ADJUSTABLE FORMFITTING PROTECTIVE FOOTWEAR

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Appl. No.: 11/395,876
Filed: Mar. 30, 2006

Related U.S. Application Data
Continuation-in-part of application No. 09/557,029, filed on Apr. 20, 2000, now Pat. No. 7,051,457.

Publication Classification
Int. Cl.
A41B 11/00 (2006.01)
A43B 17/00 (2006.01)

U.S. Cl. .................................................................. 2/239

ABSTRACT

The present invention is generally directed to improved formfitting protective footwear generally comprising a protective sheath that envelopes all or a portion of the foot from the ankle forward, and which includes fasteners which allow the user to adjust the footwear to comfortably fit his or her foot. In all embodiments, the formfitting protective footwear apparatus of the present invention surrounds the forefoot about the instep and arch and extends forward to protect at least the ball of the foot.
ADJUSTABLE FORMFITTING PROTECTIVE FOOTWEAR

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS


FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The present invention relates to adjustable form-fitting protective footwear generally comprising a protective sheath that envelopes all or a portion of the foot from the ankle forward, which includes fasteners which allow the user to adjust the footwear to comfortably fit his or her foot. The footwear can be worn during activities which are performed with bare feet and which require traction and/or protection from skin burns and tears, including, for example, modern dance, Pilates, yoga and martial arts.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] The need for protective and functional footwear intended for specific applications is well-known. Just as basketball and football place different demands on the human foot and thus require different footwear, different forms of dance also require specialized footwear. For example, ballet requires specially designed slippers and toe shoes; jazz dance requires specially designed character shoes, and tap dance requires specially modified tap shoes.

[0004] The dance style known as, modern dance requires rapid, abrupt, and complex shifts in body position, center of gravity, directional momentum and weight distribution and is often danced barefoot. Included in these movements are forceful turns, spins, stops and other movements that can cause friction burns, tearing, slivers, blisters and other foot problems. In addition, modern dancers—like other dancers—risk serious injury if their foot should slip on the dance floor or if they should turn their ankle. However, given the aesthetic requirements of their art, modern dancers often opt to dance barefoot and tolerate the foot discomfort and injuries associated therewith.

[0005] Earlier, unsuccessful attempts at providing footwear for barefoot dancers included thongs wrapped around the foot and/or tying cut nylon stockings to the foot. Some modern dancers wear a “sole” that is secured to the foot by means of an ankle strap and toe loops. However, because this sole is not securely bound to the sole of the foot, severe tearing of the skin is common, particularly between the great and index toes. As a result, most modern dancers are reluctant to use this type of footwear.

[0006] Co-pending patent applications Ser. Nos. 09/557,229 and 10/958,517, whose disclosures are incorporated-by-reference in their entirety, disclose various embodiments of footwear for dancers which addresses at least some of the problems associated with the prior art.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0007] It is an object of the various embodiments disclosed herein to provide adjustable formfitting protective footwear for dancers and other barefoot athletes such as practitioners of Pilates, yoga and martial arts, using fasteners to secure the footwear to the wearer’s foot. In particular, the various embodiments disclosed herein generally relate to adjustable formfitting footwear for barefoot athletes which in one embodiment comprises: a protective sleeve to be worn on a human foot comprising an inner portion and an outer portion; toe openings disposed in the sleeve; protective material secured to the inner portion of the sleeve; a footpad secured to the outer portion of the sleeve, wherein the protective material and the footpad are positioned in locations whereby they are underneath and protect the ball of the human’s foot when inserted in the sleeve; and fasteners on the protective sleeve for adjustably securing the footwear to the foot.

[0008] In another embodiment, the formfitting footwear comprises: a protective sleeve to be worn on a human foot; toe openings disposed in the sleeve; a protective material disposed adjacent to the toe openings; and a footpad disposed on the protective material, wherein the protective material and the footpad are positioned on the sleeve in locations whereby they are underneath and protect the ball of the human’s foot when inserted in the sleeve; and fasteners on the protective sleeve for adjustably securing the footwear to the foot.

