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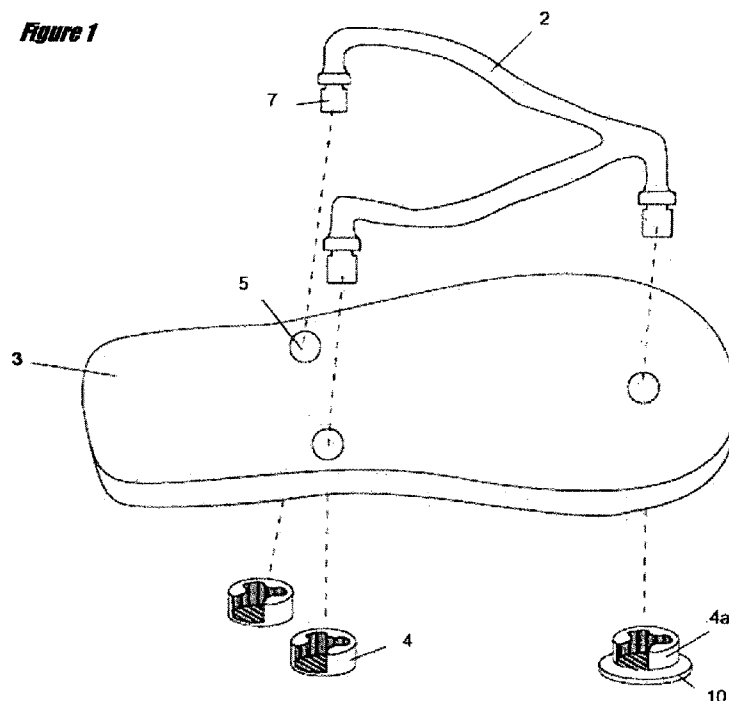
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(54) Title: FOOTWEAR

Figure 1



(57) Abstract: A foot retaining strap for a piece of footwear, the piece of footwear including a sole having an opening therein, the foot retaining strap having an end to be inserted through the opening, the end including an engagement portion for releasably engaging with a stopper shaped to restrict movement of the stopper through opening, wherein the engagement portion includes a first flange and the stopper includes a second flange, the first and second flanges configured to engage with one another to thereby restrict release of the engagement portion from the stopper.

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FOOTWEAR

Field of the invention

- 5 The present invention relates to a foot retaining strap for a piece of footwear, and a method of producing same.

Description of the Background Art

- The reference in this specification to any prior publication (or information derived from it),
10 or to any matter which is known, is not, and should not be taken as an acknowledgement or admission or any form of suggestion that the prior publication (or information derived from it), or known matter forms part of the common general knowledge in the field of endeavor to which this specification relates.

- 15 Flip flops, thongs and jandals are a type of sandal whereby the wearer's foot is retained by a single strap beginning at between the big toe and the first toe, and then diverging to both sides of the foot. Flip flops are popular in hotter climates as they allow the foot to remain cooler than more traditional closed shoes, whilst still providing protection for the sole. The absence of laces or other fastening straps makes it easy for flip flops to be slipped on and
20 off without any assistance from the hands.

- However, as the foot is retained by a single strap, the strap can be prone to breakage. Furthermore, retaining straps are typically held to the sole using stoppers or lugs fastened thereto at the underside of or within the sole. However opening in the sole, which receive
25 the straps end typically become worn and allow the lug to travel through the sole, releasing the strap end from the sole.

- Typically, in the event of strap breakage or a worn, weak sole allowing the strap to pull through the sole, a wearer will need to purchase a complete new pair of flip flops rather
30 than just replacing certain parts thereof. This is expensive for the wearer and also becomes

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an environmental issue as there are many soles which are rendered "useless" owing to the strap continually pulling through the sole.

5 Apart from the difficulties associated with repair, the tendency to manufacture flip flops as a complete unit, with the strap permanently secured to the sole, has other disadvantages. In particular it restrains the consumer's flexibility for customizing their flip flops to suit their needs or reflect their individuality. Often the wearer may wish to change the colour or design on their straps to match particular outfits or perhaps even reflect their mood.

10 **Summary of the Present Invention**

In one broad form the present invention provides a foot retaining strap for a piece of footwear, the piece of footwear including a sole having an opening therein, the foot retaining strap having an end to be inserted through the opening, the end including an engagement portion for releasably engaging with a stopper shaped to restrict movement of the stopper through opening, wherein the engagement portion includes a first flange and the stopper includes a second flange, the first and second flanges configured to engage with one another to thereby restrict release of the engagement portion from the stopper.

20 In one form, lateral movement of the engagement portion with respect to the stopper permits disengagement between the engagement portion and the stopper.

In a further form, the engagement portion includes an outwardly flanged tip receivable into a cavity in the stopper, the cavity including an inwardly protruding collar configured to engage with the outwardly flanged tip and thereby restrict release of the engagement portion from the stopper.

In another form, the stopper includes a lateral entrance to the cavity for receiving the flanged tip of the engagement portion.

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In a further form, the lateral entrance is shaped to correspond to the lateral profile of the engagement portion.

5 In another form, the collar is substantially U-shaped, having two arm portions extending inward from the lateral entrance and meeting at a rounded portion within the body of the stopper.

10 In a further form, the engagement portion includes a neck region adjacent the outwardly flanged tip, the neck region configured to be received between the arms of the U- shaped collar and guided toward the rounded portion of the collar.

15 In one form, the arms of the collar taper toward each other as they approach the rounded portion before widening out into the rounded portion such that the neck region snap engages into the rounded portion of the collar to thereby restrict lateral movement between the engagement portion and the stopper.

