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(11)

EP 0 940 093 A1

(12)

EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION

(43) Date of publication:
08.09.1999 Bulletin 1999/36

(51) Int Cl.⁶: **A24F 23/02**

(21) Application number: **99200613.0**

(22) Date of filing: **03.03.1999**

(84) Designated Contracting States:
**AT BE CH CY DE DK ES FI FR GB GR IE IT LI LU
MC NL PT SE**
Designated Extension States:
AL LT LV MK RO SI

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(30) Priority: **03.03.1998 NL 1008459**

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(54) **Preformed tobacco package**

(57) The invention relates to a package for tobacco comprising a substantially rectangular bag, provided with a front side (5) and a rear side (1) fixedly interconnected on three lateral sides (7', 7'', 7'''; 8', 8'', 8'''), and wherein the fourth side (9) can form an opening, while on the rear side (1), at the location of the opening, a flap (3) connects, characterized in that the front (5) side and/or rear side (1) consists of a preformed plastic sheet.

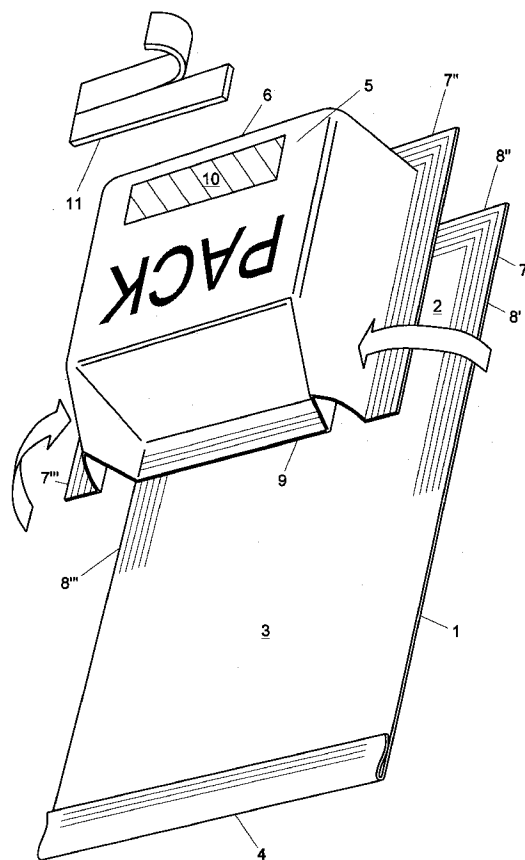


Figure 1

EP 0 940 093 A1

Description

[0001] The invention relates to a tobacco pouch made of plastic or plastic laminate, comprising a bag consisting of a front side and rear side interconnected at their lateral sides, and a flap connecting to the rear wall.

[0002] In general, packages for cut tobacco, for instance for pipe tobacco, tobacco for rolling one's own cigarettes or chewing tobacco, are manufactured from synthetic materials. Most conventionally, two different types of package are used, viz. the wrapover bag and the side-fold or block-bottom bag. The wrapover bag has the simplest form and consists of a plastic film or plastic laminate folded up over a folding seam, whereupon the lateral sides are sealed together. On the rear wall, a flap connects that can be wrapped one or more times around the bag and attached thereto, for instance with an adhesive tape.

[0003] As the name already indicates, the side-fold bag or block-bottom bag comprises folded sidewalls and a bottom, so that the bag acquires a more or less block-shaped appearance. Such bag, too, is manufactured from plastic film. In practice, such a bag often consists of a double sheet with a paper insert loosely provided between the sheets, which paper insert may be printed.

[0004] Although both packaging systems for tobacco are very common, there is nevertheless a need for an improved package for tobacco. In particular when the package of the wrapover bag type is used, it turns out that the filled package does not connect neatly at the lateral sides. Because of the filling, the lateral sides incline to draw inwards.

[0005] Hence, there is a need for an improvement of the wrapover bag which does not entail this problem, without directly requiring the construction of the block-bottom bag.

[0006] The invention is based upon the insight that it is possible to obtain a suitable tobacco package by designing the wrapover bag so that the portion where the tobacco is located is preformed, for instance as is often used for packaging foodstuffs.

[0007] Hence, the invention relates to a package for tobacco as pointed out in the introduction, comprising a substantially rectangular bag, provided with a front side and a rear side fixedly interconnected on three lateral sides, and wherein the fourth side can form an opening, while on the rear side, at the location of the opening, a flap connects, characterized in that the front side and/or rear side consists of a preformed plastic sheet.

[0008] In the basic embodiment of the invention, two versions are possible. In the first version, the conventional wrapover pouch, consisting of one single sheet which is folded double, is modified in such a manner that the front side and/or rear side is preformed in the central part thereof, for instance by vacuum forming. The edges, which fixedly interconnect the front side and rear side, are not deformed, but only the central part. The central part has the shape of a kind of tray.

