



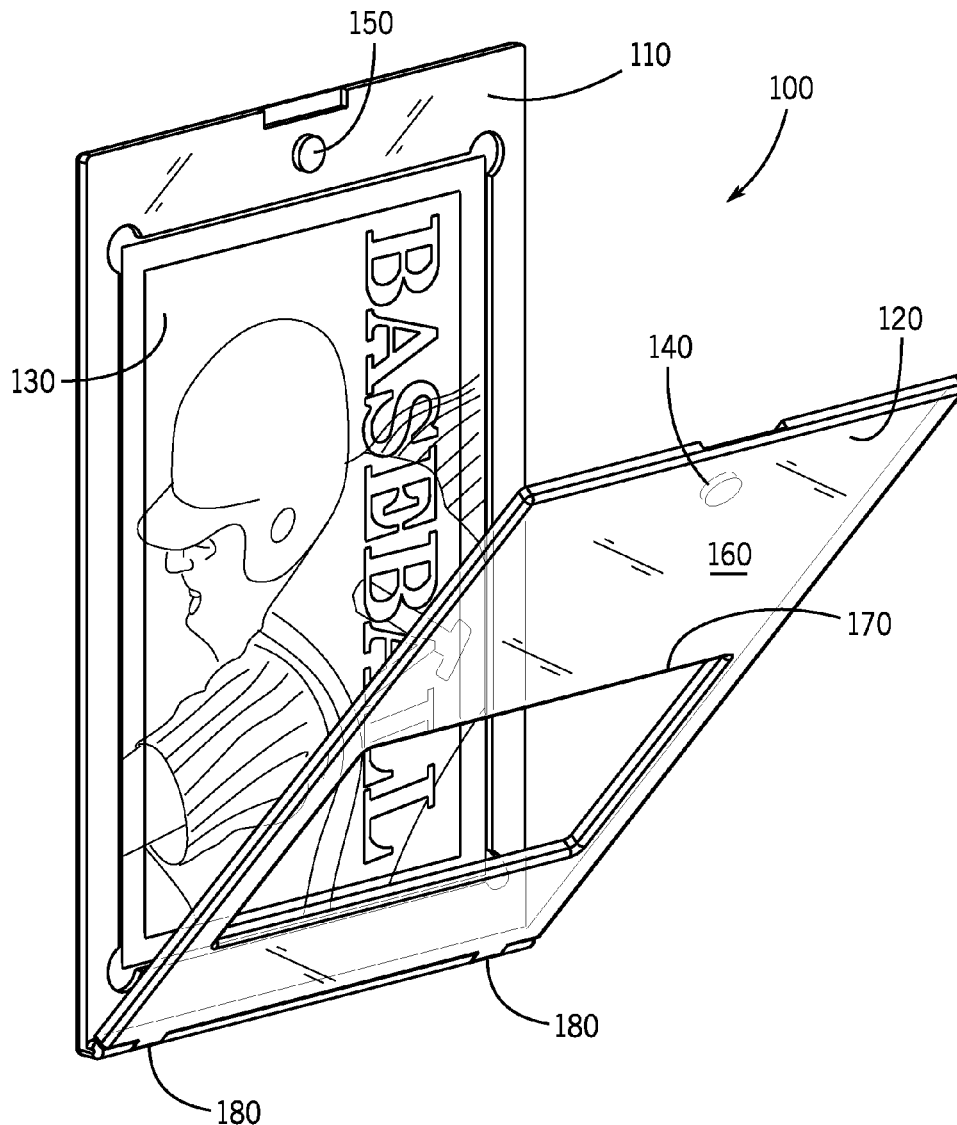
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(19) **United States**(12) **Patent Application Publication**
Cox(10) **Pub. No.: US 2021/0022467 A1**(43) **Pub. Date: Jan. 28, 2021**(54) **COLLECTOR CARD AUTOGRAPH CASE**(52) **U.S. Cl.**(71) Applicant: **Clinton Gene Cox**, Centennial, CO
(US)CPC *A45C 11/18* (2013.01); *A45C 11/24*
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(57)

ABSTRACT

A protective card case is described. The case includes a front cover including a transparent viewing area. The case also includes a rear cover including a transparent viewing area. Further, the case includes a coupling mechanism configured for coupling the front cover with the rear cover. Further still the case includes a latching mechanism configured to selectively latch the front cover with the rear cover. The rear cover includes a planar recessed area for holding a card in place when the front cover and rear cover are coupled together by the coupling mechanism and latched with the latching mechanism. The front cover includes an aperture providing access to a portion of the card when front cover and rear cover are coupled together by the coupling mechanism and latched with the latching mechanism and the aperture is at least large enough for a person to apply an autograph to a portion of the front of the card.

