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Presnell

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[54] **FOOTBALL**

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[52] **U.S. Cl.** ..... **273/65 A,** 273/65 EG

[51] **Int. Cl.** **A63b 41/08**

[58] **Field of Search** 273/58, 55, 65

[56] **References Cited**

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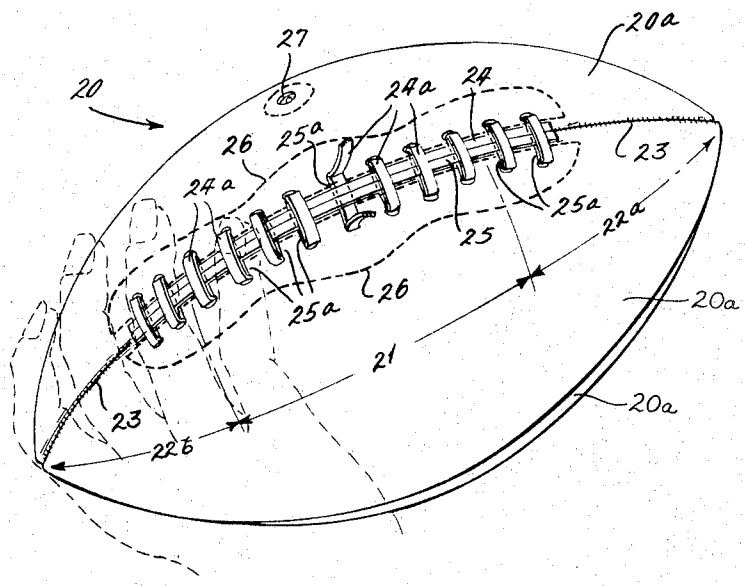
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[57] **ABSTRACT**

A football including an inflatable bladder insertion opening and in which an extended lacing length and corresponding cross loops are provided to accommodate football players with small hands and to improve the ball handling and passing manipulation. The lacing loops re extended out to a length of about 55–60 percent of the total length of a seam line.