[0009] Further objects and advantages of the invention will become apparent from the description of the drawings and the invention, which follow.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0010] The above and related objects, features and advantages of the disclosed footwear will be more fully understood with reference to the following detailed description of the preferred, albeit illustrative, embodiments of the present invention when considered in conjunction with the accompanying figures, wherein:

[0011] FIG. 1 is a perspective view of one embodiment of the formfitting protective footwear of applicant’s footwear;

[0012] FIG. 2 shows the unassembled components of a second embodiment of the disclosed footwear;

[0013] FIG. 3 shows a plan view of the footwear assembled using the components shown in FIG. 2;

[0014] FIG. 4 shows a bottom view of the embodiment of FIG. 3 positioned on a foot;

[0015] FIG. 5 shows the unassembled components of a third embodiment of the disclosed footwear;

[0016] FIGS. 6A-B show plan and bottom views of the footwear assembled using the components of FIG. 5;

[0017] FIG. 7A shows the components of a partially unassembled fourth embodiment of the disclosed footwear;

[0018] FIG. 7B shows the footwear of FIG. 7A after it has been assembled;

[0019] FIG. 8 shows a perspective view of a fifth embodiment of the disclosed footwear;

[0020] FIG. 9 is an exploded view showing various components of the protective footwear according to an exemplary sixth embodiment of the disclosed footwear with the sleeve in a spread-out configuration;
FIG. 10 is an exploded view showing various components of the protective footwear according to a seventh exemplary embodiment of the disclosed footwear with the sleeve in a spread-out configuration;

FIG. 11 is an exploded view showing various components of the protective footwear according to an eighth exemplary embodiment of the disclosed footwear with the sleeve in a spread-out configuration;

FIG. 12 shows the sleeve of FIG. 11 spread out and patterned to include a second cut-out portion;

FIG. 13 shows protective footwear according to a ninth exemplary embodiment of the disclosed footwear;

FIG. 14 shows protective footwear according to a tenth embodiment of the disclosed footwear;

FIG. 15 shows a method of forming formfitting footwear according to an exemplary embodiment of the disclosed footwear;

FIG. 16 shows another method of forming formfitting footwear according to an exemplary embodiment of the disclosed footwear.

FIGS. 17-21 show an exemplary embodiment of the adjustable formfitting footwear;

FIGS. 22A-22D show another exemplary embodiment of adjustable formfitting footwear; and

FIG. 23 shows another exemplary embodiment of the adjustable footwear.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

The present invention is directed to improved formfitting footwear for barefoot activities, such as modern dance, yoga, Pilates and martial arts, which can be adjusted about a user’s foot through the use of male and female fasteners, including, for example, Velcro®, laces, snaps, buttons and hooks, to name a few. Before describing the adjustable features of this footwear, the basic assembly of the footwear is first described. As will be seen, the footwear can be assembled according to various configurations, each of which can include fasteners for adjusting the footwear.

As shown in FIG. 1, one embodiment of the formfitting protective footwear 10 includes an elasticized sleeve 12 capable of remaining fitted about the forefoot and being provided with a footpad 14 of protective materials sufficient to protect the ball of the foot when footwear 10 worn on a human foot. Sleeve 12 is further provided with an elastic band 16 for retaining sleeve 12 about the instep of the foot and toe openings 18 for retaining sleeve 12 at the forefoot without slippage toward the heel.

FIG. 2 shows the construction elements of a second embodiment of the footwear. As shown in FIG. 2, this embodiment is constructed of four elements. First element 22 is an upper elasticized material having a first edge 24 disposed substantially perpendicular to side edges 26 and 26 thereof and a second edge 28 defining a curve or shape such that the portions of second edge 28 proximate to side edges 26 and 26 are closer to first edge 24 than is the center portion of second edge 28. Second element 32 is a substantially non-elasticized material having a first edge 34 defining a curve or shape that matingly corresponds to the curve or shape of second edge 28 of first element 22. Although substantially non-elastic, the second element 32 preferably has some elastic properties which allow the toe holes to stretch around the wearer’s toes. The second element 32 also includes side edges 36 and 36, and a second edge 38 provided with five toe holes 33 disposed adjacent thereto.