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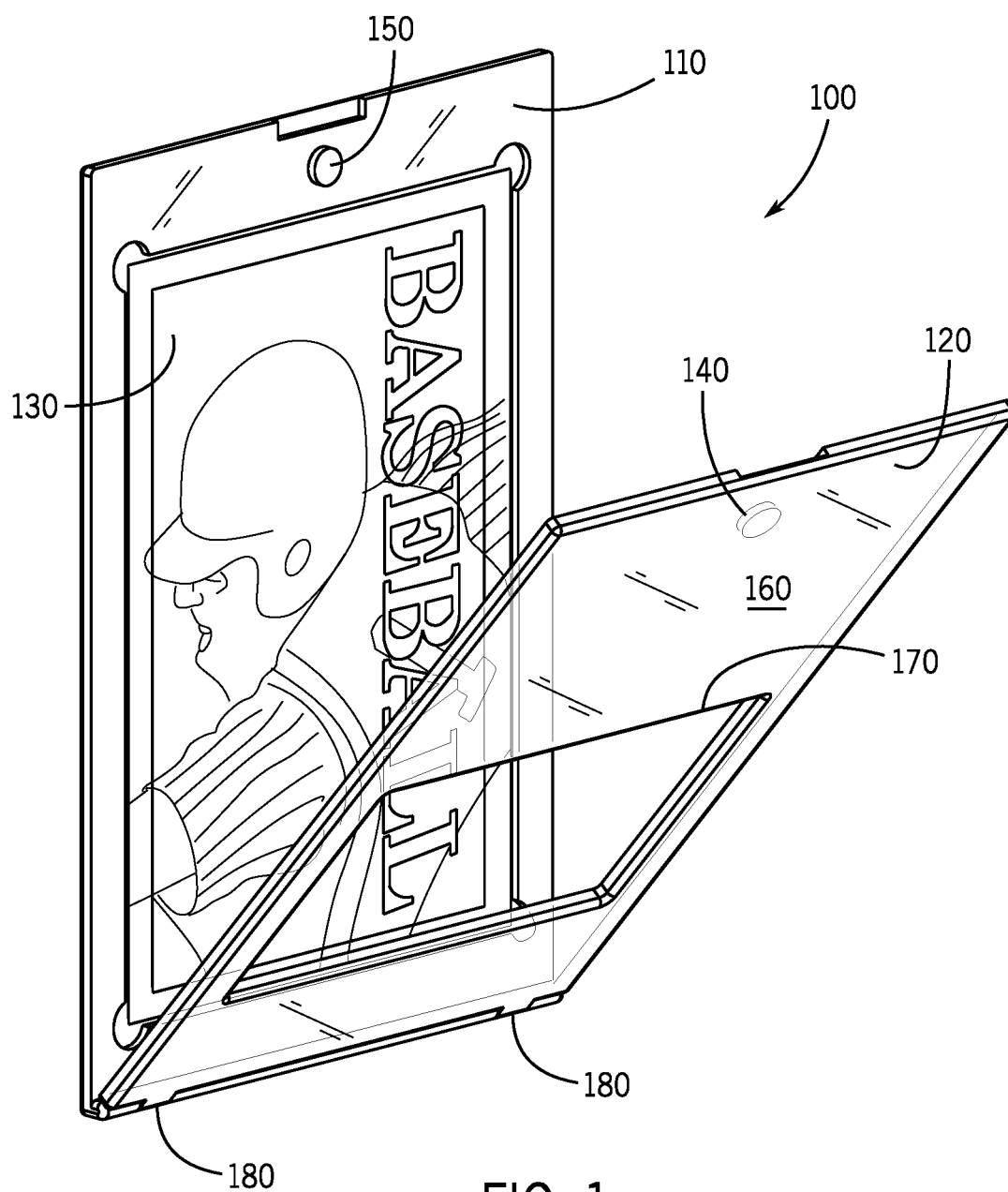


