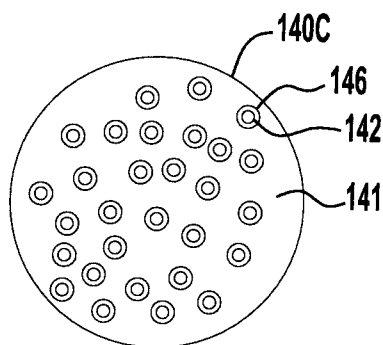


FIG. 4

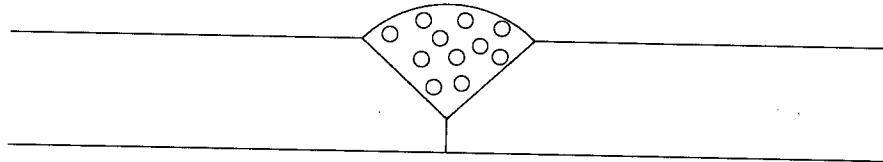


FIG. 5A

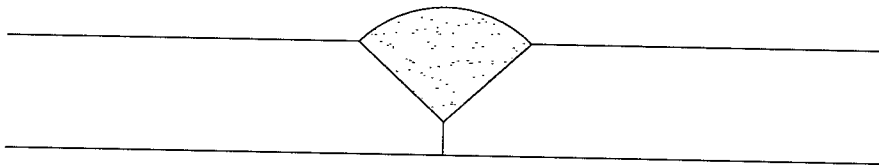


FIG. 5B

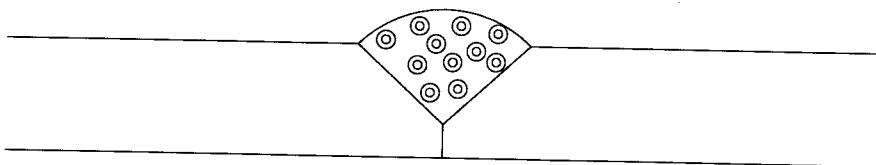


