US 20060179545A1

(19) **United States**

(12) **Patent Application Publication** (10) **Pub. No.: US 2006/0179545 A1**

Arensdorf et al. (43) **Pub. Date: Aug. 17, 2006**

(54) **ATHLETIC PROTECTIVE PADDING**

(75) Inventors: **Stephen C. Arensdorf**, Hays, KS (US); **Edward H. Tobergte**, Fairfield, OH (US)

Correspondence Address:
Ginnie C. Derusseau
Chase Law Firm, L.C.
Suite 130
4400 College Boulevard
Overland Park, KS 66211 (US)

(73) Assignee: **Arveda, LLC d/b/a Stromgren Supports, Inc.**

(21) Appl. No.: **11/059,769**

(22) Filed: **Feb. 17, 2005**

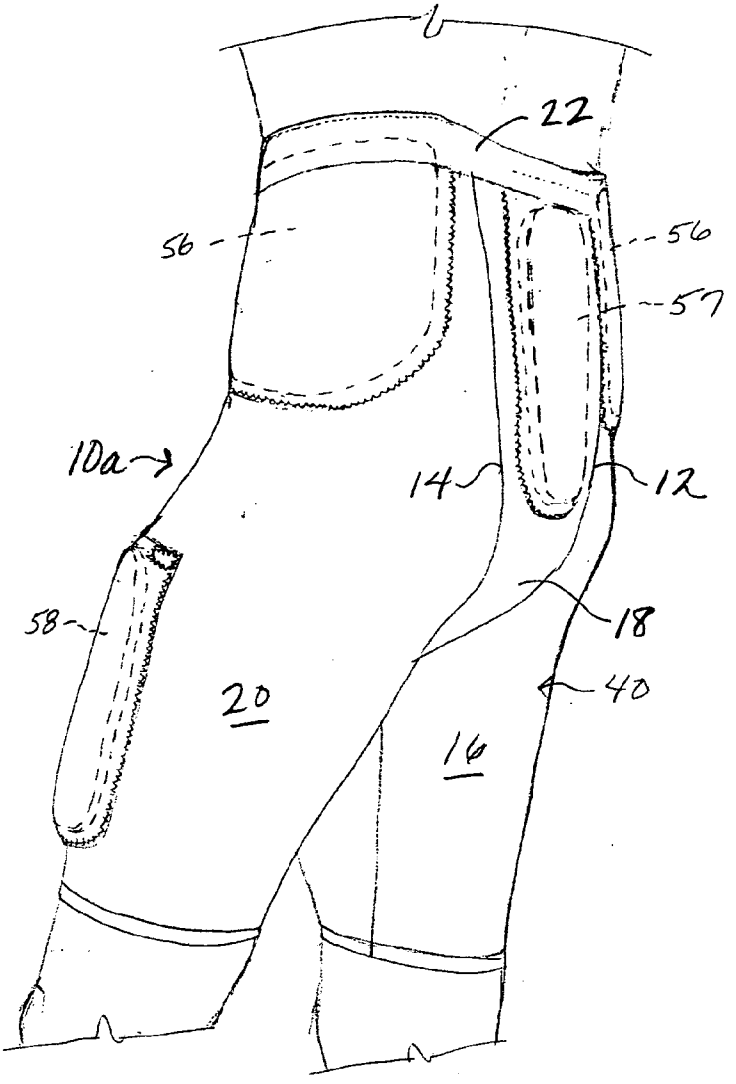
Publication Classification

(51) **Int. Cl.**
A41D 1/06 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **2/227**

(57) **ABSTRACT**

An athletic protective pad having first and second layers of breathable fabric and a foam body having a layer of perforated foam. The layer of foam is preferably closed cell foam with spaced apart perforations therethrough. The foam body is sandwiched between the first and second layers of fabric, thereby wicking moisture away from a wearer.