FIG. 1

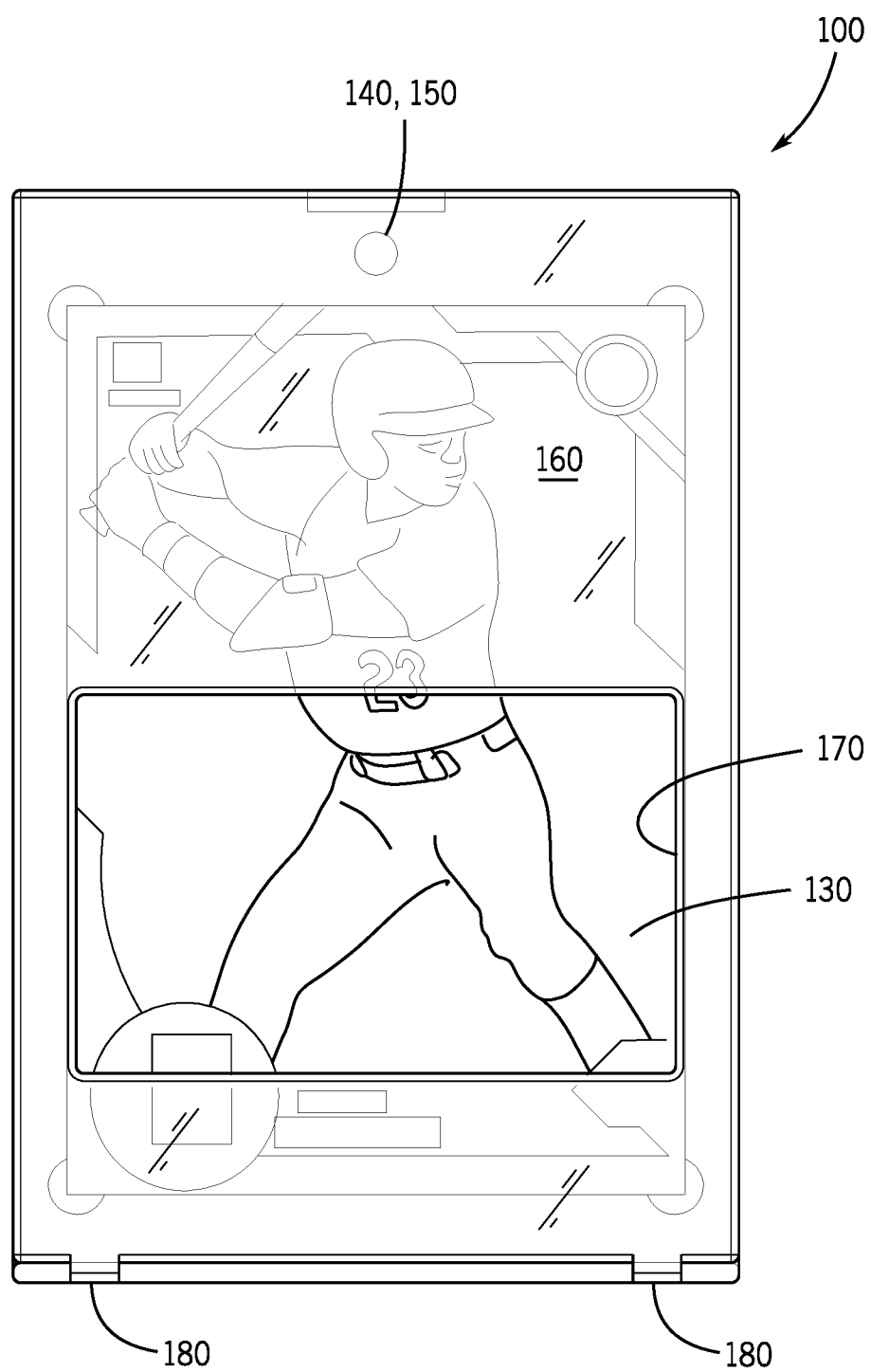


FIG. 2

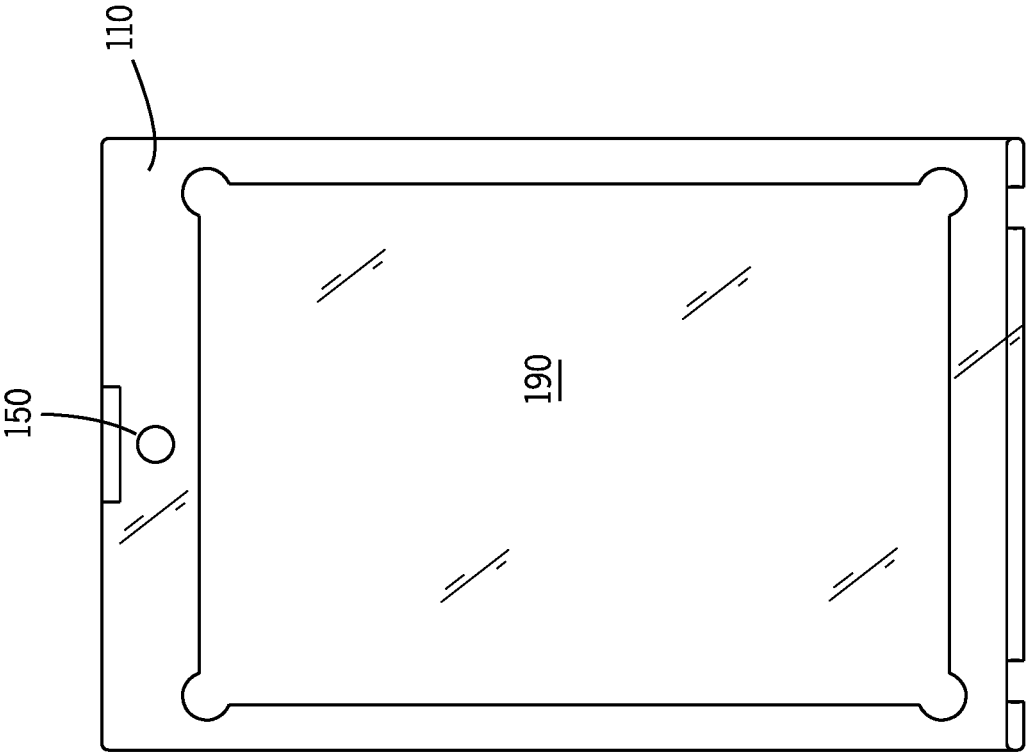


FIG. 4

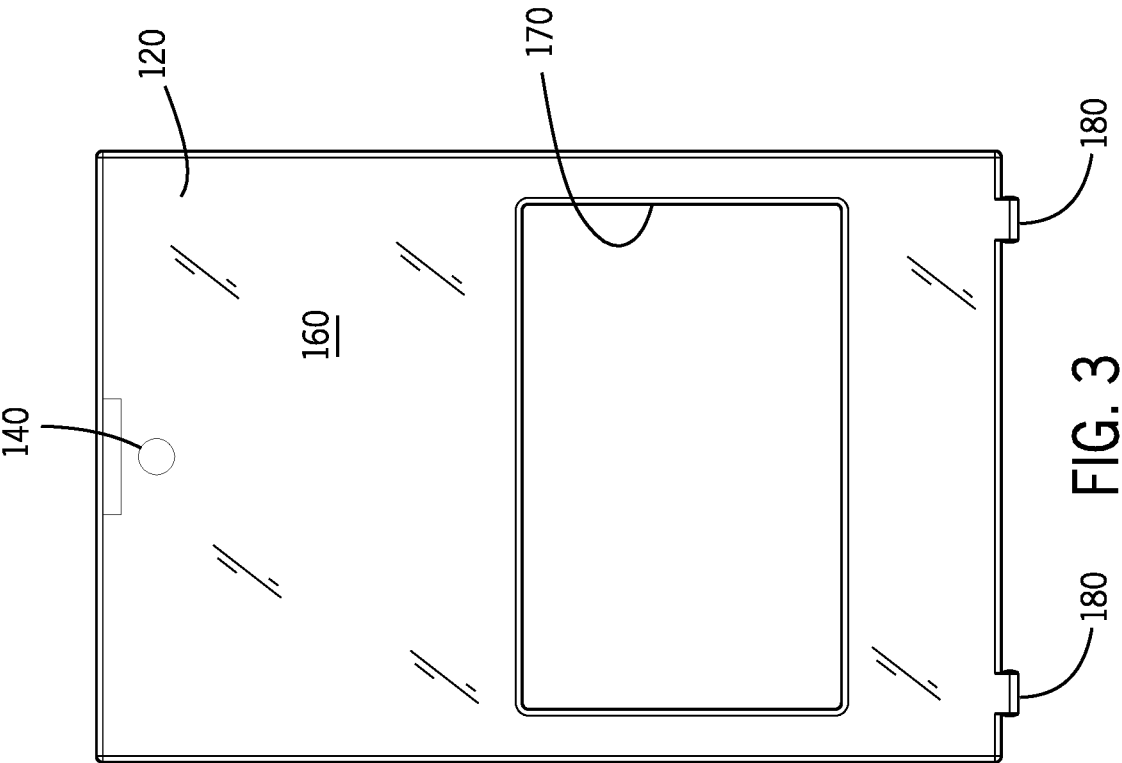


FIG. 3

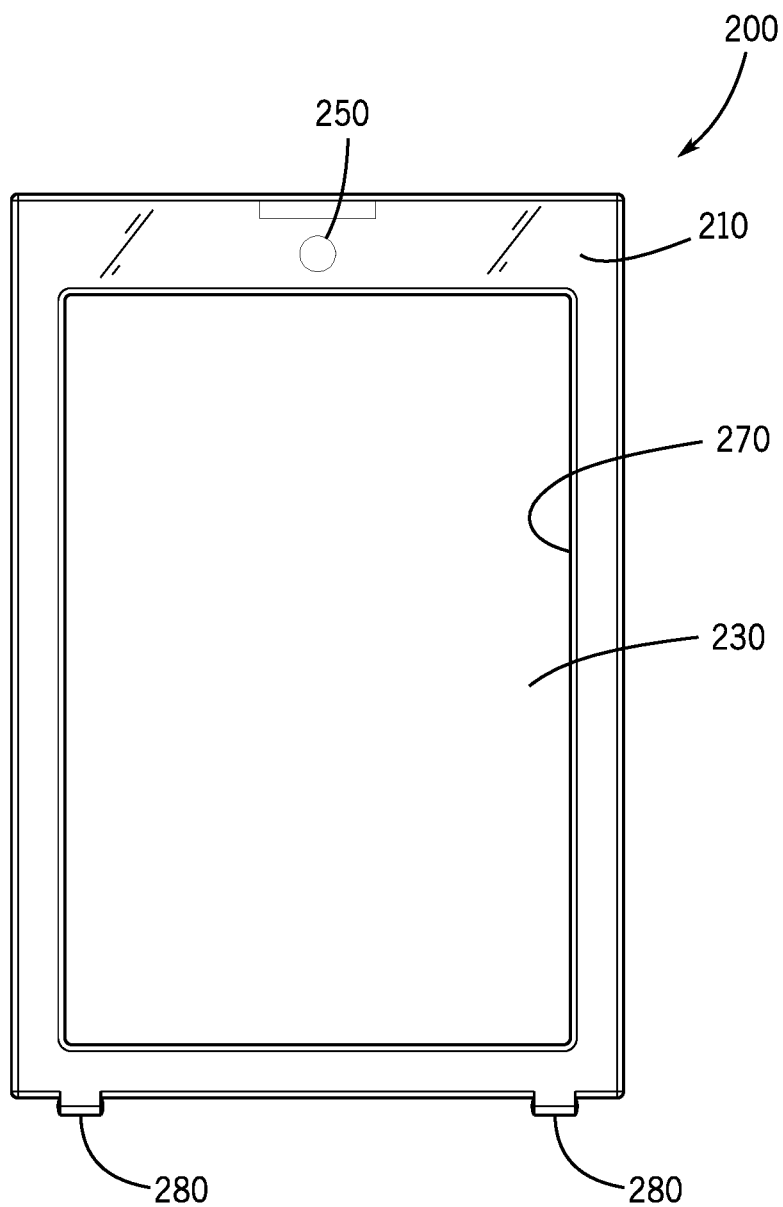


FIG. 5

COLLECTOR CARD AUTOGRAPH CASE

BACKGROUND

[0001] Card collectors of sports cards or other collector cards may use receptacles and, more particularly closed receptacles for storing articles. For example, a case for protecting a collectible article, such as a sports card, photograph, or the like, may help to preserve the condition of the article. These card cases have usefulness in other areas such as but not limited to preserving the condition of photographs, postcards, postage stamps, coins, and other articles collected by hobbyists.

[0002] Some sports cards are quite rare and have become quite valuable as a result of popularity of sports card collecting. The condition of a rare sports card contributes significantly to the value. Nevertheless, active hobbyists are likely to handle their collections frequently, which subjects their sports cards to the risk of being soiled, worn, torn, or otherwise damaged. Consequently, there is a need for protecting the sports cards when they are handled.

