March 3, 1970 W. E. LYMAN 3,497,972

BASEBALL SHOE OVERLAY PROTECTOR

Filed July 31, 1968

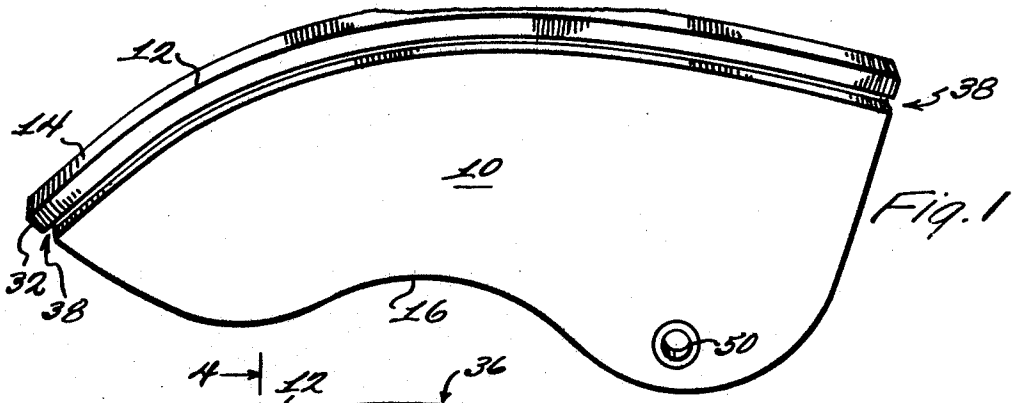


Fig. 1

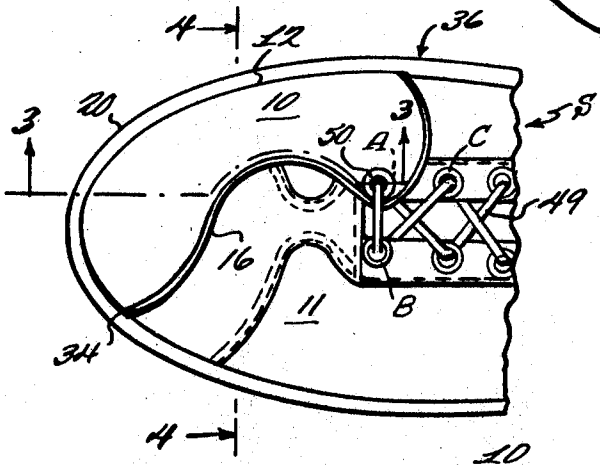
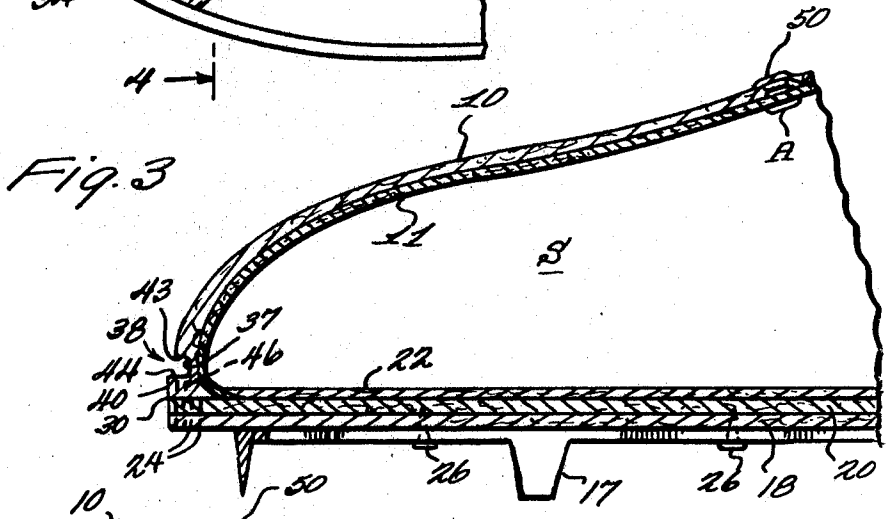