FIG. 6

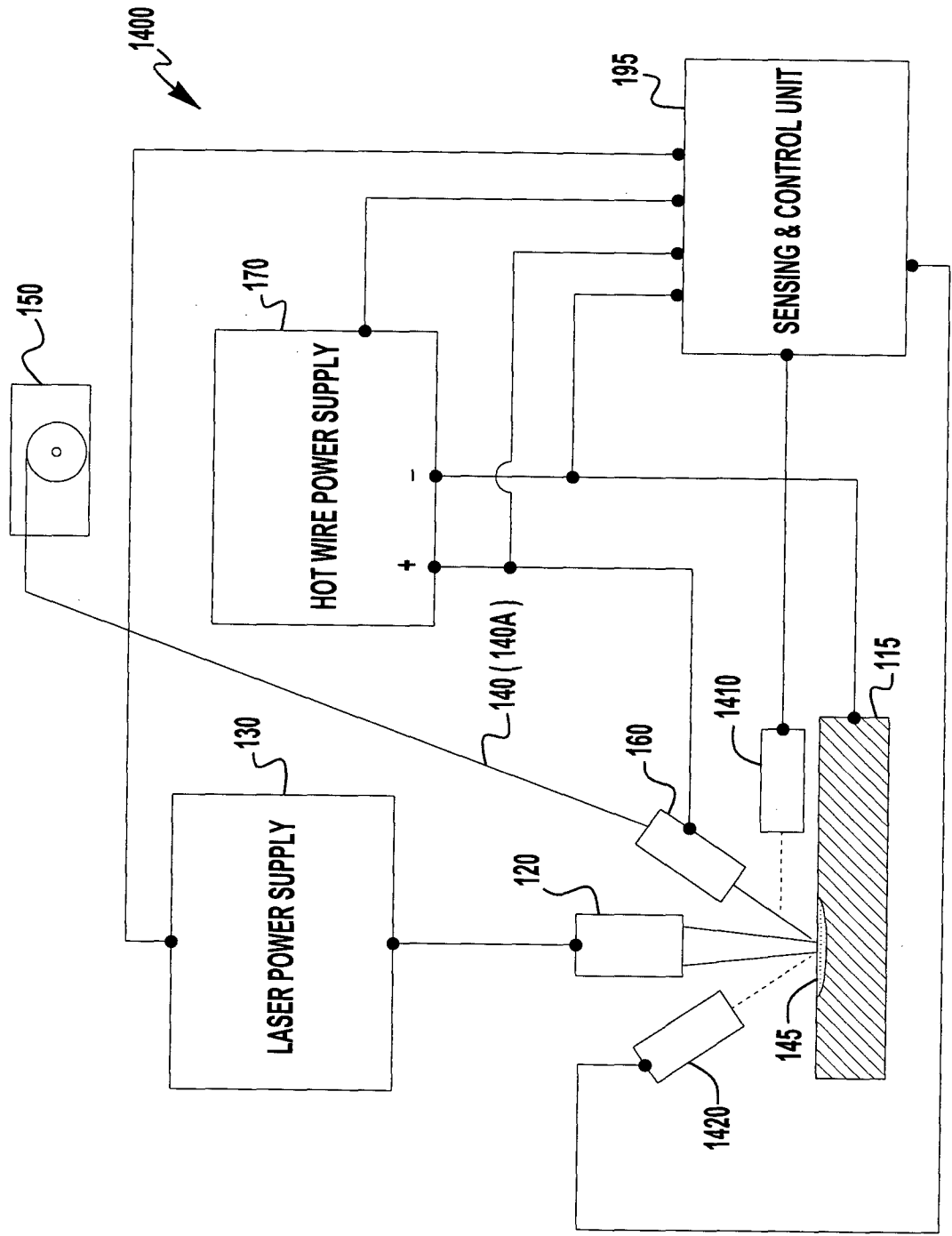


FIG. 7

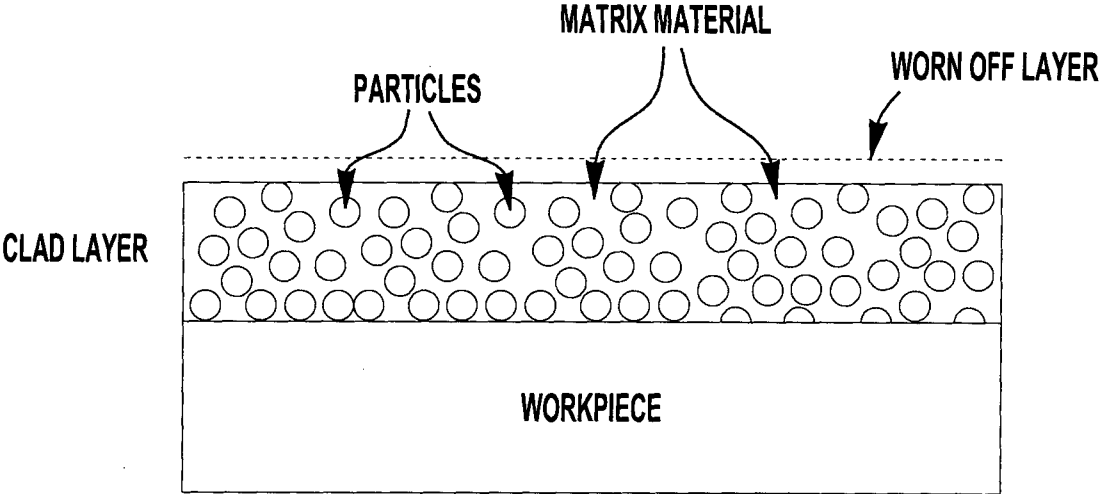


FIG. 8A

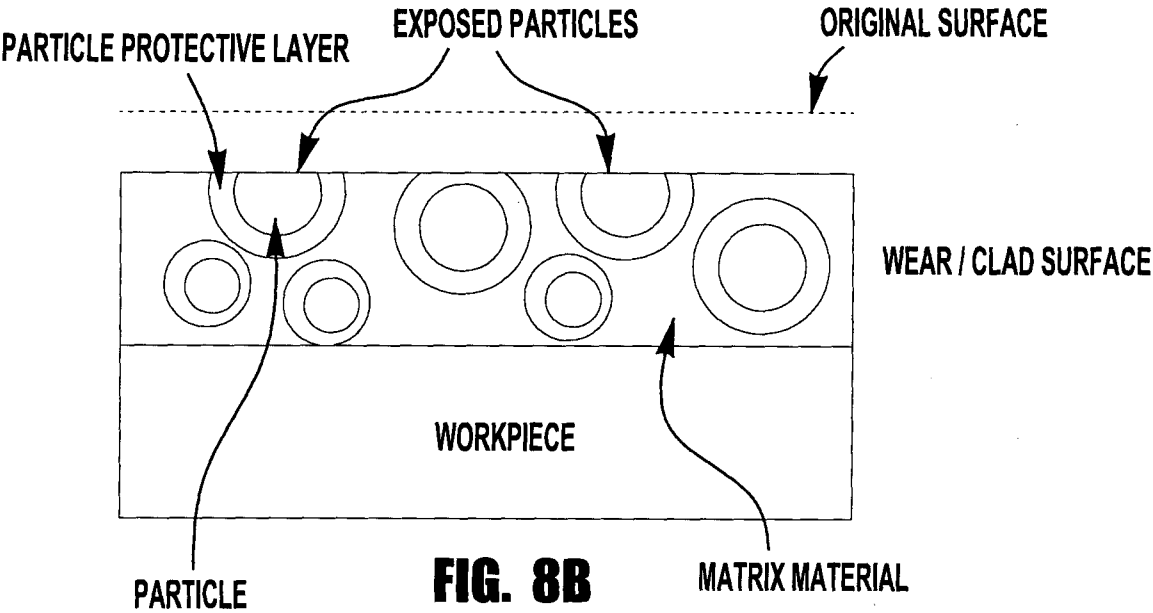


FIG. 8B