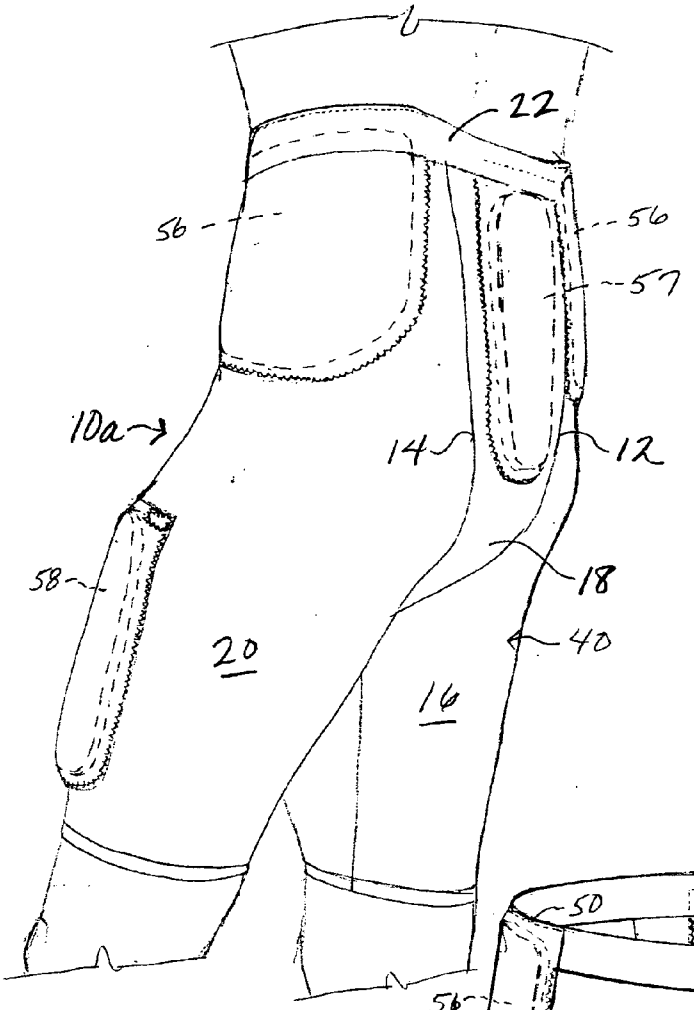

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Fig. 1

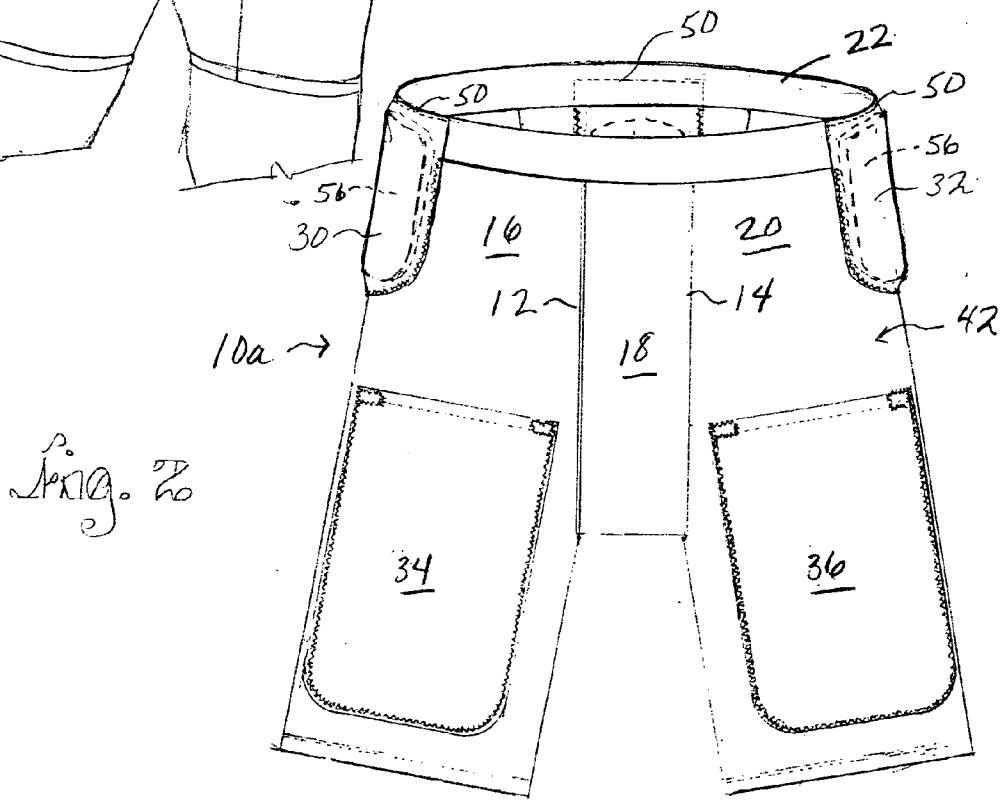
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Fig. 2