Fig. 2

Fig. 3



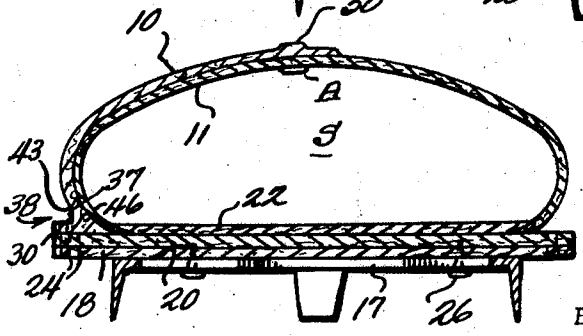


Fig. 4

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United States Patent Office 3,497,972
Patented Mar. 3, 1970

3,497,972

BASEBALL SHOE OVERLAY PROTECTOR

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Filed July 31, 1968, Ser. No. 748,989
Int. Cl. A43b 5/00; A43c 13/14
U.S. Cl. 36—72 4 Claims

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

An overlay for the forward portion of a baseball pitcher's shoe is disclosed having a bottom edge which extends from the toe of the shoe around the inside edge of the shoe to a point opposite the ball of the foot and an upper edge which extends over the toe portion of the shoe to an eyelet of the shoe. The overlay is secured to the shoe by stitching the bottom edge of the overlay to the top surface of the welt, and securing the top edge of the overlay across the upper of the shoe by threading a shoe lace through an eyelet near the uppermost part of the overlay.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of invention

The invention relates to foot coverings which are generally provided with reinforced surfaces. Still more particularly, the invention relates to a covering to protect a baseball pitcher's shoe during use, including a reinforced overlay covering for a shoe. The overlay extends over that portion of the shoe which covers the toes and forward instep area of the wearer's foot.

Description of prior art

Persons familiar with the motion of a baseball pitcher in delivery of a pitch will recognize the problems and expense caused by excessive wear on the front and upper inside surfaces of a baseball pitcher's shoe. In the delivery of a baseball, the pitcher faces the plate and as he prepares to deliver the ball, his lead foot is conventionally positioned over the pitching rubber with the toe and inside edge of the shoe directed downward over the front edge of the rubber. As the delivery motion is carried out the toe and inside edge of the shoe of the lead foot are dug into the ground in front of the rubber so as to brace the bottom of the foot axially against the rubber. The follow-through motion of the delivery causes the inside surface of the upper shoe on the bracing foot to be dragged in the dirt, thus subjecting not only the toe of the shoe but also the inside upper portion of the toe of the shoe to excessive grinding wear.

Efforts to protect the shoe from this terrific strain and abuse experienced in all type of soil and under the wide variety of pitching mound conditions have met only with limited success. Attempts include the use of protector overlays and the plates. One example of a prior toe plate utilizes a metallic lower portion and an upper leather portion having a lacing eyelet therethrough. Such a shoe protector not only adds weight but reduces the flexibility of the pitcher shoe thus reducing not only its comfort but its effectiveness.

Another overlay protector calls for stitching across the top of the shoe, thereby weakening the upper leather by needle perforations. Also, this overlay is shown to extend over the edge of the sole of the shoe and is sewn to the bottom, thereby creating an unsatisfactory extra layer which may be felt by the pitcher as pressure is placed upon the bottom of the foot in the pitching motion.

Still another shoe top protector disclosure teaches fitting a rubberized closure about the toe of the foot so as to cover the greater portion of the upper toe as well as the forward sole of the shoe. In addition to the reduction of flexibility of the shoe because of the additional layer across the bottom, the movement and comfort of the foot within the shoe may be hampered because the entire toe portion is enclosed. The preferred mode of that disclosure calls for holding the protector in place by elasticity, thus apparently crimping the shoe and foot.

It is an object of the present invention to provide an overlay to protect and reinforce the inside edge and upper of a baseball pitcher's shoe without detracting from the comfort, flexibility, utility, or appearance of the shoe.