20 In another form, the opening in the sole includes an upper portion near to the upperside of the sole and a lower portion near to the underside of the sole, the lower portion having a larger cross section than the upper portion.

In one form, the lower portion is shaped to receive the stopper such that the underside of the stopper sits flush with the underside of the sole.

25 In another form, the stopper includes a flanged base portion.

In one form, the engagement portion is formed of a rigid material when compared to the material of the foot retaining strap.

30 In another form, the engagement portion is substantially hollow and is configured to receive the end of the foot retaining strap therein.

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In one form, the end of foot retaining strap is injection moulded into the engagement portion.

In another form, the foot retaining strap is injection moulded through the engagement
5 portion.

In a further form, the engagement portion includes an inwardly protruding flange or rib such that the end of the foot retaining strap is retained therein after injection moulding.

10 In one form, the piece of footwear is a flip flop, the foot retaining strap including three ends, two ends for engagement to stoppers through openings positioned at a rear portion of the sole and the remaining end for engagement to a stopper through an opening positioned at a forward portion of the sole.

15 In a further broad form the present invention provides stopper for use with a foot retaining strap as described herein.

In a further broad form the present invention provides a sole for use with a foot retaining strap described herein.

20

In a further broad form the present invention provides a method for producing a foot retaining strap having an engagement portion on an end thereof, the engagement portion for engagement with a sole or a stopper positioned within or at the underside of the sole to provide engagement with the sole, the method including injection moulding the end of the
25 foot retaining strap into a hollow provided in the engagement portion.

In a further broad form the present invention provides a piece of footwear including:

a sole having an opening therein, the opening travelling between the upperside and the
30 underside of the sole; and

- 5 -

a foot retaining strap having an end to be received through the opening from the upperside to the underside of the sole, the end including an engagement portion for releasably engaging with a stopper at the underside of the sole, the opening shaped to prohibit the stopper moving through opening from the underside to the upperside,

5

wherein the engagement portion includes a first flange and the stopper includes a second flange, the first and second flanges configured to interact with one another during engagement of the engagement portion and the stopper to restrict release of the engagement portion from the stopper.

10

In one form, the piece of footwear includes a plurality of openings in the sole, a respective plurality of foot retaining strap ends and a respective plurality of stoppers.

15

In a further broad form the present invention provides a stopper for releasably engaging with a foot retaining strap of a piece of footwear, the foot retaining strap including an outwardly flanged tip receivable into a cavity in the stopper, wherein the cavity includes an inwardly protruding collar configured to interact with the outwardly flanged tip and thereby restrict release of the foot retaining strap from the stopper.

20

In one form, the stopper includes a flanged base portion.

25

In a further broad form the present invention provides a stopper for releasably engaging with a foot retaining strap of a piece of footwear, the piece of footwear including a sole having an opening configured to receive an end of the foot retaining strap therethrough, the stopper including a outwardly protruding flange to restrict movement of the stopper through the opening such that the foot retaining strap is substantially retained to the sole.

30

Brief Description of the Drawings

An example of the present invention will now be described with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which: -

5

Figure 1 shows one example of the invention in a flip flop with an interchangeable strap;

Figure 2a is an underside view of the sole of the flip flop in figure 1 with stoppers removed;

Figure 2b is an underside view of the sole of the flip flop in figure 1 with stoppers in place;

10 Figure 3 shows the interaction between the engagement portion and stopper of the flip flop of figure 1;

Figure 4 shows perspective views of a further example of an engagement portion;

Figure 5 is a perspective view of a further example of a stopper;

Figure 6 shows a perspective view of the stopper in figure 5 having a flanged base portion.

15 Figure 7 shows a cross sectional view of one example of an engagement portion;

Figure 8 shows a foot retaining strap injection moulded through end portion with additional anchoring holes; and

Figure 9 shows top, perspective and cross sectional side views of the stoppers and engagement portion from figure 1.

20

Detailed Description Including Best Mode

The foregoing describes only some embodiments of the present invention, and modifications and/or changes can be made thereto without departing from the scope and
25 the spirit of the invention, the embodiments being illustrative and not restrictive.

In the context of this specification, the word "comprising" means "including principally but not necessarily solely" or "having" or "including", and not "consisting only of". Variations of the word "comprising", such as "comprise" and "comprises" have
30 correspondingly varied meanings.

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One embodiment of the present invention is provided by figure 1 to 3. The footwear (1) can be described as a flip flop and includes a foot retaining strap (2), a sole (3), and stoppers (4, 4a).

5 The sole (3) has openings (5) travelling between the upperside and the underside of the sole (3). To assemble the footwear, the ends (6) of the foot retaining strap are inserted through the opening from the upperside to the underside of the sole (3). Each end (6) includes an engagement portion (7) for releasably engaging with a lug or stopper (4) at the underside of the sole (3). The stoppers (5) are shaped to restrict the stoppers (4, 4a) moving
10 through the openings from the underside to the upperside. The foot retaining strap (2) is thereby engaged with the sole (3). When used as part of a flip flop, the foot retaining strap (2) has three ends, two ends engaged to a stopper through openings positioned at a rear portion of the sole (3), and the remaining end engaged to a stopper through an opening positioned at a forward end of the sole (3).

15

During engagement the flanges (8) of the engagement portions are configured to engage with the flanges (9) of respective stoppers to restrict release of the corresponding strap ends from the stoppers.