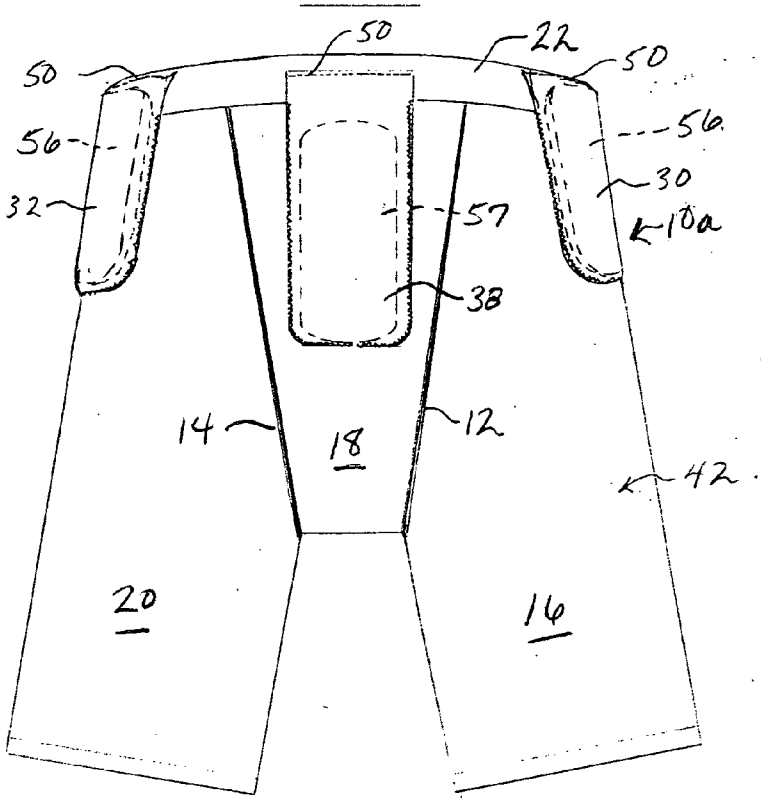

Fig. 3

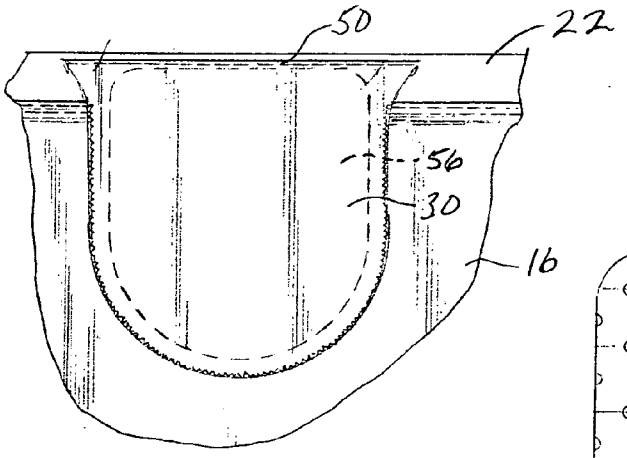

Fig. 4

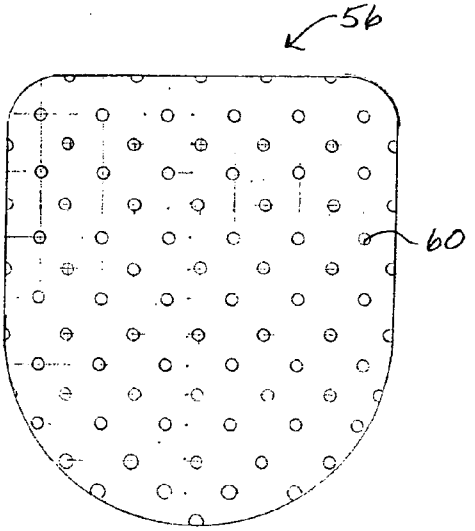

Fig. 5

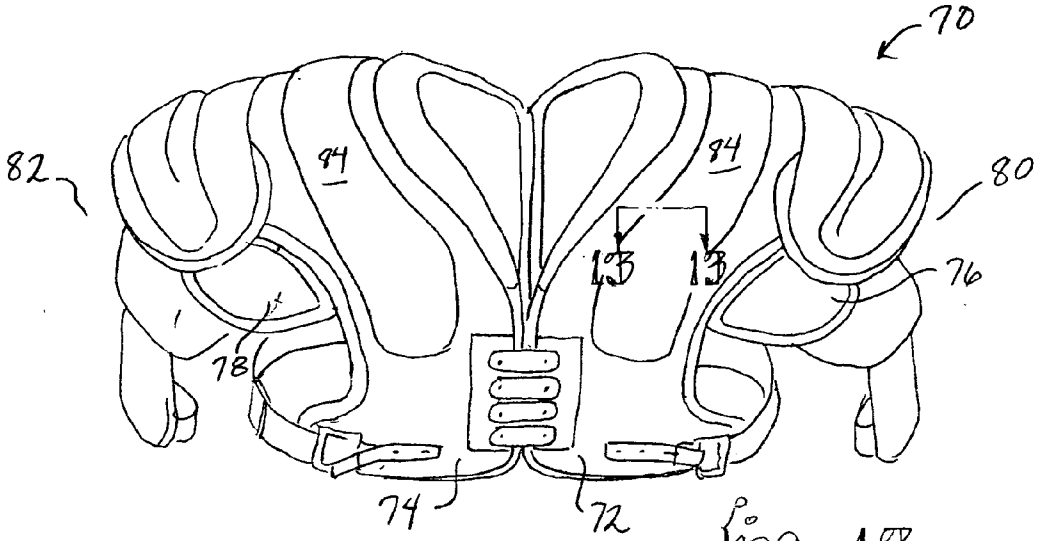
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Fig. 17

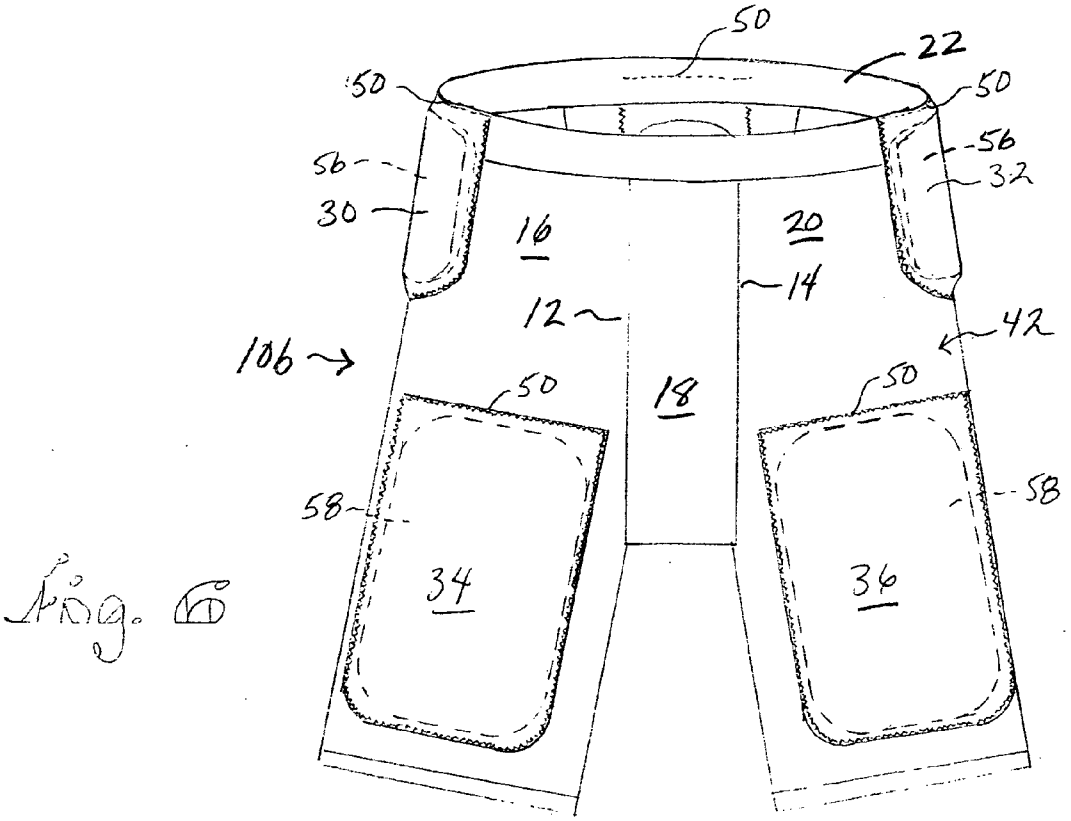
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Fig. 16