Preferably, element 32 is made from material having characteristics resistant to tearing in the areas adjacent to or between toe holes 33 during intensive use, while at the same time having properties which provide sufficient comfort to the foot, and unlikely to induce blistering or tearing of the skin adjacent to or between the toes. For example, element 32 could be made from any one or more of soft leather, neoprene or a Lycra containing knit, or woven fabric, to name a few. Third element 42 is a lower elasticized material having both a first edge 44 and a second edge 48 disposed perpendicularly to side edges 46 and 46. Finally, fourth element 52 is a non-elasticized material suitable for use as a pad capable of protecting the ball of the foot, while not inhibiting the movement of the wearer.

In various embodiments, fourth element 52 may be constructed of any suitable material which provides traction, including, for example, smooth leather, suede leather, synthetic leather, moldable polymers and elastomers, and other similar suitable materials. Additionally, fourth element 52 may optionally be textured by dimpling, forming ridges therein, forming grooves therein, or other means. Such textures would serve to provide enhanced traction between fourth element 52 and flat surface, such as a floor.

To assemble the embodiment of FIG. 2, first and second elements 22 and 32 are joined, preferably by stitching, along their corresponding edges 28 and 34. Likewise, fourth element 52 is joined to third element 42, again, preferably by stitching, such that fourth element 52 is positioned under the ball of the foot in the finished article. Thereafter, first and third elements 22 and 42 are joined to form a foot-shaped profile, again, preferably by stitching, along their side edges 26/46 and 26/46, such that the perpendicularly disposed second edges 24 and 44 of first element 22 and third element 42 are adjacent to each other and in parallel, leaving an opening therebetween through which a foot is inserted. At this point in the assembly process, fourth element 52 is disposed within the interior of the assembled footwear (see FIG. 3). First edge 38 of second element 32 is then joined to third element 42, again, preferably by stitching. Finally, the constructed article 20 is trimmed along the joined edges and turned inside-out, such that the trimmed edges now occupy the interior void and fourth element 52 is now disposed on the exterior of the article. FIG. 3 shows a perspective view of constructed article 20 made from the elements shown in FIG. 2. FIG. 4 shows a bottom view of the embodiment of FIG. 3 positioned over a human foot, wherein the fourth element 52 and second element 32 are positioned such that they are underneath and protect the ball of a wearer’s foot when inserted therein.

It is noted that the foregoing assembly steps may be performed in different sequences, provided that the finished article is properly constructed to withstand intensive use. Additionally, it is noted that although the second element 32 and fourth element 52 are described as separate elements,
one skilled in the art would understand that this embodiment can be modified such that these elements are combined as a single construction.

[0038] In the embodiment shown in FIGS. 5, 6A and 6B, the third element 42 may be pre-cut such that construction is completed without need for a trimming step. FIGS. 6A and 6B shows an assembled view of the components of FIG. 5, wherein the second element 32 is on the exterior of the foot wear and fourth element 52 is on the interior. To complete assembly, the footwear is stitched together and turned inside out such that the second element 32 is on the interior of the footwear and element 52 is on the exterior, wherein second elements 32 and the fourth element 52 are positioned underneath and protect the ball of wearer’s foot when inserted therein, as shown in FIG. 6B. One skilled in the art will understand that these components can be assembled according to the methods relating to FIGS. 2-4, except that trimming would not be required after assembly.

[0039] Optionally, edge 39 and 39’ of the first and third elements 22 and 42 are not stitched together, but rather include mating fasteners 43, 43’, such as, for example, Velcro®, laces and loops, hooks and clips, snaps and buttons, to name a few. The remaining edges of the elements are stitched together. In this regard, edges 36 and 37 are stitched together, edges 36’ and 37’ are stitched together and edges 41 and 41’ are stitched together. Once assembled, the footwear is turned inside out, so that the second element 32 is on the interior of the foot wear and fourth element 52 is on the exterior, wherein elements 32 and 52 are positioned underneath and protect the ball of wearer’s foot when inserted therein, as shown if FIG. 6B. According to this embodiment, edges 39 and 39’ are secured together via fasteners 43 and 43’ after inserting the foot into the footwear, and the fasteners may be adjusted to make the footwear tighter or looser.