8 Claims, 2 Drawing Figures



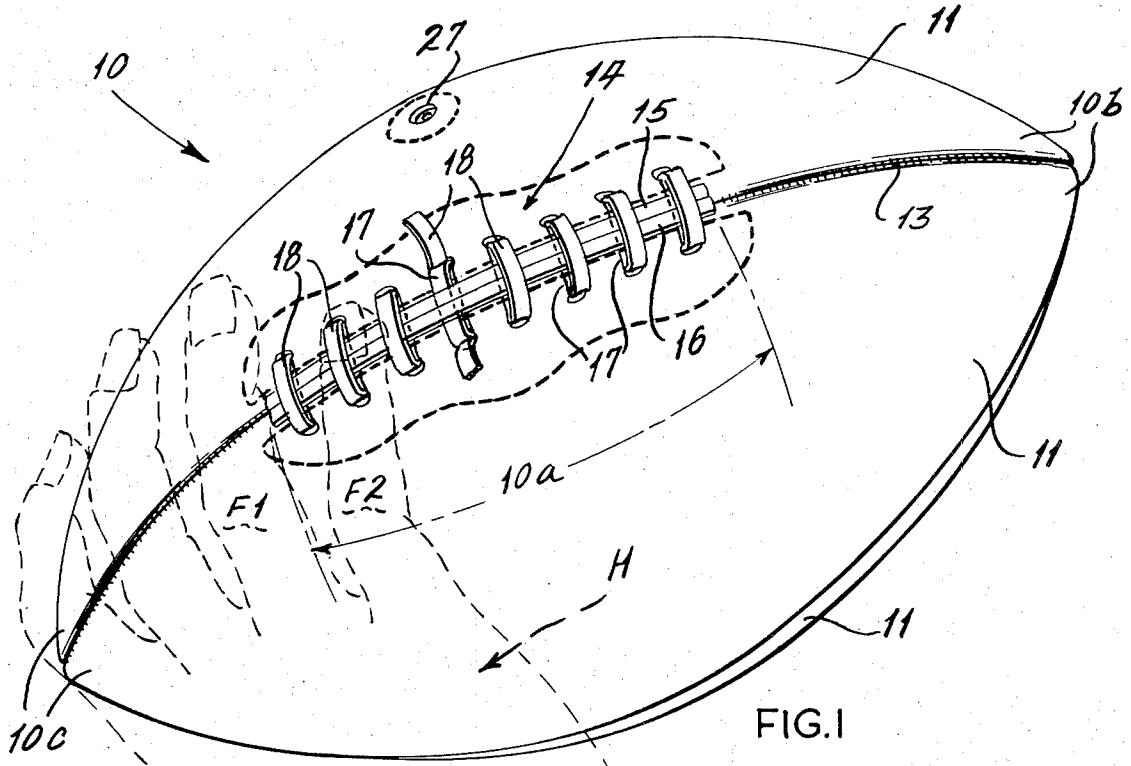

10
27
14
11
15
10b
18
13
18
17
17
16
11
10a
F1
F2
H
11
10c

FIG.1

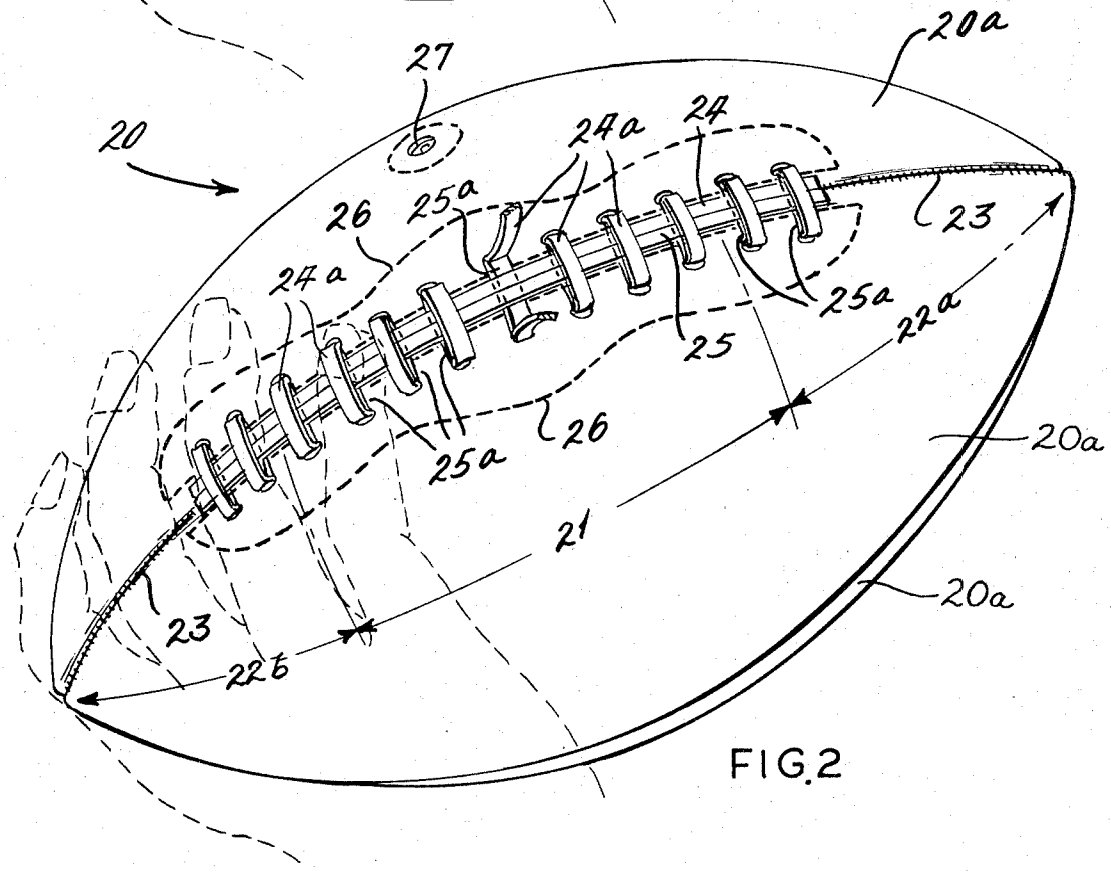

20a
27
20
24a
24
26
25a
23
24a
25a
22a
25
26
20a
25a
21
20a
23
22b

FIG.2

FOOTBALL

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to improvements in football lacing constructions and is directed more specifically to improving the ball handling efficiency and security.