Fig. 1B

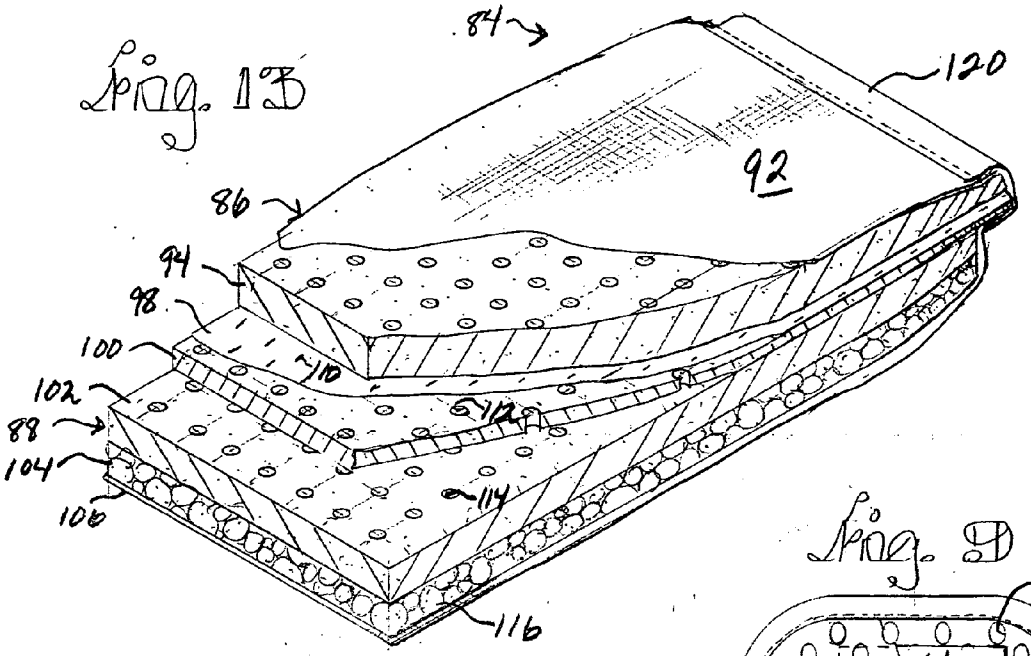


Fig. 9

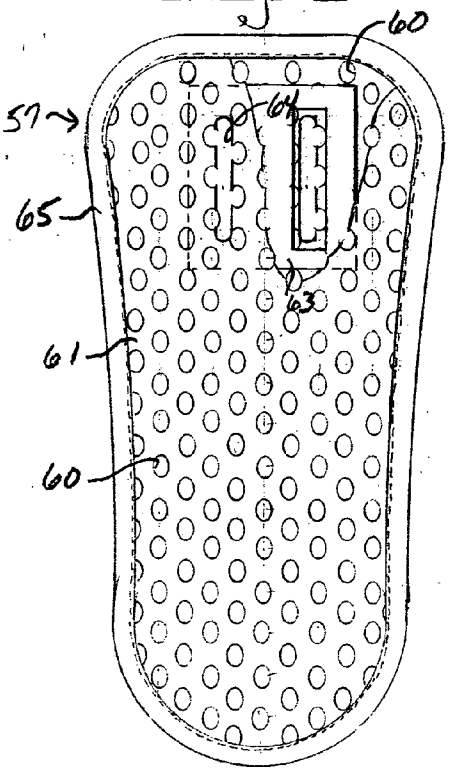
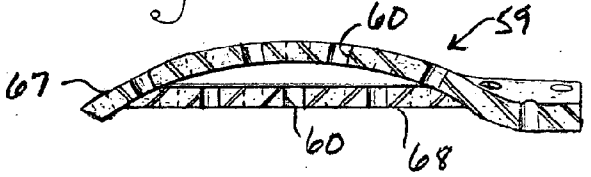