[0040] FIGS. 7A-8B show the components of another embodiment of the present invention. As shown in FIG. 7A, this embodiment includes an elongated strip of material 100 having first edge 102 defining an outward curve or shape having a single toe hole 104 defined adjacent thereto. The material 100 also includes side edges 106 and 106’, and a second edge 108 that is substantially straight and disposed perpendicularly to each of side edges 106 and 106’. An opening (not shown) is included in material 100 adjacent to the toe hole 104. The opening has a size and shape corresponding to the size and shape of a footpad/protective material 110, which is inserted into and secured to the opening via stitching, gluing or other means. In one embodiment, the footpad/protective material 110 is a single piece having an inner protective surface and an outer traction surface which are positioned underneath and protect the ball of a wearer’s foot when inserted therein, as shown in FIG. 7B. The inner surface of the footpad/protective material is preferably made from a moisture wicking material, and the outer surface made from any one or more of smooth leather, suede leather, synthetic leather, moldable polymers, elastomers and synthetic rubber materials, such as neoprene. According to this embodiment, edges 106 and 106’ are secured together via stitching and then turned inside out.

[0041] The material 100 can optionally include mating fasteners 107 and 107’ adjacent to ends 106 and 106’, as shown in phantom in FIG. 7A. In this embodiment, the wearer simply inserts a toe through toe hole 104 and secures fasteners 107, 107’ together about the foot. In use, the article is slipped over a human foot such that the great or second toe is inserted into toe hole 104 with the remaining toes extending unencumbered beyond first edge 102.

[0042] FIG. 8 shows a perspective view of a sixth embodiment of the present invention. This embodiment 120 is of unitary construction and is formed by a conventional molding process. Footpad 122 constructed of a like or alternate material may optionally be provided. Here again, the footpad is made from one piece having an inner protective surface and an outer traction surface which are positioned underneath and protect the ball of a wearer’s foot when inserted therein.

[0043] FIG. 9 is an exploded view showing various components of the protective footwear according to another exemplary embodiment of the invention with the sleeve in a spread-out configuration. As shown in FIG. 9, the sleeve 210 is cut out of or otherwise formed from elastic material so as to have the appropriately placed toe openings 214 formed in an upper portion 211 of the sleeve 210. The elastic material used to form the sleeve 210 is preferably lycra or spandex. The pad 216 is attached to a lower portion 213 of the sleeve 210 preferably by sewing. In this embodiment, the pad 216 is a multi-layer structure made up of a ground-contact layer 218, a shock-absorbing and or cushioning layer 220 and an optional moisture absorbing layer 222. The various layers of the pad 216 may be laminated together by, for example, adhesive, heat or a combination of the two.

[0044] The ground-contact layer 218 is preferably made of a durable material that provides adequate friction with the ground surface, including smooth leather, suede leather, synthetic leather, moldable polymers, elastomers and synthetic rubber materials, such as neoprene. The ground-contact layer 218 may also be textured to enhance traction, such as by forming ridges, grooves and/or dimpings in the outer surface of the ground-contact layer 218. The thickness of the ground-contact layer 218 is preferably in the range of about 0.25 mm to about 2.0 mm.

[0045] The shock-absorbing and/or cushioning layer 220 is preferably placed between the ground-contact layer 218 and the optional moisture-absorbing layer 222. Depending on the structure and materials used, the shock-absorbing and/or cushioning layer 220 has the ability to cushion and/or absorb forces exerted on the wearer’s feet. The shock-absorbing and/or cushioning layer 220 assists in reducing foot pain and injury. Suitable materials for the shock-absorbing and/or cushioning layer 220 include foam materials, such as, for example, polyurethane foam, hydrophilic urethane foam, polyethylene foam, closed cell foams, open cell foams, ethylene propylene rubber (EPDM), or gel-like materials, such as, non-silicon polymer gel. The thickness of the shock-absorbing layer 220 is preferably in the range of about 0.25 mm to about 3.0 mm. If desired, the shock-absorbing and moisture or wicking layer may be combined to form a single construction.