Heretofore the basic or standard football has had a bladder insertion opening which is closed by a lacing assembly including eight loop stitches directed transversely of the bladder opening, which lacing and loops have traditionally been utilized by football players as a gripping surface, especially for passing. The problem up to now has been that football players with small hands have had to grip the ball closer to the enlarged or fat center section in order to get one or two fingers on the lacing. This has increased the possibility of fumbles and mishandling of the ball in wet or cold weather, especially when a player has a limited spread between the fingers and the thumb.

The improved lacing construction of this disclosure is accompanied by the enlargement of the bladder insertion opening in one of the seams of the casing so that the inflatable bladder may be laid in the casing more accurately, so that the reinforcement patch for the air valve and the alignment of the air valve in the patch area can be made easier, and so that additional lacing extended toward and into the conoidal ends of the football will place a gripping surface in the area of the football casing where a player with small hands can easily improve the efficiency of ball handling.

The objects of the invention are to provide an extended lacing for closing the bladder insertion opening in a football casing so as to get an increase in the gripping surface for more efficient ball handling.

It is also an object of this invention to provide an extra lacing surface so that football players with small hands may obtain a more secure grip on the football and thereby improve the accuracy of passing, and afford a means for improving the distance of passing as more force and spiral action may be imparted to a ball with the longer lacing.

Yet other objects of the invention are to provide an improved lacing construction which will afford better all round ball control, to improve maximum offensive efficiency in ball handling and passing, and to minimize or reduce the chances of fumbles in cold weather, or when the ball is wet.

A preferred embodiment of the present lacing construction for a football consists in providing an extended lacing assembly for closing the bladder insertion opening whereby extra lacing loops are brought nearer the opposite longitudinal ends of the football for the purpose of allowing ball handling in an area where the ball diameter will be found more suitable for players having small hands, but without detriment to the other players with normal or large hands.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The drawings accompanying and forming a part of the application for patent on the improved football disclose the following:

FIG. **1** is a view of a prior art football held in position for passing and showing the usual handhold thereon; and

FIG. **2** is a view similar to FIG. **1**, but showing the improved football lacing construction of this invention.

DESCRIPTION OF A PREFERRED FOOTBALL LACING CONSTRUCTION

In FIG. **1** the football **10** has its central section **10***a* in an ellipsoidal configuration and the end sections tapering toward tips **10***b* and **10***c*. The casing or outer cover is made up of cooperating quarter sections **11** side seamed in the usual manner. One of the side seams **13** is interrupted at the lacing assembly **14** so that an opening is formed to allow insertion of the bladder or air containing sack (not shown). The bladder receiving opening is generally confined to the ellipsoidal central section **10***a* of the casing, and is covered by the longitudinal lacing ends **15** and **16** disposed beneath the loops **17** and **18** of the cooperating lacing **15** and **16**.

The football **10** is usually gripped by the hand H for passing or other manipulation with one or two fingers (F1 and F2) in contact with the lacing. If more fingers are placed in contact with the lacing the hand must be brought closer to the ellipsoidal center section of the ball **10** and this is more easily accomplished with a large hand, but very difficult with a small size hand. The size and shape of the football body **10** is generally fixed within certain standards so that the playing and handling characteristics will be predictable. The players who most often handle the football under game conditions do not have the same size hands so that some players are handicapped due to small hands. For such handicapped players it is necessary to try and grip the body **10** far out toward a tip section **10***c* and **10***b* and yet keep at least the little finger F2 on the lacing. When passing a football, the fingers use the lacing as a raised surface for imparting rotation which greatly aids the stability and flight of the ball as it rotates about its major axis extending from tip **10***c* to tip **10***b* and generally parallel to the lacings **15**, **16**. The foregoing refers to prior art footballs.

The greatly improved football of this invention is shown at **20** in FIG. **2**. The football **20** has a casing with an ellipsoidal center section **21** which lies between substantially identically shaped conoidal end sections **22***a* and **22***b*. An opening in the quarter sections **20***a* is provided in the central portion of the longitudinal seam **23** for the insertion of a bladder (not shown). The opening is covered by laces **24** and **25**, and is held closed by the lacing looped portions **24***a* and **25***a* directed across the bladder opening. The loop portions **25***a* underlie loops **24***a*, as is shown by partly lifting up lacing portion **24***a* to reveal portion **25***a*. The bladder opening is suitably internally reinforced for the lacing holes by a ply of material (not shown) held in place by the stitches **26** which are exposed to view as indicated in FIG. **2**, and the length of the bladder opening ends at about the last or endmost loops of the lacing **24** and **25**.