Fig. 8



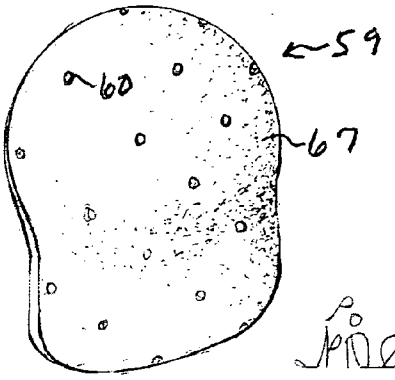


Fig. 7

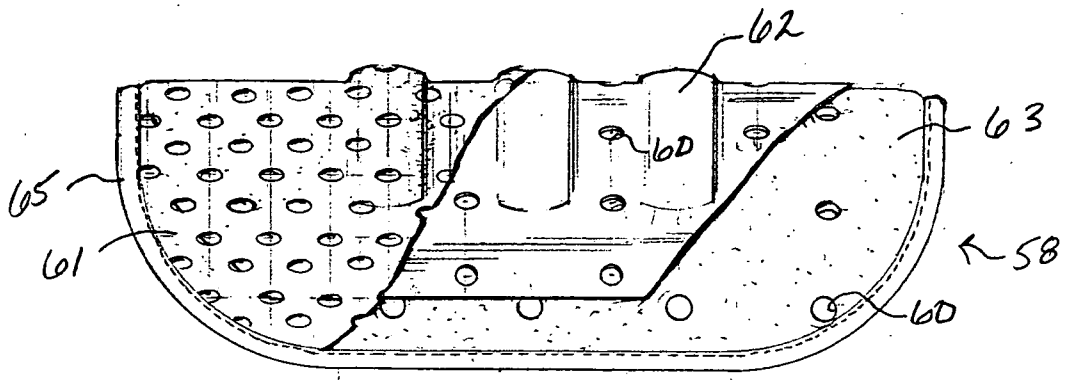


Fig. 11

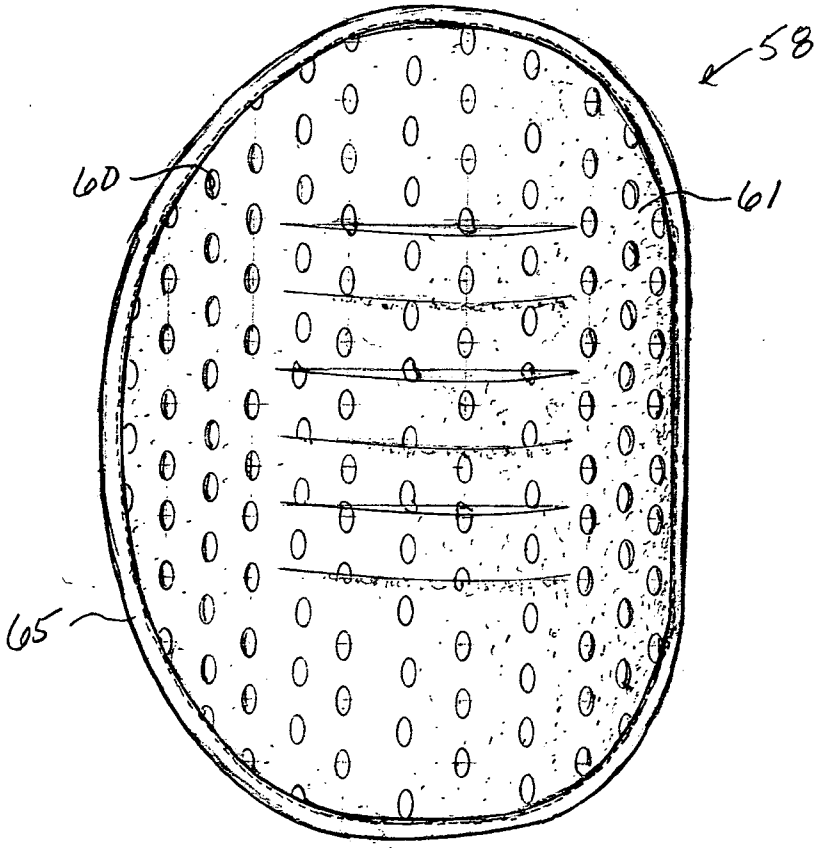


Fig. 10

ATHLETIC PROTECTIVE PADDING

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] This invention relates to improvements in athletic protective gear that is provided with lightweight, moisture wicking protective pads. In particular, the athletic protective gear is provided with breathable padding.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] Athletic protective pads, such as shoulder pads, rib protectors, hip pads, thigh pads, tail pads and so forth, are commonly worn by athletes in a variety of sports in which body contact with either another participant or a piece of equipment used in the sport presents the risk of injury. These types of protective pads have long been known and used by athletes in contact sports, such as football and hockey.

[0003] Compression wear, especially pants, has become widely used and accepted for active individuals and athletes engaged in sports and physical activity ranging from bicycling to football. The basic function of compression pants and compression shorts is to serve as an athletic girdle and support for muscles of the abdomen, lower back and thighs. This is accomplished through the use of a stretch fabric which is placed in tension as the part is pulled into position on the wearer's body. In sports such as football and baseball the shorts can be provided with internal pockets for receiving and holding protective pads. Hip, tailbone and thigh pockets may be provided on a fully-pocketed knee-length garment in order to provide maximum protection against impact. Alternatively, some or all of the protective pads may be sewn in permanently. Compression pants may additionally provide knee pads.

[0004] Sports such as football, baseball and hockey have long used protective helmets to provide head protection. The helmets include internal padding material for absorbing and cushioning impact.