[0046] The moisture-absorbing or wicking layer 222 is preferably placed closest to the wearer’s foot to enhance sweat absorption capability. The moisture-absorbing layer is an optional layer, and thus, in other exemplary embodiments of the invention, the pad 216 may only include the ground-contact layer 218 and the shock-absorbing layer 220, or the
ground-contact layer 218 only. The moisture absorbing layer 222 is preferably made of materials such as, for example, Ultralord® or nylon and polyester fabrics made with up to 50% load of Refresh fibers, or treated with moisture wicking finishes and has a thickness in the range of about 0.25 mm to about 2.0 mm. If desired, the shock-absorbing and moisture wicking layer may be combined to form a single construction.

[0047] The elastic piece 212 is preferably in a band shape and is attached to the end of the sleeve 210 furthest from the wearer's toes. The elastic piece 212 is attached to the sleeve 210 by sewing and/or adhesive and is made of, for example, woven or knit elastic.

[0048] FIG. 10 is an exploded view showing various components of the protective footwear according to another exemplary embodiment of the invention with the sleeve in a spread-out configuration. This embodiment is substantially the same as the embodiment of FIG. 9, except for the provision of a separate toe piece 232 that protects the forefoot of the wearer and provides toe openings. As shown in FIG. 10, the toe piece 232 is attached to a cutout portion 230 of the sleeve 210 formed in the upper portion 211 of the sleeve 210. Preferably the toe piece 232 is formed of a material that provides sufficient support so that the portions adjacent to or between the toe holes do not tear during intensive use, and also sufficient comfort so as not to induce blistering or tearing of the skin adjacent to or between the toes. Appropriate materials for the toe piece 232 may be, for example, neoprene, powermesh or tricot spandex.

[0049] FIG. 11 is an exploded view showing various components of the protective footwear according to another exemplary embodiment with the sleeve in a spread-out configuration. This embodiment is substantially the same as the first-described embodiment, except for the provision of a second cut-out portion 234 formed in a lower portion 213 of the sleeve 210 that accommodates the pad 216. FIG. 12 shows the sleeve 210 spread out and patterned to include the second cut-out portion 234. The pad 216 is attached to the cut-out portion 234 preferably by sewing.

[0050] FIG. 13 is an exploded view of another embodiment of the protective footwear which includes a sleeve 210 having a first cut-out portion 234 sized and shaped to accommodate a pad 216 when attached thereto. Similarly, the sleeve 210 has a second cut-out portion 230 sized and shaped to accommodate a toe piece 232 when attached thereto. All other features of this embodiment are substantially similar to the embodiments described with reference to FIGS. 9-12, and can be varied in a similar manner to those embodiments if desired.

[0051] FIG. 14 shows a perspective view of another embodiment of the footwear positioned for use over a human foot. This embodiment, which may be adapted for use with any of the other embodiments of the invention, is characterized by a sleeve 140 which extends over the ankle, thereby providing increased lateral stability and support. The sleeve 140 can be made from two pieces of Lyca® sewn together, or a single piece of Lyca® made on a knitting machine. The sleeve 140 includes a pad 216 having the same construction as that described with reference to FIG. 9. The pad 216 is located underneath and protects the ball of the foot. The footpad and protective material can be made and attached to the sleeve 140 according to any of the embodiments discussed herein, and can be made as a single construction or made from multiple elements. In one embodiment, the footpad is made of neoprene, rubber, or a moisture absorbing foam.