[0003] Some sports cards may be particularly valuable if they have been autographed by the athlete depicted in the sports card. Conventionally, if an autograph is desired to be obtained on a card that is in a conventional collector case, the card would have to be removed from the card case and handled by the owner and possibly by the athlete to get the autograph. Every time the card is handled outside of its case, it risks being damaged. Accordingly, there is a need for a protective card case that allows for obtaining an autograph without removing the card from its protective case.

[0004] Conventionally there are few commercially available products which can be utilized for protecting sports cards and none which allow autographing without removing from the case. One product comprises a sheet of clear plastic which is folded along one edge and heat sealed along one or perhaps two other edges, thereby forming a sleeve which is open along at least one edge so that a sports card can be inserted. Such a sleeve does not provide a convenient way for obtaining an autograph on the card without removing it from the sleeve. Therefore, the need to provide a protective case that enables autographing without removing the card from its protective case remains.

SUMMARY

[0005] An exemplary embodiment relates to a protective card case. The case includes a front cover including a transparent viewing area. The case also includes a rear cover including a transparent viewing area. Further, the case includes a coupling mechanism configured for coupling the front cover with the rear cover. Further still the case includes a latching mechanism configured to selectively latch the front cover with the rear cover. The rear cover includes a planar recessed area for holding a card in place when the front cover and rear cover are coupled together by the coupling mechanism and latched with the latching mechanism. The front cover includes an aperture providing access to a portion of the card when front cover and rear cover are coupled together by the coupling mechanism and latched with the latching mechanism and the aperture is at least large enough for a person to apply an autograph to a portion of the front of the card.