20 Once engaged, lateral movement between the engagement portion (7) and the stopper is required to disengage the engagement portion (7) and the stopper (4, 4a). Simply pulling the strap (2) apart from the stopper in an unspecified direction will do little to release the stoppers.

25 The openings (5) in the sole typically include an upper portion (8) near to the upperside of the sole and a lower portion (9) near to the underside of the sole, the lower portion having a larger cross section than the upper portion. Typically the lower portion (9) is shaped to receive the stopper such that the underside of the stopper sits flush with the underside of the sole. The upper portion has a smaller cross section than the stopper and is typically the
30 part of the opening that inhibit the stopper moving through the opening. It should be noted that, once the stoppers are positioned within the sole, lateral movement with respect to the

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engagement portions is restricted and thus disengagement even more difficult to achieve.

Additionally the stoppers may include a flanged base portion (10). The flanged base portion (10) interacts with the underside of the sole to further restrict the stopper (4a) travelling through the sole (3). This feature is particularly advantageous when the opening is torn or beginning to wear out.

Figure 2a shows the vacant lower portions (9) whilst figure 2b shows the rear stoppers (4) sitting flush within the openings in the rear half of the sole portion (3). Figure 2b also shows the secondary flange portion (10) of the front stopper (4a) having a larger cross section than the lower portions (9) in the underside of the sole portion (3).

Typically the engagement portion (7) is formed of a rigid material when compared to the material of the foot retaining strap. Whilst the foot retaining strap should be somewhat flexible and soft for the comfort of the wearer, the engagement portions, to be engaged with the stoppers, should be stronger and more rigid to prevent accidental disengagement of the engagement flanges (8, 9), such as, for example, if they were to bend and move past one another.

It will be appreciated engagement portions and stoppers can take a variety of forms which work on the principle of having corresponding flanges that interact to restrict disengagement. For example, a further engagement portion and stopper combination is shown in figures 4 to 6. In this example the engagement portion (11) includes an outwardly flanged tip (12) receivable into a cavity (13) in the stopper (14), the cavity (13) includes an inwardly protruding collar (15) configured to interact with the outwardly flanged tip (12) to thereby restrict release of the engagement portion from the stopper. As is clear from the figure, flange (16) interacts with flange (17) to restrict disengagement of the engagement portion from the stopper.

The cavity (13) includes a lateral entrance (18) for receiving the flanged tip (12) of the engagement portion. The lateral entrance (18) is shaped to correspond to the lateral profile

of the engagement portion.

Additionally, the collar (15) is substantially U-shaped, having two arm portions (19, 20) extending inward from the lateral entrance (18) and meeting at a rounded portion (21) within the body of the stopper (14). On engagement, a narrow neck region (22) of the engagement portion (11), adjacent the outwardly flanged tip (12), is received between the arms of the U-shaped collar and thereby guided toward the rounded portion (21) of the collar (15). The arms (19, 20) of the collar taper toward each other as they approach the rounded portion (21) before widening out into the rounded portion (21) such that the neck region (22) snap engages into the rounded portion of the collar. Lateral movement and thereby disengagement between the engagement portion and the stopper is additionally restricted in this embodiment.

In addition, underside flange (27) contributes to engagement by engaging with the top surface of the stopper. The top surface of the stopper may also include a slight depression (28) shaped to fit the underside flange (27) and further strengthen engagement.

In some embodiments, the engagement portions may be hollow and may receive the ends of the foot retaining strap therein. For example, the foot retaining strap may be injection moulded into or through the hollow engagement portion. The inner surface of the engagement portion may include an internal flange portion (23) and/or rib (24) such that the foot retaining strap is retained therein after moulding. By injection moulding the end of the foot retaining strap into engagement with the engagement portion, there is less chance of the two parts becoming dislodged during use of the strap.

To further anchor the foot retaining strap to the end portion there may be one or more holes (25) in the body of the end portion. This allows the foot strap material (typically rubber/pvc) to travel through the hole/s during moulding to provide extra anchor points for the material of the foot retaining strap to anchor the end portion. Additionally, the foot strap material may be injection moulded through the end portion such that an excess of

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material anchors with top flange (26) after moulding. These features contribute further to the strength of the attachment between the end portion and the foot retaining strap.

It will be appreciated that an alternate embodiment of the invention has the end portion and
5 foot retaining strap formed as a single body and/or out of a single material, such that no attachment is required.

The advantages of the present invention are numerous.

10 At first instance the simple engagement mechanism of strap end and stopper is quick and effective. In addition, the foot retaining strap and stoppers can be used in conjunction with sole portions from any manufacturer.

Furthermore, should the openings in the sole become worn out, the consumer can now
15 purchase a single stopper or lug with a flanged base portion to contact the underside of the sole. The flange further restricts the stopper moving through the opening. The problem of the straps pulling through the weak and worn out openings in the sole portion is thereby addressed.

20 As soles, straps and stoppers are potentially reusable the present invention also has a positive effect on the environment as consumers are now able to and encouraged to purchase a pair of straps or stopper rather than a complete pair of flip flops for example. The consumption of rubber and other flip flop making materials can thereby be kept to a minimum.

25

For example, in the instance where the wearer wishes to replace the strap on the flip flop he or she first pushes or pulls the stoppers from the sole to make them accessible. Then, typically via a lateral movement, the ends of the straps are removed from engagement with the stoppers. The strap ends are then free to travel through the openings in the sole
30 portion. The strap is now removed from the sole portion and a new strap selected. The strap end engagement portions of the new strap are inserted through the openings from the

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upper side of the sole and engaged with the stoppers at the underside of the sole portion. Engagement may be by snap engagement or otherwise and typically occurs through a lateral movement. The end portions of the strap are thereafter restricted from travelling back through the sole as the cross section of the stoppers is larger than that of the upper
5 portion of the openings. The new strap is thus attached to the sole.