[0052] In a method of forming the protective footwear according to an exemplary embodiment of the invention, the sleeve 210 is first formed from a Lyca® sheet in a spread out configuration as shown in the embodiments of FIGS. 9-14. As shown in FIGS. 10-13, cut-out portions 230 and/or 234 may be formed in the Lyca® sleeve to accommodate the toe piece 232 and/or the pad 216, respectively. Alternatively, toe holes 214 may be formed directly in the sleeve 210 instead of using a separate toe piece 232. The pad 216 is then attached to the lower portion 213 of the sleeve 210 and the Lyca® is trimmed around the pad 216. The elastic piece 212 is also attached to the end of the sleeve 210 furthest from the wearer's toes, which can be done at any time during the assembly process. As shown in FIG. 15, the upper portion 211 of the sleeve 210 is folded over the lower portion 213 of the sleeve 210 such that the pad 216 is disposed within the void defined by the upper portion 211 and lower portion 213. Then, as shown in FIG. 16, the upper portion 211 and the lower portion 212 are joined together around their respective edges, and the product is turned inside out to result in the finished protective footwear 210.

[0053] In each of the embodiments shown in FIGS. 17-23 mating fasteners 251, 253 (shown in phantom) may optionally be included along the outer lower edges of sleeve 210. The operation and function of these adjustable fasteners is best shown for these embodiments in FIG. 18, which shows pad 216 attached to sleeve 210 by a seam 258. As shown in phantom in FIG. 17, the sleeve 210 includes a first cut-out portion 234 and/or a second cut-out portion 230 to accommodate the pad 216 and the toe piece 232, respectively. Additionally, toe holes 214 are included in the sleeve 210 (or toe piece 232 if used) and an elastic retaining strip 212 is secured to the bottom of sleeve 210. Additionally, fasteners 251 and 253 are secured (e.g., via stitching) to the bottom half of the sleeve 210, as shown in FIG. 18.

[0054] To complete assembly of the sleeve 210, the upper portion 211 is folded over the lower portion 213, as shown in FIGS. 19 and 21. Next, the outer periphery of pad 216, which extends between points 255 and 256, is secured by a seam 259 to the outer periphery of the upper portion sleeve 210, which extends between portions 256, 257, as shown in FIG. 20. The material on sleeve 210 located below portions 255 and 257 are not stitched together. Rather, they include fasteners 251, 253, which in a preferred embodiment, is Velcro®. However, other fasteners, such as laces, hooks, loops, snaps and buttons may also be used. Once assembled, the sleeve 210 is turned inside out for use (see FIG. 21).

[0055] FIG. 23 shows an exemplary embodiment which was assembled according to the foregoing method, and which includes cutouts corresponding to the pad 216 and toe piece 232.

[0056] The fasteners 251 and 253 allow the wearer to close and adjust the sleeve 210 according to the size of their foot. In this regard, once inserted on the wearer’s foot, the fasteners 251, 253 are secured together about the foot and can be adjusted as needed. Additionally, for this embodiment, it is possible to assemble the footwear without the moisture absorbing layer 222, and/or the shock absorbing
and/or cushioning layer 220 such that the pad includes the ground contact layer 218 only. Moreover, although the fasteners 251 and 253 are located on the bottom of the foot when worn, it is possible to modify the design of the footwear such that the fasteners are located on the top side of the footwear, if desired. In each of the embodiments described herein, the pad 216 is located in a position where it will be underneath and protect the ball of the foot when the footwear is worn.

[0057] Referring to FIGS. 22A-22D, another embodiment of the adjustable footwear is shown. In this embodiment, a sleeve 303 (FIG. 22C) is formed from a bottom portion 307 (FIG. 22B) and a top portion 309 (FIG. 22A). The bottom portion 307 includes a pad 305 secured to an elastic material 304, such as Lyقرأ®. The elastic material 304 has a rectangular portion 311 and a somewhat triangular portion 313 having two rounded portions 315, 317 along its upper edge. Fasteners 321 and 323 are located adjacent to the far ends of rectangular portion 311. Preferably, fasteners 321, 323 are Velcro®, but can be other types of fasteners as well, including, for example, hooks, laces, buttons, snaps and the like. The pad 305 is generally heart shaped and includes rounded edges that correspond in shape and size to rounded portions 315, 317 of elastic material 304 and are secured thereto (e.g., via stitching), as shown in FIG. 22B.