[0006] Another exemplary embodiment relates to a protective card case. The case includes a front cover including

a transparent viewing area and including tabs protruding from the bottom of the front cover. The case also includes a rear cover including a transparent viewing area and including two tab receivers configured to mate with the two tabs of the front cover and couple the front cover with the rear cover. Further, the case includes a magnetic catch configured to selectively latch the front cover with the rear cover. The front cover includes an aperture providing access to a portion of the front of a card when front cover and rear cover are coupled together by the tabs and tab receiver and latched with the magnetic catch and the aperture is at least large enough for a person to apply an autograph to a portion of the front of the card.

[0007] Yet another exemplary embodiment relates to a method of obtaining an autograph on a collector card. The method includes placing a card in a protective card case. The protective case includes a front cover including a transparent viewing area and including tabs protruding from the bottom of the front cover. The protective case also includes a rear cover including a transparent viewing area and including two tab receivers configured to mate with the two tabs of the front cover and couple the front cover with the rear cover. Further, the protective cover includes a magnetic catch configured to selectively latch the front cover with the rear cover. The front cover includes an aperture providing access to a portion of the front of a card when front cover and rear cover are coupled together by the tabs and tab receiver and latched with the magnetic catch and the aperture is at least large enough for a person to apply an autograph to a portion of the front of the card. The method also includes handing the protective case to an autographer. Further the method includes receiving from the autographer the card in the protective case having been signed by the autographer through the aperture without having removed the card from the case.

[0008] In addition to the foregoing, other system aspects are described in the claims, drawings, and text forming a part of the disclosure set forth herein. The foregoing is a summary and thus may contain simplifications, generalizations, inclusions, and/or omissions of detail; consequently, those skilled in the art will appreciate that the summary is illustrative only and is NOT intended to be in any way limiting. Other aspects, features, and advantages of the devices and/or processes and/or other subject matter described herein will become apparent in the disclosures set forth herein.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0009] FIG. 1 is an exemplary embodiment of a sports card collector case.

[0010] FIG. 2 is an exemplary embodiment of the sports card collector case of FIG. 1.

[0011] FIG. 3 is an exemplary embodiment of a front cover of the sports card collector case of FIG. 1.

[0012] FIG. 4 is an exemplary embodiment of a rear cover of the sports card collector case of FIG. 1.

[0013] FIG. 5 is an alternative exemplary embodiment of a sports card collector case.

[0014] The use of the same symbols in different drawings typically indicates similar or identical items unless context dictates otherwise.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0015] Referring to FIGS. 1 and 2, a case **100** is provided for protecting a collectible article, such as a sports card **130**, a photograph, or the like. The protective case comprises two elements, a rear cover **110** and a front cover **120**, which are joined together at a hinge or connector **180** and a catch such as magnetic catch **150**, for enclosing the article.

[0016] Both rear cover **110** and front cover **120** are preferably constructed from a transparent elastic material, such as but not limited to clear polyvinyl plastic or a rigid clear polymer such as but not limited to polystyrene, however any of a variety of other materials may be used without departing from the scope of the invention. Rear cover **110** may include a recessed area in which the card may sit to keep it easily centered and from moving within the case. In accordance with an exemplary embodiment rear cover **110** includes a latching mechanism **150** which engages with a complementary latching mechanism **140** on front cover **120**. In the exemplary embodiment shown the latching mechanism is two opposing magnets however any of a variety of latching mechanisms may be used including but not limited to a flexible tab and engaging recess or other engagement structure or a screw which a receiving threaded aperture, etc.

[0017] As shown in FIG. 1, rear cover **110** and front cover **120** are engaged by hinge portions **180**. Hinge portions **180** may simply be a tab on one cover and a recess fitting the tab on the other cover or may be a hinge joining rear cover **110** and front cover **120**. Any of a variety of engagement mechanisms may be used at hinge **180** for coupling of rear cover **110** and front cover **120**.

[0018] In accordance with an exemplary embodiment, front cover **120** includes a transparent window area **160** which allows a user to view card **130** clearly. Similarly, rear cover **110** includes a transparent window area **190** for clearly viewing the back of the sports card (see e.g., FIG. 4). Front cover **120** also includes a rectangular aperture **170** which provides direct access to a portion of the face of the card while the card remains in protective case **100**. Aperture **170** may be used by a card collector to obtain an autograph on the card from the featured player. Many collectors see added value in a card actually signed by the player. The value of a card can be degraded by handling of the card directly. Thus, by having card **130** contained in case **100**, a collector may carry card **130** to an autograph event or game where they meet the featured player and provide them with card **130**. The player in turn autographs card **130** through aperture **170** while the card remains substantially protected within case **100**.