A similar process may be carried out when replacing the stoppers and/or soles.

The present piece of footwear and method for interchanging parts thereof has advantages
10 in that it is quick and simple with no specific shoe making tools required, and no professional shoe repair experience necessary. The components such as stopper/lugs and engagement portions are large enough to allow engagement by hand. The releasable engagement between strap and stoppers is far less complex than existing footwear claiming
15 interchangeable straps. Therefore there is provided a piece of footwear which permits the wearer to change the parts thereof easily for purposes of repair and/or fashion.

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The claims defining the invention are as follows:

1. A foot retaining strap for a piece of footwear, the piece of footwear including a sole having an opening therein, the foot retaining strap having an end to be inserted through
5 the opening, the end including an engagement portion for releasably engaging with a stopper shaped to restrict movement of the stopper through opening,

wherein the engagement portion includes a first flange and the stopper includes a second flange, the first and second flanges configured to engage with one another to
10 thereby restrict release of the engagement portion from the stopper.
2. A foot retaining strap as claimed in claim 1, wherein lateral movement of the engagement portion with respect to the stopper permits disengagement between the engagement portion and the stopper.
15
3. A foot retaining strap as claimed in claim 1 or 2, wherein the engagement portion includes an outwardly flanged tip receivable into a cavity in the stopper, the cavity including an inwardly protruding collar configured to engage with the outwardly flanged tip and thereby restrict release of the engagement portion from the stopper.
20
4. A foot retaining strap as claimed in claim 3, wherein the stopper includes a lateral entrance to the cavity for receiving the flanged tip of the engagement portion.
5. A foot retaining strap as claimed in claim 4 wherein the lateral entrance is shaped to
25 correspond to the lateral profile of the engagement portion.
6. A foot retaining strap as claimed in claim any one of claims 3 to 5 wherein the collar is substantially U-shaped, having two arm portions extending inward from the lateral entrance and meeting at a rounded portion within the body of the stopper.
30

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7. A foot retaining strap as claimed in claim 6 wherein the engagement portion includes a neck region adjacent the outwardly flanged tip, the neck region configured to be received between the arms of the U- shaped collar and guided toward the rounded portion of the collar.

5

8. A foot retaining strap as claimed in claim 7 wherein the arms of the collar taper toward each other as they approach the rounded portion before widening out into the rounded portion such that the neck region snap engages into the rounded portion of the collar to thereby restrict lateral movement between the engagement portion and the stopper.

10

9. A foot retaining strap as claimed in any one of the preceding claims wherein the opening in the sole includes an upper portion near to the upperside of the sole and a lower portion near to the underside of the sole, the lower portion having a larger cross section than the upper portion.

15

10. A foot retaining strap as claimed in claim 9 wherein the lower portion is shaped to receive the stopper such that the underside of the stopper sits flush with the underside of the sole.

20 11. A foot retaining strap as claimed in claim 9 wherein the stopper includes a flanged base portion.

12. A foot retaining strap as claimed in any one of the preceding claims wherein the engagement portion is formed of a rigid material when compared to the material of the
25 foot retaining strap.

13. A foot retaining strap as claimed in any one of the preceding claims wherein the engagement portion is substantially hollow and is configured to receive the end of the foot retaining strap therein.

30

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14. A foot retaining strap as claimed in claim 13 wherein the end of foot retaining strap is injection moulded into the engagement portion.
15. A foot retaining strap as claimed in claim 13 wherein the foot retaining strap is injection moulded through the engagement portion.
16. A foot retaining strap as claimed in claim 14 or 15 wherein the engagement portion includes an inwardly protruding flange or rib such that the end of the foot retaining strap is retained therein after injection moulding.
17. A foot retaining strap as claimed in any one of the preceding claims wherein the piece of footwear is a flip flop, the foot retaining strap including three ends, two ends for engagement to stoppers through openings positioned at a rear portion of the sole and the remaining end for engagement to a stopper through an opening positioned at a forward portion of the sole.
18. A stopper for use with a foot retaining strap as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 17.
19. A sole for use with a foot retaining strap as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 17.
20. A method for producing a foot retaining strap having an engagement portion on an end thereof, the engagement portion for engagement with a sole or a stopper positioned within or at the underside of the sole to provide engagement with the sole, the method including injection moulding the end of the foot retaining strap into a hollow provided in the engagement portion.
21. A piece of footwear including:
- A sole having an opening therein, the opening travelling between the upperside and the underside of the sole; and

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A foot retaining strap having an end to be received through the opening from the upperside to the underside of the sole, the end including an engagement portion for releasably engaging with a stopper at the underside of the sole, the opening shaped to prohibit the stopper moving through opening from the underside to the upperside,

5

wherein the engagement portion includes a first flange and the stopper includes a second flange, the first and second flanges configured to interact with one another during engagement of the engagement portion and the stopper to restrict release of the engagement portion from the stopper.

10

A piece of footwear as claimed in any one of the preceding claims wherein the piece of footwear includes a plurality of openings in the sole, a respective plurality of foot retaining strap ends and a respective plurality of stoppers.

15 22. A stopper for releasably engaging with a foot retaining strap of a piece of footwear, the foot retaining strap including an outwardly flanged tip receivable into a cavity in the stopper, wherein the cavity includes an inwardly protruding collar configured to interact with the outwardly flanged tip and thereby restrict release of the foot retaining strap from the stopper.