[0058] Top portion 309 is approximately the same width as the pad 305, as shown in FIG. 22A. Top portion 309 has a rectangular or square-shaped lower half 331 and an upper rounded half 333, which includes toe holes 310. The rounded half 333 of top portion 309 is secured to the upper portion of pad 305 via a seam 337, thereby forming a pocket through which the foot and toes are inserted, as shown in FIG. 22C. The lower half 331 of top portion 309 includes a fastener 339 (e.g., Velcro®) which is located such that it will mate with fasteners 321 and 323 when worn on a foot, as shown in FIG. 22D.

[0059] In operation, the wearer inserts his or her foot in the pocket between top portion 309 and bottom portion 307, with the toes extending through toe holes 310. Next, the wearer folds the rectangular portions 311 over the top of his or her foot and secures the fasteners 321, 323 to fastener 337. The wearer can adjust the fastener so that a comfortable fit is achieved, and the pad 305 is located in a position which is underneath and protects the ball of the wearer’s foot.

[0060] It is noted that for the embodiments shown in FIGS. 22A-22D, the pad 305 can consist of the moisture absorbing layer 222, ground contact layers 218 and cushioning layer 220, or any combination thereof. Additionally, if desired, a separate toe piece and corresponding cut-out can be used.

[0061] It should be appreciated that the protective footwear according to various exemplary embodiments of the invention may be made by any other suitable process, such as one in which the sleeve with the toe holes are formed as a unitary construction using conventional molding processes. Alternatively, the upper and lower portions of the sleeve may be two entirely separate pieces which are later sewn together. Soft leather, synthetic leather or any other suitable materials may be used so that the pad is constructed of one layer that is either sewn onto the sleeve 210 or sewn on to a cutout area 234 where the inner surface of the footpad that makes contact with the skin serves as the protective layer and the opposite side serves as the ground contact layer.

[0062] It is understood that the presently claimed invention may be embodied in other specified forms without departing from the spirit or essential characteristics thereof. The present embodiments are therefore to be considered in all respects as illustrative and not restrictive, and all changes which come within the meaning and range or equivalency of the claims are therefore intended to be embraced therein.

What is claimed is:
1. Formfitting footwear comprising:
   - a protective sleeve to be worn on a human foot comprising an inner portion and an outer portion;
   - toe openings disposed in said sleeve;
   - protective material secured to the inner portion of said sleeve;
   - a footpad secured to said outer portion of said sleeve, wherein said protective material and said footpad are positioned in locations whereby they are underneath and protect a ball of said human’s foot when inserted in said sleeve; and
   - fasteners on said protective sleeve for adjustably securing said footwear to the foot.
2. The footwear of claim 1, further comprising material which retains said sleeve about said foot’s instep when inserted in said sleeve.
3. The footwear of claim 1, wherein said sleeve is formed from at least two sheets of material which are partially stitched together.
4. The footwear of claim 1, wherein said fasteners are Velcro®.
5. The footwear of claim 4, wherein said footpad is made from a material from the group consisting of smooth leather, suede leather, synthetic leather, moldable polymers and elastomers.
6. The footwear of claim 1, wherein said footpad is textured to enhance traction.
7. The footwear of claim 6, wherein said textured footpad comprises one or more of the following: ridges, grooves and dimpling.
8. The footwear of claim 1, further comprising an absorption layer adjacent to said footpad and protective materials.
9. Formfitting footwear comprising:
   - a protective sleeve to be worn on a human foot;
   - toe openings disposed in said sleeve;
   - a protective material disposed adjacent to said toe openings;
   - a footpad disposed on said protective material, wherein said protective material and said footpad are positioned on said sleeve in locations whereby they are underneath and protect a ball of said human’s foot when inserted in said sleeve; and
   - fasteners on said protective sleeve for adjustably securing said footwear to the foot.