The greater length of opening makes it easier to insert the bladder and adjust the position of the bladder to the inside of the casing, along with aligning the usual valve washer in the casing with the usual exposed air valve **27** which is vulcanized into the bladder. The greater length of opening is obtained as a result of extending the number of lacing loops **24***a* and **25***a* well into the respective conoidal end sections **22***a* and **22***b* so that, in addition to the above noted advantages, players with small hands can get a secure grip with more than one finger on the lacings. The extra loops and extension of the lacing into the casing end sections **22***a* and **22***b* provides better ball control and accuracy

of delivery of a pass. By getting more fingers on the lacings, without having to shift the hand more into the ellipsoidal center section **21**, the ball can be passed without wobble, and the ability to attempt long passes is greatly improved. The extra number of lacing loops and the length of the lacing underlying the loops provides a better handle for the quarterback and ball carriers, lessens the chance of fumbles when the ball is wet or the hands are cold, and increases the efficiency of the player with small hands.

In considering the construction of a football such as that shown in FIG. **2**, it should be understood that the casing may be a single molded body having simulated seam lines in place of the stitched seams **23** of footballs made of various separately formed parts which are assembled by side seaming and stitching and other means. When the football is a single molded body the lacing means **24** and **25** and the transverse lacing loops **24***a* and **25***a* are molded in place and form a raised surface in the seam line to simulate the feel of the lacing means shown in FIG. **2**. Therefore, a molded casing is within the scope of this disclosure with the result that the improved football shown at **20** in FIG. **2** may have a one-piece molded body with seam lines and simulated lacing means extending into the conoidal end sections **22***a* and **22***b* so as to duplicate the football construction heretofore described.

It is to be appreciated that the number of lacing loops extending transversely of a seam line is not important, as many footballs of the prior art have had various numbers of such lacing loops. The limitation of the prior art has been in keeping the bladder opening nearly a constant size while varying the number of loops. In this disclosure a departure from the limits of the prior art has been made by extending the lacing loops farther out toward and into the conoidal ends of the football casing with the result that the bladder is more easily inserted and the ball handling efficiency has been increased.

Heretofore the football of FIG. **1** has had the lacing loops confined to a length of about 20–35 percent of the total length of a seam line. The lacing loops of the football of FIG. **2** are extended out to a length of about 55–60 percent of the total length of a seam line. This increase is significant and has resulted in improved assembly and playing characteristics.

What is claimed is:

1. A football comprising an elongated inflatable casing having a central ellipsoidal section and opposite conoidal end sections tapering off in opposite directions from said central section, the opposite end sections being on and symmetrical with the elongated axis of the casing, a bladder opening in the casing extending along the curved surface of the ellipsoidal center section, and lacing means closing said bladder opening and having spaced loops directed transversely of the length of the bladder opening, said lacing means and loops extending into and forming gripping surfaces in said conoidal end sections of said casing.

2. The football of claim **1** and in which said casing is composed of plies extending longitudinally of the football and being side seamed to each other, said bladder opening being in one of said side seams to open to the casing interior, and said lacing means being disposed on the outer surface of said casing for contact by the fingers of the player handling the football.

3. The football of claim **2** wherein said lacing means connects the plies across the bladder opening and extends lengthwise of the seam for substantially 55 to 60 percent of the total length of the surface of said central and opposite end sections of the casing.

4. The football of claim **1** wherein said lacing means has a length along the curvature of said central and opposite end sections of substantially 55 to 60 percent of the total length of the casing as measured along the surface thereof.

5. A football comprising an inflatable casing having a central ellipsoidal section and opposite conoidal end sections, said casing having visible seam lines running from end to end of the football along the exposed surface, and lacing means in one of said seam lines extending through said central section and into each of said end sections, said lacing means being raised on the casing surface and including elongated portions running along said one seam line and loop portions directed across and spaced apart along said elongated portions.

6. The football set forth in claim **5** wherein said one seam line is interrupted to provide an opening to the casing interior, and said lacing means holds said opening closed with the endmost ones of said loop portions being adjacent the end limits of said opening.

7. The football set forth in claim **5** wherein said lacing means extends along a seam line for substantially 55 to 60 percent of its length.

8. The football set forth in claim **5** wherein said lacing means extends along a seam line in said ellipsoidal central section and into each conoidal end section.

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