20

23. A stopper as claimed in claim 22 wherein the stopper includes a flanged base portion

24. A stopper for releasably engaging with a foot retaining strap of a piece of footwear, the piece of footwear including a sole having an opening configured to receive an end of
25 the foot retaining strap therethrough, the stopper including a outwardly protruding flange to restrict movement of the stopper through the opening such that the foot retaining strap is substantially retained to the sole.

Figure 1

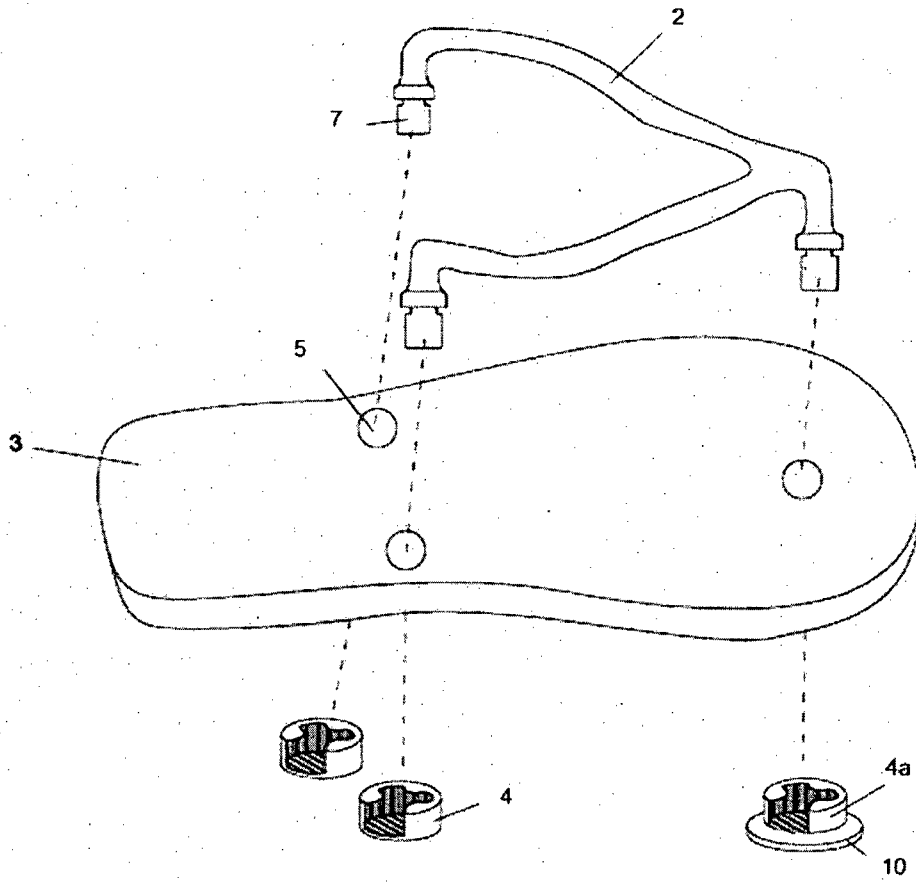


Figure 2a

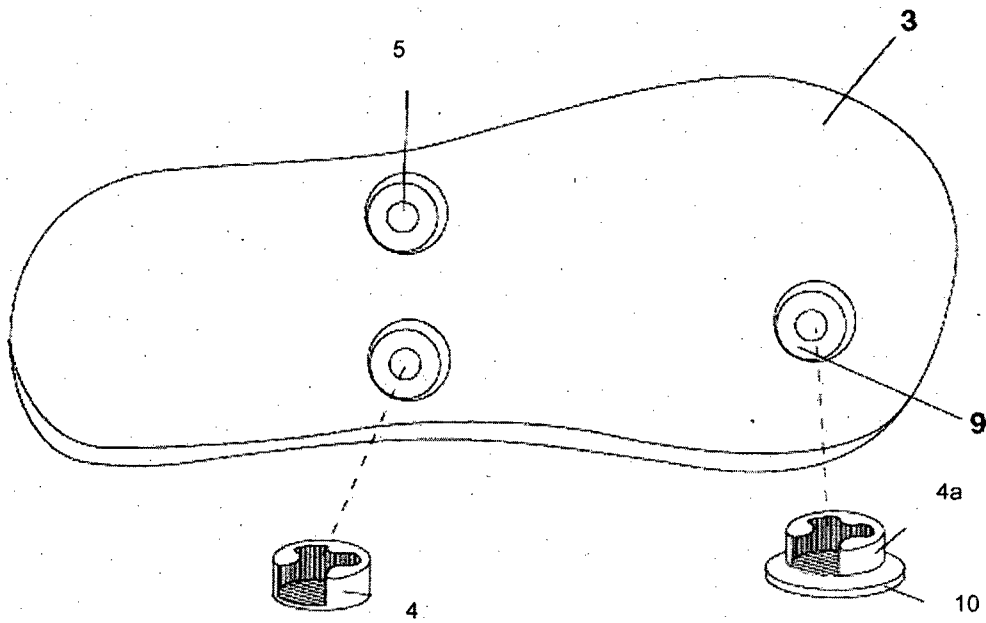


Figure 2b

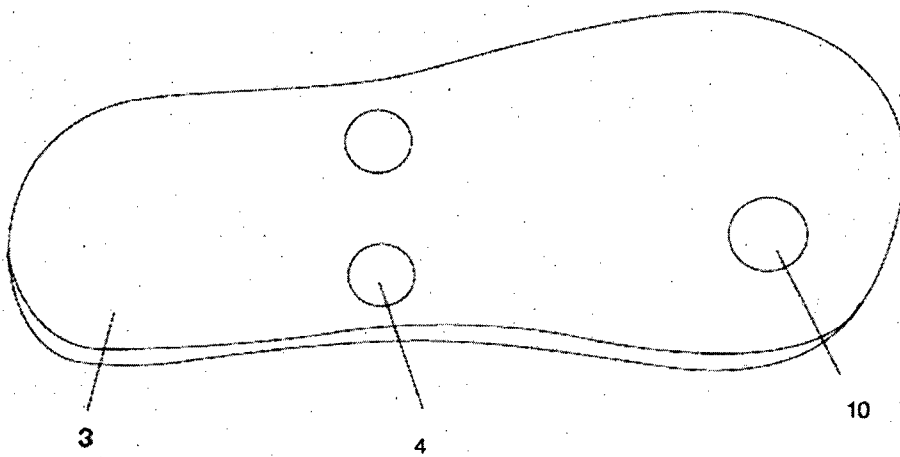


Figure 3

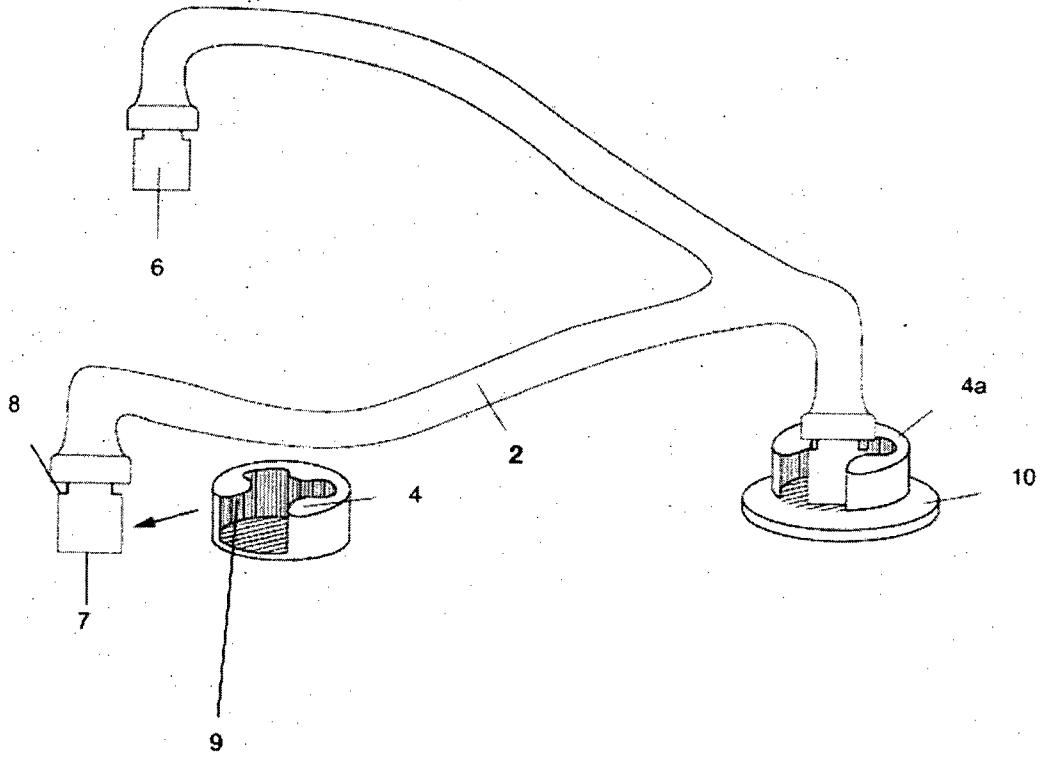


Figure 4

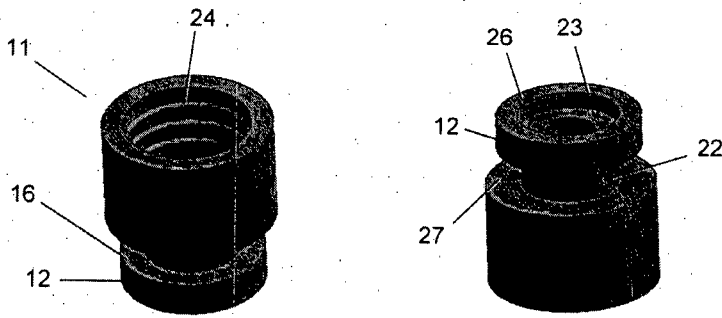


Figure 5

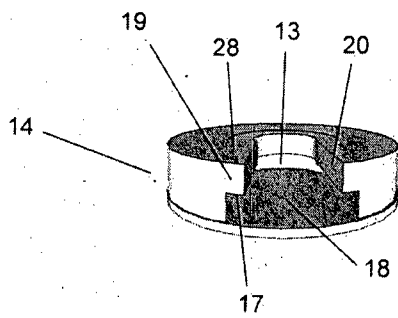