[0019] In accordance with an exemplary embodiment, case **100** may be formed of two separate pieces as depicted in FIGS. 3 and 4 which show front cover **120** (FIG. 3) separated from rear cover **110** (FIG. 4). FIG. 3 is seen with a magnetic catch **140** a clear viewing area **160**, an autograph aperture **170**, and tabs **180** for forming separable the hinge portion. In accordance with various exemplary embodiments aperture **170** should be understood that it may be any variety of shapes sizes and locations in front cover **120**. The shape may include any rectangles or squares with sharp or rounded corners, further the shape may include circles, ovals, or elongated ovals, or any other shape. Aperture **170** may be located anywhere within front cover **120** and alternatively may be located on back cover **110** either alone or in combination with aperture **170** on front cover **120**.

[0020] Generally back cover **110** (FIG. 4) includes magnetic catch **150** and a transparent viewing area **190** through which the back of the card may be viewed. As stated above, back cover **110** may include an aperture for access to autographing the back of the card in some alternative embodiments.

[0021] It should be noted that the exemplary embodiments may generally be formed in any size without departing from the scope of the invention. For example, case **100** may be 4¼" high and 2⅞" wide. Aperture **170** may be located ¾" from the bottom of front cover **120** and ¼" from either side of front cover **120**. The aperture may be a rectangle of 1½" high and 2⅜" wide.

[0022] In another exemplary embodiment, case **100** may be 4⅞" high and 3¼" wide. Aperture **170** may be located 1¼" from the bottom of front cover **120** and ½" from either side of front cover **120**. The aperture may be a rectangle of 1½" high and 2½" wide.

[0023] These are just two exemplary embodiments of card case **100** and any of a variety of sizes may be used without departing from the scope of the invention. In yet one further embodiment, depicted in FIG. 5, a card case **200** is shown with a front cover **210**. Cover **210** includes a large rectangular aperture **270** providing access to the front of card **230**. Case **200** includes a magnetic latch **250** or other latching mechanism at the top of front cover **210**. The bottom of case **200** includes a cath or hinge portion **280** which allows for holding the bottom of card case **200** front and rear covers together and may allow a hinging interface between the two covers.

[0024] In some instances, one or more components may be referred to herein as "configured to," "configured by," "configurable to," "operable/operative to," "adapted/adaptable," "able to," "conformable/conformed to," etc. Those skilled in the art will recognize that such terms (e.g. "configured to") generally encompass active-state components and/or inactive-state components and/or standby-state components, unless context requires otherwise.

[0025] While particular aspects of the present subject matter described herein have been shown and described, it will be apparent to those skilled in the art that, based upon the teachings herein, changes and modifications may be made without departing from the subject matter described herein and its broader aspects and, therefore, the appended claims are to encompass within their scope all such changes and modifications as are within the true spirit and scope of the subject matter described herein. It will be understood by those within the art that, in general, terms used herein, and especially in the appended claims (e.g., bodies of the appended claims) are generally intended as "open" terms (e.g., the term "including" should be interpreted as "including but not limited to," the term "having" should be interpreted as "having at least," the term "includes" should be interpreted as "includes but is not limited to," etc.). It will be further understood by those within the art that if a specific number of an introduced claim recitation is intended, such an intent will be explicitly recited in the claim, and in the absence of such recitation no such intent is present. For example, as an aid to understanding, the following appended claims may contain usage of the introductory phrases "at least one" and "one or more" to introduce claim recitations. However, the use of such phrases should not be construed to imply that the introduction of a claim recitation by the indefinite articles "a" or "an" limits any particular claim

containing such introduced claim recitation to claims containing only one such recitation, even when the same claim includes the introductory phrases “one or more” or “at least one” and indefinite articles such as “a” or “an” (e.g., “a” and/or “an” should typically be interpreted to mean “at least one” or “one or more”); the same holds true for the use of definite articles used to introduce claim recitations. In addition, even if a specific number of an introduced claim recitation is explicitly recited, those skilled in the art will recognize that such recitation should typically be interpreted to mean at least the recited number (e.g., the bare recitation of “two recitations,” without other modifiers, typically means at least two recitations, or two or more recitations). Furthermore, in those instances where a convention analogous to “at least one of A, B, and C, etc.” is used, in general such a construction is intended in the sense one having skill in the art would understand the convention (e.g., “a system having at least one of A, B, and C” would include but not be limited to systems that have A alone, B alone, C alone, A and B together, A and C together, B and C together, and/or A, B, and C together, etc.). In those instances where a convention analogous to “at least one of A, B, or C, etc.” is used, in general such a construction is intended in the sense one having skill in the art would understand the convention (e.g., “a system having at least one of A, B, or C” would include but not be limited to systems that have A alone, B alone, C alone, A and B together, A and C together, B and C together, and/or A, B, and C together, etc.). It will be further understood by those within the art that typically a disjunctive word and/or phrase presenting two or more alternative terms, whether in the description, claims, or drawings, should be understood to contemplate the possibilities of including one of the terms, either of the terms, or both terms unless context dictates otherwise. For example, the phrase “A or B” will be typically understood to include the possibilities of “A” or “B” or “A and B.”