[0005] These and other types of padding typically do not allow body heat to be released from the body. Thus, typical padding is very warm when worn by an athlete. This can decrease the athlete's level of performance and in extreme cases it can even be a cause of heat stroke. Furthermore, this padding typically is not breathable. The padding does not allow perspiration to be wicked away from the athlete's body. It is desirable for the padding to transfer heat and moisture away from the wearer.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0006] **FIG. 1** is a perspective view of compression pants shown as worn by a user, the sport pants having breathable hip, thigh and tail protective pads in accordance with the present invention.

[0007] **FIG. 2** is a front view of the compression pants of **FIG. 1** turned inside out and with the thigh pads removed from within the thigh panels.

[0008] **FIG. 3** is a rear view of the compression pants of **FIG. 1** turned inside out.

[0009] **FIG. 4** is an enlarged detail of the right hip panel and pad of the compression pants of **FIG. 1**.

[0010] **FIG. 5** is an enlarged top view of a hip pad of the compression pants of **FIG. 1**.

[0011] **FIG. 6** is a front view of a second embodiment of compression pants turned inside out, with breathable hip, thigh and tail pads in accordance with the present invention.

[0012] **FIG. 7** is a perspective view of a knee pad used with compression pants in accordance with the present invention.

[0013] **FIG. 8** is a cross-section of the knee pad of **FIG. 7**.

[0014] **FIG. 9** is an enlarged top view of a tail pad used with compression pants in accordance with the present invention, broken away to show the inner plastic layer.

[0015] **FIG. 10** is an enlarged perspective view of a thigh pad used with compression pants in accordance with the present invention.

[0016] **FIG. 11** is a partial top view of the thigh pad of **FIG. 10** broken away to show the inner plastic layer.

[0017] **FIG. 12** is a perspective view of football shoulder pads having breathable protective padding in accordance with the present invention.

[0018] **FIG. 13** is a cross-sectional view taken along line **13-13** of **FIG. 12** showing the breathable padding, with the outer plastic removed for clarity.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0019] Referring initially to **FIGS. 1-3** and **6**, the protective padding of the present invention is shown as used with a compression sport pant. More specifically, the pant illustrated in **FIGS. 1-3** is a knee-length football girdle **10***a* and the pant illustrated in **FIG. 6** is a baseball sliding pant **10***b*. The pants **10***a* and **10***b* are very similar; however, differences between the pants **10***a* and **10***b* will be made clear throughout the description. **FIG. 1** shows the exterior or outer surface **40** of the pants **10***a* and **FIGS. 2, 3** and **6** show the interior or inner surface **42** of the pants **10***a* and **10***b* (with the pants **10***a* and **10***b* turned inside-out).

[0020] The sport pants **10***a* and **10***b* have three body sections stitched together at main seams **12** and **14**, a right pelvis and leg section **16**, a crotch section **18** and a left pelvis and leg section **20**. The main seams **12** and **14** extend from the front of a waistband **22** down under the crotch and up to the back of the waistband **22** as may be appreciated by comparing **FIGS. 2 and 6** with **FIGS. 1 and 3**.

[0021] Each of the pants **10***a* and **10***b* are provided with five pad panels, namely, identical right and left hip pad panels **30** and **32**, identical right and left thigh pad panels **34** and **36** and a tail pad panel **38**. The pad panels **30**, **32**, **34**, **36** and **38** are secured by stitching to the inner surface **42** of the pants **10***a* and **10***b*, as shown most clearly in **FIGS. 2, 3** and **6**.

[0022] The three body sections **16**, **18** and **20** and the pad panels **30**, **32**, **34**, **36** and **38** are formed of a highly resilient, breathable fabric, preferably a blend of 75 percent nylon and 25 percent Lycra® (DuPont registered trademark) having a rating of approximately 280 denier. But the compression pants may be formed of any suitable compression material.

[0023] The pad panels **30**, **32**, **34**, **36** and **38** are stitched and secured to the body sections **16**, **18** and **20** substantially as the pocket panels shown and described in detail in U.S. Pat. No. 5,161,257 which is hereby incorporated herein by reference. However, unlike the panels in the '257 patent, as shown and described herein, most of the pad panels **30**, **32**, **34**, **36** and **38** do not present pockets. More specifically, pad panels **30**, **32** and **38** of compression pant **10***a* and pad panels **30**, **32**, **34**, **36** and **38** of compression pant **10***b* do not present pockets. Each hip panel **30** and **32** is secured along its top edge by stitching **50** immediately adjacent the top edge of the waistband **22**. The top edge of the tail pad panel **38** is secured by stitching **50** to the waistband **22**. The top edge of each thigh panel **34**, **36** of compression short **10***b* is secured by stitching **50** to the corresponding right or left body section **16** or **20**.

[0024] Thigh panels **34** and **36** of the football girdle **10***a* do present pockets. Of course, the pad panels **30**, **32**, **34**, **36** and **38** can be secured to the pants **10***a* and **10***b* as pockets or closed across the top edge, as desired. If the panels **30**, **32**, **34**, **36** or **38** are secured to the pants **10***a* or **10***b* to form pockets, the athletic pad is selectively removable from the pants **10***a* or **10***b*. Otherwise, the pad is not removable from the pants **10***a* or **10***b*.