Figure 6

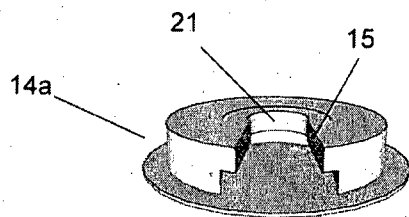


Figure 7

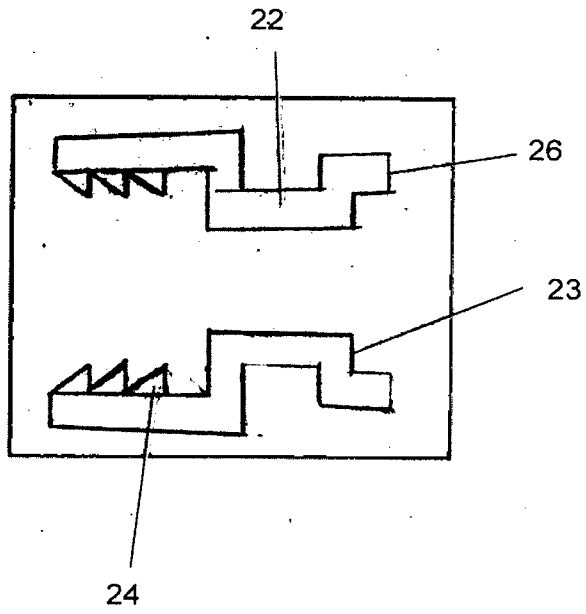


Figure 8

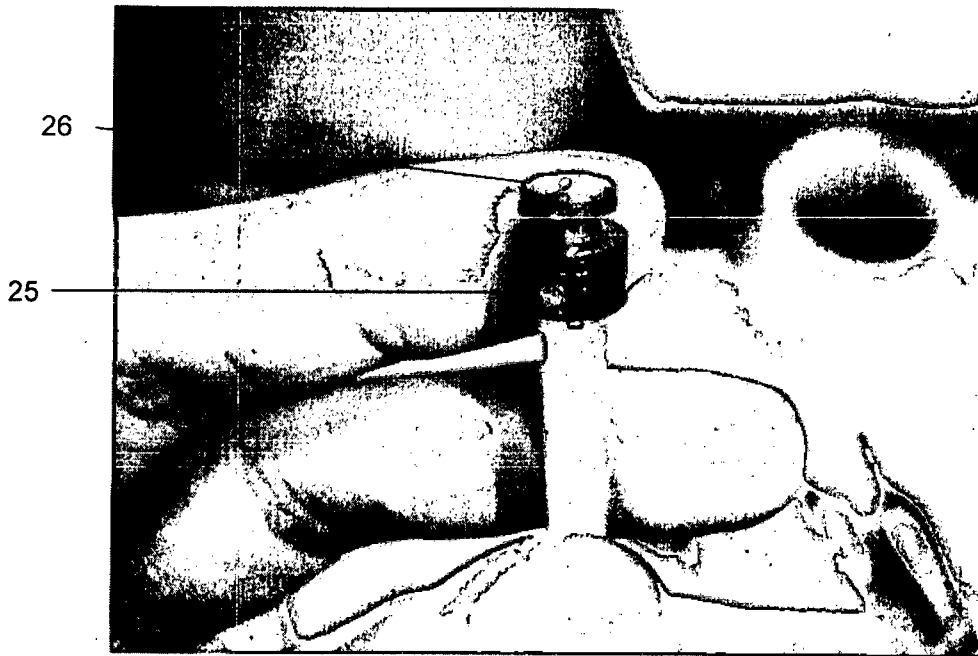
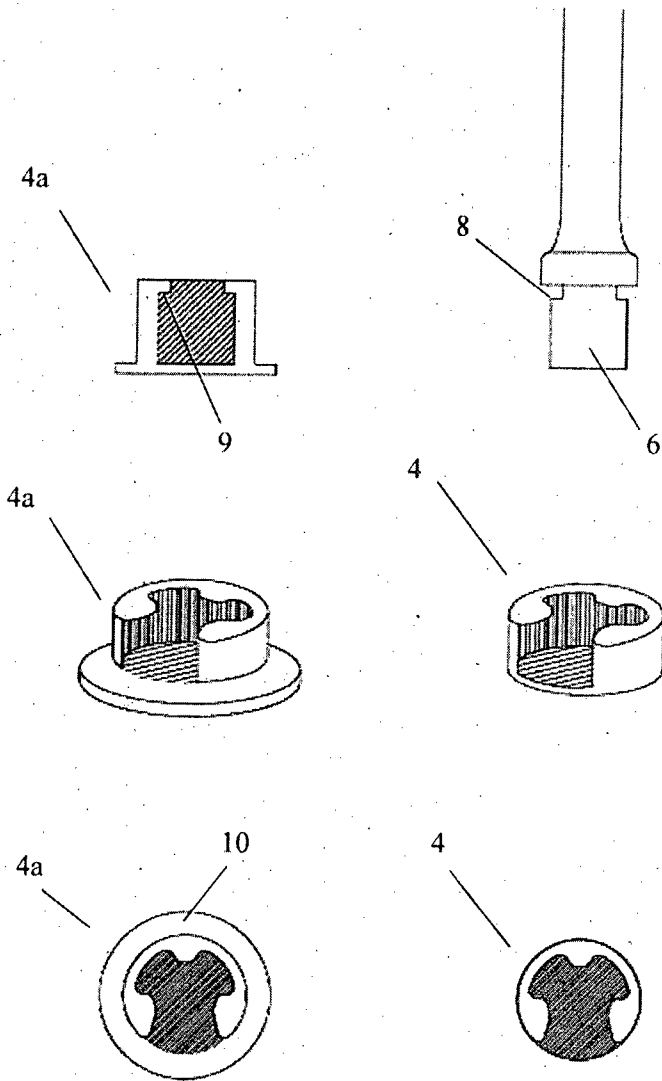


Figure 9



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

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A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

Int. Cl.