[0026] With respect to the appended claims, those skilled in the art will appreciate that recited operations therein may generally be performed in any order. Also, although various operational flows are presented in a sequence(s), it should be understood that the various operations may be performed in other orders than those which are illustrated, or may be performed concurrently. Examples of such alternate orderings may include overlapping, interleaved, interrupted, reordered, incremental, preparatory, supplemental, simultaneous, reverse, or other variant orderings, unless context dictates otherwise. Furthermore, terms like “responsive to,” “related to,” or other past-tense adjectives are generally not intended to exclude such variants, unless context dictates otherwise.

1. A protective card case, comprising:

- a front cover including a transparent viewing area;
- a rear cover including a transparent viewing area; and
- a coupling mechanism configured for coupling the front cover with the rear cover;
- a latching mechanism configured to selectively latch the front cover with the rear cover,

wherein the rear cover includes a planar recessed area for holding a card in place when the front cover and rear cover are coupled together by the coupling mechanism and latched with the latching mechanism, and

wherein the front cover includes an aperture providing access to a portion of the card when front cover and rear cover are coupled together by the coupling mechanism

and latched with the latching mechanism and the aperture is at least large enough for a person to apply an autograph to a portion of the front of the card.

2. The protective card case of claim **1**, wherein the front cover and rear cover are formed of a substantially rigid plastic material.

3. The protective card case of claim **1**, wherein the coupling mechanism comprises a hinge.

4. The protective card case of claim **1**, wherein the coupling mechanism comprises a tab and receiver.

5. The protective card case of claim **1**, wherein the coupling mechanism comprises interlocking portions of the front and rear cover.

6. The protective card case of claim **1**, wherein the latching mechanism comprises a magnetic latch.

7. The protective card case of claim **1**, wherein the latching mechanism comprises a screw and threaded aperture.

8. The protective card case of claim **1**, wherein the rear cover includes an aperture providing access to a portion of the back of the card when front cover and rear cover are coupled together by the coupling mechanism and latched with the latching mechanism and the aperture is at least large enough for a person to apply an autograph to a portion of the back of the card.

9. The protective card case of claim **1**, wherein the aperture comprises an elongated oval.

10. A protective card case, comprising:

- a front cover including a transparent viewing area and including tabs protruding from the bottom of the front cover;

- a rear cover including a transparent viewing area and including two tab receivers configured to mate with the two tabs of the front cover and couple the front cover with the rear cover; and

- a magnetic catch configured to selectively latch the front cover with the rear cover,

wherein the front cover includes an aperture providing access to a portion of the front of a card when front cover and rear cover are coupled together by the tabs and tab receiver and latched with the magnetic catch and the aperture is at least large enough for a person to apply an autograph to a portion of the front of the card.

11. The protective card case of claim **10**, wherein the front cover and rear cover are formed of a substantially rigid plastic material.

12. The protective card case of claim **10**, wherein the front cover and rear cover are formed of a substantially elastic plastic material.

13. The protective card case of claim **10**, wherein the tab and tab receivers form a hinge.

14. The protective card case of claim **10**, wherein the tab and tab receivers comprise interlocking portions of the front and rear cover.

15. The protective card case of claim **10**, wherein the magnetic latch comprises at least one magnet.

16. The protective card case of claim **10**, wherein the magnetic latch includes at least one rare earth magnet.

17. The protective card case of claim **10**, wherein the rear cover includes an aperture providing access to a portion of the back of the card when the front cover and the rear cover are coupled together by the tab and tab receivers and latched

with the magnetic latch and the aperture is at least large enough for a person to apply an autograph to a portion of the back of the card.

18. The protective card case of claim **10**, wherein the aperture comprises an elongated oval.

19. The protective card case of claim **10**, wherein the aperture comprises a multilateral shape.

20. A method of obtaining an autograph on a collector card comprising:

placing a card in a protective card case, the protective case comprising:

a front cover including a transparent viewing area and including tabs protruding from the bottom of the front cover;

a rear cover including a transparent viewing area and including two tab receivers configured to mate with

the two tabs of the front cover and couple the front cover with the rear cover; and

a magnetic catch configured to selectively latch the front cover with the rear cover,

wherein the front cover includes an aperture providing access to a portion of the front of a card when front cover and rear cover are coupled together by the tabs and tab receiver and latched with the magnetic catch and the aperture is at least large enough for a person to apply an autograph to a portion of the front of the card;

handing the protective case to an autographer;

receiving from the autographer the card in the protective case having been signed by the autographer through the aperture without having removed the card from the case.

* * * * *