[0025] Whether, the panels **30**, **32**, **34**, **36** and **38** form pockets or are secured across the top edge, they cooperate with the corresponding body section **16**, **18** or **20** of the pants **10***a* or **10***b* to sandwich an athletic pad **56**, **57**, **58** or **59** therebetween. The athletic pads can take any shape as desired.

[0026] As shown, the athletic pads **56**, **57**, **58** and **59** are formed of closed cell EVA foam. The pads **56**, **57**, **58** and **59** have spaced apart perforations **60** extending therethrough, as seen in **FIGS. 5**, **7**, **8**, **9**, **10** and **11**. The combination of the breathable fabric used for the body sections **16**, **18** and **20** and the pad panels **30**, **32**, **34**, **36** and **38** of the sport pants **10***a* and **10***b* and the perforated EVA foam for the pads **56**, **57**, **58** and **59** allows the sport pants **10***a* and **10***b* to ventilate or wick moisture away from the wearer, making the pants **10***a* and **10***b* drier and cooler to wear. Furthermore, the pants **10***a* and **10***b* thus do not absorb moisture and become heavy. Alternatively, the pads **56**, **57**, **58** and **59** could be formed of Brock™ foam, discussed in more detail below, or any other kind of breathable or perforated foam.

[0027] A hip pad **56** is shown in detail in **FIG. 5**. It has a tear drop shape and substantially conforms to the shape of the hip panel **30**. It is shown secured to the right body section **16** by the hip panel **30** in **FIG. 4**. Hip pads **56** are also shown with pants **10***a* and **10***b* in **FIGS. 1**, **2**, **3** and **6** secured high on the waistband **22** to protect the wearer's iliac crest. This helps prevent hip pointer injuries. Preferably, the hip panels **30** and **32** and the hip pads **56** are positioned within ⅛" of the top edge of the waistband **22**.

[0028] A tail pad **57** is shown in detail in **FIG. 9**. It has an elongated shape to substantially conform to the shape of panel **38**. The tail pad **57** is shown secured between the panel **38** and the body section **18** of the pants **10***a* and **10***b* in **FIGS. 1 and 3**. The tail pad **57** includes a top and bottom layer of perforated closed cell foam **61** and **62** which sandwich a middle reinforcing plastic layer **63** extending around strap slots **64**. The plastic layer **63** is held in place between the foam layers **61** and **62** with any suitable adhesive. The outer edges of the foam layers **61** and **62** are stitched together, preferably through fabric edging **65**.

[0029] **FIGS. 1 and 6** show larger, substantially rectangular shaped thigh pads **58** secured by panels **34** and **36**. **FIG. 2** includes panels **34** and **36** which present pockets into which thigh pads **58** can be inserted and removed, as desired. A thigh pad **58** is shown in detail in **FIGS. 10 and 11**. Similar to the tail pad **57**, the thigh pads **58** include a top and bottom layer of perforated closed cell foam **61** and **62** which sandwich a middle reinforcing plastic layer **63**. The plastic layer **63** is held in place between the foam layers **61** and **62** with any suitable adhesive. The outer edge of the foam layers **61** and **62** are stitched together, preferably through fabric edging **65**. The perforations **60** extend through all three layers **61**, **62** and **63**.

[0030] **FIG. 7** shows a knee pad **59** that may be used with a longer version of the pants **10***a* and **10***b* that extend over the wearer's knees. The knee pad **59** includes a top, cupped layer **67** and a flat base layer **68**, as shown in **FIG. 8**. Each layer **67** and **68** has the perforations **60** extending therethrough.

[0031] Protective padding, such as that described above with respect to compression sport pants **10***a* and **10***b* can also be used in connection with other athletic gear. For instance, this type of breathable padding could be used in protective helmets, as used in football or baseball. Such padding would wick moisture away from the wearer's head. If the padding is spaced or suspended from the helmet's hard outer shell, the breathability would be enhanced. Additionally, as another example, football shoulder pads **70**, such as those shown in **FIG. 12**, can incorporate the breathable padding.

[0032] The shoulder pads **70** include left and right torso halves **72** and **74**, left and right deltoid pads **76** and **78** and left and right shoulder pads **80** and **82**. A rigid plastic outer area **84** typically extends partially over the exterior of each torso half **72** and **74** to provide stability to the shoulders. The padding construction **84** used in the football shoulder pads **70** is best shown in **FIG. 13**. The padding construction **84** presents an outer pad **86** and an inner pad **88**.

[0033] As shown and described herein, the outer and inner pads **86** and **88** include a combination of breathable fabrics, closed cell EVA foam and Brock™ foam. This combination of materials is used to provide ease in manufacture, cost efficiency and comfort to the wearer. The combination of breathable fabrics, perforated closed cell foam and Brock™ foam also allows the football shoulder padding to ventilate or allow heat and moisture transfer therethrough while still providing adequate protection. However, it should be understood that the padding could be composed of a single thicker layer of EVA foam or of Brock™ foam or any other perforated or otherwise breathable foam. Furthermore, the fabric layers could be composed of any suitable breathable fabric.

[0034] The padding construction **84** includes an outer fabric layer **92** and a foam layer **94**, which presents the outer pad **86**. The outer fabric layer **92** is preferably a breathable nylon mesh material, and the foam layer **94** is preferably EVA closed cell foam, with a 6 mm thickness. The foam layer **94** includes spaced apart perforations **96**. The outer fabric layer **92** is laminated over the outer surface of the foam layer **94**. The lamination does not substantially block

or clog the perforations **96**. The outer fabric layer **92** and the foam layer **94** are substantially the same width, a first width.