A43B 3/12 (2006.01)*A43B 1/14* (2006.01)*A43B 1/10* (2006.01)*A43B 21/36* (2006.01)

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

WPI, EPODOC; Keywords: FLIP FLOP, SANDAL, JANDAL, THONG, STRAP, UPPER, STOPPER, FASTENER, CLAMP, COLLAR, PLUG, CAP, RETAIN, U-SHAPED, SEMI CIRCLE, FLANGE, COLLAR, SOLE, OPENING, APERTURE, VOID, HOLE, PLUG, LUG, INTERLOCK, HOUSING and like terms

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	US 2009/0044423 A1 (AMSTERDAM) 19 February 2009 Paragraph [0005]	
X	WO 2008/047256 A2 (WHITAKER et al) 24 April 2008 Figure 5, Page 5, lines 3-23	20, 24
X	US 2008/0086825 A1 (MULLEN) 17 April 2008 Figure 5, Paragraphs [0031]-[0034]	24
P, X	WO 2011/134032 A1 (SAO PAULO ALPARGATAS S.A.) 3 November 2011 Figures 1-5 and translation obtained from Patentscope www.wipo.int/patentscope/search/	1-10, 12, 17-19, 21-22



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"E" earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date

"X"

document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone

"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)

"Y"

document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art

"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means

"&"

document member of the same patent family

"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

Date of the actual completion of the international search

13 December 2011

Date of mailing of the international search report

20 DECEMBER 2011

Name and mailing address of the ISA/AU

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/AU2011/001297

Box No. II Observations where certain claims were found unsearchable (Continuation of item 2 of first sheet)

This international search report has not been established in respect of certain claims under Article 17(2)(a) for the following reasons:

1. Claims Nos.:
because they relate to subject matter not required to be searched by this Authority, namely:

2. Claims Nos.:
because they relate to parts of the international application that do not comply with the prescribed requirements to such an extent that no meaningful international search can be carried out, specifically:

3. Claims Nos.:
because they are dependent claims and are not drafted in accordance with the second and third sentences of Rule 6.4(a)

Box No. III Observations where unity of invention is lacking (Continuation of item 3 of first sheet)

This International Searching Authority found multiple inventions in this international application, as follows:
See Supplemental Box

1. As all required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this international search report covers all searchable claims.
2. As all searchable claims could be searched without effort justifying additional fees, this Authority did not invite payment of additional fees.
3. As only some of the required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this international search report covers only those claims for which fees were paid, specifically claims Nos.:

4. No required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant. Consequently, this international search report is restricted to the invention first mentioned in the claims; it is covered by claims Nos.:

Remark on Protest

- The additional search fees were accompanied by the applicant's protest and, where applicable, the payment of a protest fee.
- The additional search fees were accompanied by the applicant's protest but the applicable protest fee was not paid within the time limit specified in the invitation.
- No protest accompanied the payment of additional search fees.

Supplemental Box

(To be used when the space in any of Boxes I to IV is not sufficient)

Continuation of Box No: III

This International Application does not comply with the requirements of unity of invention because it does not relate to one invention or to a group of inventions so linked as to form a single general inventive concept.

This Authority has found that there are different inventions based on the following features that separate the claims into distinct groups:

- Claims 1-19 and 21 are directed to a foot retaining strap and a piece of footwear respectively. The feature of the engagement portion including a first flange and the stopper including a second flange, the first and second flanges configured to interact with one another during engagement to restrict release of the engagement portion is specific to this group of claims.
- Claim 20 is directed to a method for producing a foot retaining strap. The feature of injection moulding the end of the foot retaining strap into a hollow provided in the engagement portion is specific to this group of claims.
- Claims 22-23 are directed to a stopper for releasably engaging with a foot retaining strap of a piece of footwear. The feature of the cavity of the stopper including an inwardly protruding collar configured to interact with the outwardly flanged tip and thereby restrict release of the foot retaining strap from the stopper is specific to this group of claims.
- Claim 24 is directed to a stopper for releasably engaging with a foot retaining strap of a piece of footwear. The feature of the stopper including an outwardly protruding flange to restrict movement of the stopper through the opening such that the foot retaining strap is substantially retained to the sole is specific to this group of claims.

PCT Rule 13.2, first sentence, states that unity of invention is only fulfilled when there is a technical relationship among the claimed inventions involving one or more of the same or corresponding special technical features. PCT Rule 13.2, second sentence, defines a special technical feature as a feature which makes a contribution over the prior art.

When there is no special technical feature common to all the claimed inventions there is no unity of invention.

In the above groups of claims, the identified features may have the potential to make a contribution over the prior art but are not common to all the claimed inventions and therefore cannot provide the required technical relationship. Therefore there is no special technical feature common to all the claimed inventions and the requirements for unity of invention are consequently not satisfied *a priori*.

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International application No.

PCT/AU2011/001297

This Annex lists the known "A" publication level patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned international search report. The Australian Patent Office is in no way liable for these particulars which are merely given for the purpose of information.

Patent Document Cited in Search Report		Patent Family Member					
US	2009044423	NONE					
WO	2008047256	BR	PI0604324	EP	2081458	US	2009260260
US	2008086825	US	7694436				
WO	2011134032	NONE					
Due to data integration issues this family listing may not include 10 digit Australian applications filed since May 2001.							
END OF ANNEX							