[0009] Preferably, only the front side is deformed, as this is the optimal embodiment. In each embodiment, it is preferred that the bag be so designed that additional space for taking out tobacco is created on the open side. This may for instance be effected by preforming the front side in such a manner that said tray-shaped central part has no wall on one side.

[0010] In a second embodiment, the front side and rear side consist of separate sheets, which, however, may in fact be formed in the same manner as described hereinabove in relation to the first variant.

[0011] In accordance with a specific embodiment, the front side has a shape such that the opening displays a certain widening, which simplifies the use of the package.

[0012] The package is manufactured from plastic sheets, wherein materials can be used that are known for this type of applications, while also taking into account the requirements in respect of appearance and moisture/oxygen barrier properties. Examples of materials are polyesters, polyamides, polyethylene, polypropylene and polystyrene. These materials can be applied as such, or as coextrudate or laminate with other plastics. If necessary, there may also be used additions for increasing the water vapor proofness, such as EVOH or aluminum.

[0013] More in particular, suitable materials for the rear side of the package are the various types of polypropylene film, such as OPP, COP and the like, but it is also possible to use laminates of various materials. Also, use can be made of laminates of two layers of plastic film having a printed layer, for instance of paper or plastic, provided between them, as is customary in block-bottom bags.

[0014] Such choices can also be made with regard to the front side.

[0015] The plastics that are used for the manufacture of the package may be transparent, printed, colored or a combination thereof.

[0016] The package according to the invention may further comprise all kinds of useful or embellishing aspects, such as a cover at the end of the flap, for improving the stiffness thereof. If necessary, the front side and/or rear side may be provided with an embossing, for instance with a brand name or logo.

[0017] Another aspect is the provision of means for affixing a book of cigarette papers to the package. In its simplest form, this may be a strip of double-sided adhesive tape provided with a covering strip. After removal of the covering strip, the book of cigarette papers can be stuck thereto, so that it is always at hand. However, it is also possible to apply more complicated systems, for instance as described in Dutch patent application 1002375.

[0018] Conventional closures for such tobacco packages are adhesive strips in the form of a strip of sellotape. However, this has the drawback that after some use, the adhesive power decreases, due to tobacco

sticking to the glue. In the aforesaid Dutch patent application, this drawback is overcome. However, it is also possible to use Velcro as closing means. In particular when this is provided as an extended strip, transversely to the bottom fold, this enables the package to be rendered smaller and smaller, according as more tobacco has been taken therefrom.

[0019] To improve the preservability, more in particular the shelf-life, it is preferred that in the factory, after the filling of the package, a temporary seal be provided on the top side of the pouch, for instance in the form of a layer of adhesive or a temporary hot weld which can readily be opened by the user without damaging the package.

[0020] In the closed form, the top of the front side will preferably be folded inwards, as is also customary in a block-bottom bag.

[0021] The invention will now be explained with reference to a Figure, which should not be considered a limitation of the invention.

[0022] In this Figure, an example of a possible embodiment of the package according to the invention is shown schematically.

[0023] The package consists of a rear side 1 comprising a bag part 2 and a flap part 3, the latter being folded around at its top side 4. The package also comprises a front side 5 whose central part 6 is shaped into a tray, while the edges 7', 7'' and 7''' are substantially undeformed. These edges are fixedly hot-welded to the corresponding edges 8', 8'' and 8''' of the rear side. The top side 9 of the front side 5 is fixed with a 'light' weld to the rear side 1, at the location of the transition of the bag part 2 and the flap part 3.

[0024] For attaching a book of cigarette papers, a length of double-sided adhesive strip 11 may be provided on the central part 6 of the front side 5, at 10.

[0025] Finally, it is further observed that the top side of the front side may be folded inwards at the lateral sides, as indicated by the arrows 12' and 12''.

Claims

1. A package for tobacco comprising a substantially rectangular bag, provided with a front side and a rear side fixedly interconnected on three lateral sides, and wherein the fourth side can form an opening, while on the rear side, at the location of the opening, a flap connects,
characterized in that the front side and/or rear side consists of a preformed plastic sheet.
2. A package according to claim 1, wherein the front side and the rear side each consist of a separate sheet, fixedly interconnected on three sides.
3. A package according to claim 1, wherein the front side and the rear side consist of one sheet which is

folded double.

4. A package according to claim 1-3, wherein the rear side consists of a laminate of two or more plastics.
5. A package according to claim 1-4, wherein the front side has its opening provided with a widening.
6. A package according to claim 1-5, wherein the front side and/or rear side is preformed by vacuum forming a plastic sheet.
7. A package according to claim 1-6, wherein the front side and the rear side are fixedly welded together on three sides.
8. A package according to claim 1-7, wherein the filled package is provided, at the location of the opening, with a temporary seal.
9. A package according to claim 8, wherein said temporary seal consists of a layer of adhesive or a hot weld.
10. A package according to claim 1-9, wherein the front side and/or rear side is provided with an embossing.
11. A package according to claim 1-10, wherein the rear side and/or front side consists of a plastic laminate.
12. A package according to claim 1-11, wherein the front side is manufactured from a plastic which, after forming, is less stiff than the rear side.
13. A package according to claim 1-12, provided with a closure, for instance in the form of an adhesive strip or Velcro.
14. A package according to claim 1-13, provided with means for attaching a packet of cigarette papers in or on the package.