[**0035**] The padding construction **84** further includes an intermediate reinforcing fabric layer **98**, a second foam layer **100**, a third foam layer **102**, a fourth foam layer **104** and an inner fabric layer **106**, which presents the inner pad **88**.

[**0036**] The intermediate fabric **98** has spaced apart openings **110** therethrough. The second and third foam layers **100** and **102** are preferably closed cell EVA foam, with the second layer **100** being thinner relative to the third layer **102**. Specifically, the second foam layer **100** preferably has a thickness of 4 mm and the third foam layer **102** preferably has a thickness of 8 mm. Each of layers **100** and **102** have spaced apart perforations **112** and **114**, respectively. Preferably, the layer **102** is formed of C3000 EVA type foam, which is softer and lighter than some other EVA foams.

[**0037**] The fourth foam layer **104** is formed of closed cell foam beads **116** fused together where the individual beads **116** meet. One such foam is Brock™ foam which is disclosed in U.S. Pat. Nos. 5,920,915 and 6,032,300. These patents are hereby incorporated herein by reference. This foam circulates air in three dimensions. As the body sweats, the sweat coats the beads which actually accelerates evaporation, body cooling and drying. Upon impact, each bead tries to separate the adjacent beads sideways, deflecting the energy away from the body and thereby absorbing more impact than foams of comparable weight and flexibility. This fourth foam **104** layer preferably has a thickness of 5 mm. The inner fabric layer **106** is also breathable and it extends across or over the exposed surface of the fourth foam layer **104**.

[**0038**] Of the inner pad **88**, the intermediate fabric layer **98** and foam layers **100**, **102** and **104** are laminated together. This lamination does not block or clog a substantial portion of the layers' perforations **110**, **112** and **114**.

[**0039**] The intermediate fabric layer **98** and the second foam layer **100** have the first width, or are substantially the same width as the outer foam pad **86**. The third and fourth foam layers **102** and **104** have a second width, narrower than the first width. The inner fabric layer **106** has substantially the first width. Thus, the inner fabric layer **106** is secured to the intermediate fabric layer **98** and foam layers **100**, **102** and **104** by stitching the side edges of the inner fabric layer **106** to the sides edges of the intermediate fabric layer **98** and the second foam layer **100** to form the inner pad **88**.

[**0040**] The outer and inner pads **86** and **88** are secured together by stitching the side edges of the inner pad **88**, (i.e., the side edges of intermediate fabric layer **98**, second foam layer **100** and inner fabric layer **106**) to the side edges of the outer pad **86** (i.e., the side edges of the outer fabric **92** and foam layer **94**) through fabric edging **120**. Thus, no stitching extends into the third or fourth layers of foam **102** and **104** of the inner pad **88**. Fabric edging **120** extends around the periphery or outer edge of the padding construction **84**.

[**0041**] It is to be understood that while certain forms of this invention have been illustrated and described, it is not limited thereto except insofar as such limitations are included in the following claims and allowable equivalents thereof. More specifically, this athletic protective padding construction could be used in protective helmets and in connection with padding for any sport.

Having thus described the invention, what is claimed as new and desired to be secured by Letters Patent is as follows:

1. Athletic protective pad, comprising:

first and second layers of breathable fabric;

a foam body having a layer of foam with spaced apart perforations therethrough, said foam body sandwiched between said first and second layers of breathable fabric, thereby wicking moisture away from a wearer.

2. Athletic protective pad as claimed in claim 1 wherein said layer of foam is closed cell foam.

3. Athletic protective pad as claimed in claim 2 wherein said first and second layers of breathable fabric and said foam body present a compression sport pant.

4. Athletic protective pad as claimed in claim 2 wherein said first and second layers of breathable fabric and said foam body present football shoulder padding.

5. Athletic protective pad as claimed in claim 4 wherein said foam body has layers of breathable foam including a layer of closed cell foam with spaced apart perforations therethrough.

6. Athletic protective pad as claimed in claim 5 wherein said layers of breathable foam further include a layer of foam formed of closed cell foam beads fused together.

7. A compression sport pant, comprising:

a garment of resilient, breathable fabric having right and left pelvic leg regions and a crotch region shaped to compliment the pelvic and leg region of a wearer;

a panel member of resilient, breathable fabric anchored to said garment;

a first foam body having a layer of closed cell foam mounted between said panel member and said garment, said foam body having spaced apart perforations therethrough, thereby wicking moisture away from the wearer.

8. A compression sport pant as claimed in claim 7 wherein said panel member includes opposed hip panels and said foam body includes a pad sandwiched between each of said panels and said garment.

9. A compression sport pant as claimed in claim 7 wherein said panel member includes a tail panel and said foam body includes a pad sandwiched between said tail panel and said garment.

10. A compression sport pant as claimed in claim 7, wherein said panel member presents a pocket member adapted to selectively receive a second foam body therein.

11. A compression sport pant as claimed in claim 10 wherein said pocket member includes two pockets, one said pocket anchored to each one of said garment's leg regions.

12. A compression sport pant as claimed in claim 7 wherein said panel member includes thigh panels, one said panel anchored to each one of the leg regions of said garment and said foam body includes a pad mounted between each of said panels and said garment.

13. A compression sport pant as claimed in claim 8 wherein said hip panels are anchored adjacent a top edge of a waistband of said garment.

* * * * *