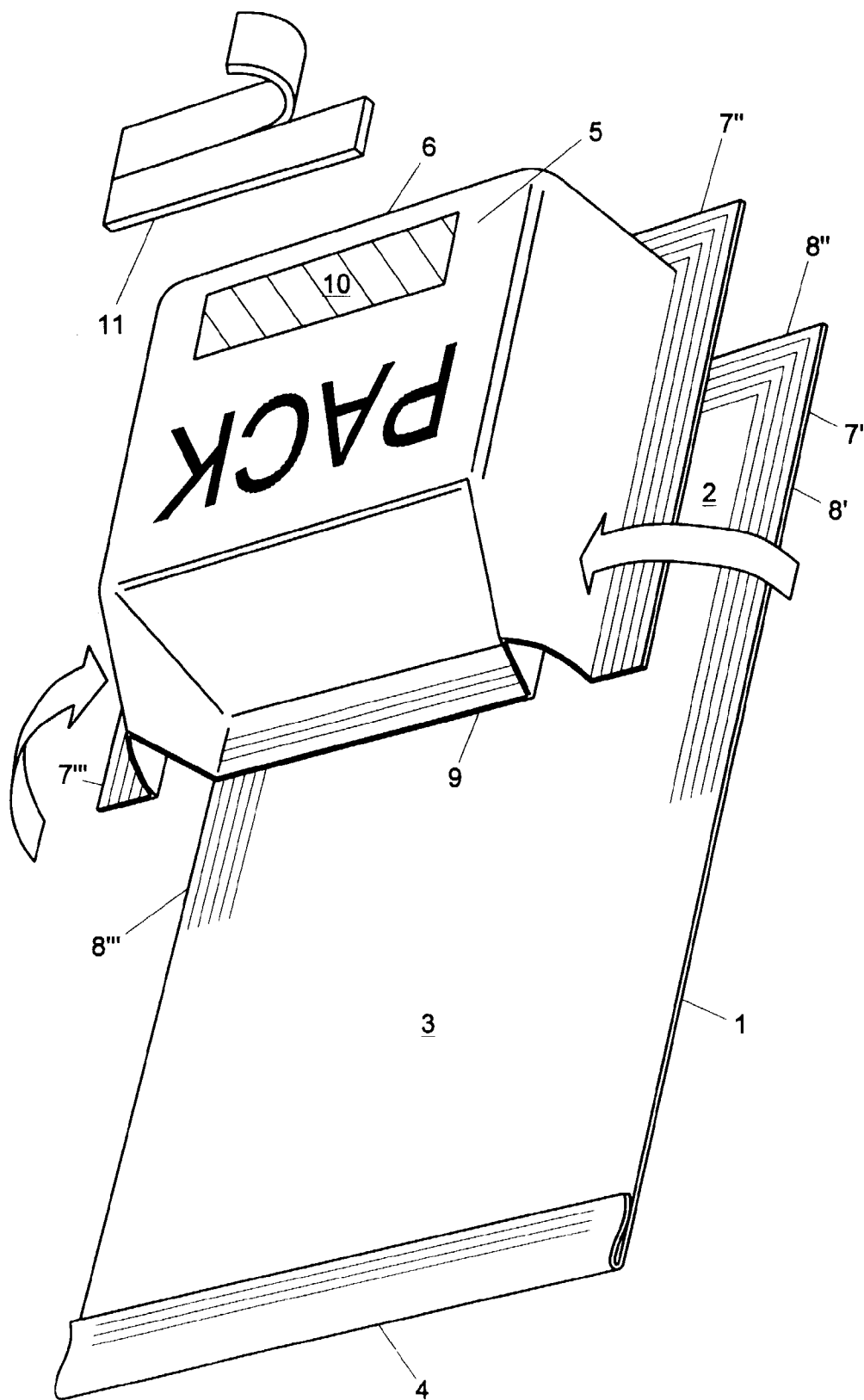


Figure 1



European Patent
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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 99 20 0613

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Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int.Cl.6)
A	US 3 387 640 A (BUTLER) 11 June 1968 * the whole document *	1, 2, 4, 7-9, 11, 13	A24F23/02
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The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search THE HAGUE		Date of completion of the search 2 June 1999	Examiner Riegel, R
CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document			

EPO FORM 1503 03/92 (P4/C01)

**ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT
ON EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION NO.**

EP 99 20 0613

This annex lists the patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned European search report.
The members are as contained in the European Patent Office EDP file on
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