In accordance with the principles of the present invention, this result is achieved by utilizing an overlay which extends only over that portion of the shoe which is actually subject to abuse. Thus, the overlay extends both along the top of the welt from the toe of the shoe to a point along the inside edge of the shoe generally opposite the ball of the foot upward from the welt of the shoe to the top of the instep.

The overlay has therein a channel or groove which is outwardly disposed and is adapted to extend along the edge of the overlay which is secured to the top of the welt. The bottom wall of the groove serves to partition the groove from the welt. When the overlay is placed in a position to be stitched to the welt and sole, this partition covers the stitching holding the welt and sole together and provides a surface for stitching the overlay to the welt and sole. By abutting the bottom edge of the overlay against the top edge of the welt, awkward overlapping beneath the edge of the sole which may cause irritation to the pitcher's foot is eliminated.

The overlay is held by molded contour over the upper by means of the normal lacing of the shoe whereby the lace is passed through an eyelet near the uppermost point of the overlay. The elimination of awkward overlapping coupled with the contour fit of the overlay and the possibility of adjustment by lacing results in a protector which not only provides full protection against wear without the wearer's loss of mobility but also helps to brace the pitcher's foot during delivery.

An additional feature realized by the stitching of the overlay to the welt and sole is that no threads are required to be woven into the upper. This adds life to the shoe because such stitching causes the upper to be weakened by the stitching perforation. Stitching through the sole and welt merely reinforces the sole and welt bind and makes it possible to use a succession of overlays discarding one and replacing it with another when the first is worn, without detracting from comfort or longevity of the shoe itself.

It is the further object of the present invention to provide an overlay protector for a baseball pitcher's shoe which is inexpensive to manufacture and which can be quickly and easily applied to the shoe.

Significant economies of manufacture and application of the present invention are realized as the direct result of the simplicity of design of the overlay and the availability of machine stitching. The groove and abutting placement of the overlay on top of the welt makes machine stitching possible. The availability of machine stitching results in low cost mass production of the invention and simple replacement of worn overlays. It can be easily seen that such replacement is more easily accomplished than having a shoe resoled.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The invention includes a flexible overlay protector for a baseball shoe which is adapted to conform to and lay against the upper and be secured thereon by stitching the bottom end of the overlay to the top of the welt and threading a shoe lace through an eyelet in the upper portion of the overlay to draw it against the shoe by normal

lacing. The invention further includes a channel or groove in the overlay protector near the bottom end of the overlay, the bottom wall of which provides a surface through which the stitching may be passed.

The invention will be understood more readily by reference to the accompanying drawings; however these drawings are intended to illustrate the invention and are not to be construed to limit the scope of the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIGURE 1 is a perspective view of the protector overlay pattern.

FIGURE 2 is a top elevational view of the protector overlay secured on a baseball shoe.

FIGURE 3 is a cross sectional view along line 3—3 in FIGURE 2.

FIGURE 4 is a cross sectional view along line 4—4 in FIGURE 2.

Referring now more particularly to the drawings, in FIGURE 1 the pattern for an overlay protector **10** is illustrated embodying the principles of the present invention. The overlay protector **10** is made of leather or an equivalent flexible material. It is preferred that a single layered piece of leather be used. The overlay has an inner surface, which is adapted to conform to the contour of the outer surface of a baseball shoe upper **11**, and an opposite outer wearing surface. The periphery of the overlay **10** is generally defined by a lower edge **12** having a surface **14** for abutting a welt of a baseball shoe and an upper edge **16** having a contour which enables the shoe to flex in the proper manner when the overlay protector is in place.

FIGURES 2, 3 and 4 illustrate the protector overlay positioned upon a conventional baseball shoe S having triangularly arranged spiked plates **17**, a sole **18**, and a welt **20**. An inner sole **22** in the shoe is shown to overlap the upper **11**. The sole and welt are stitched together by stitching **24**. The upper **11** and the inner sole are stitched or otherwise attached to the sole and welt in a similarly conventional manner. The spikes are secured to the sole by screws **26** or similar means.

The lower edge **12** is adapted to be positioned adjacent the junction between the welt **20** and the upper **11**. When the overlay is so positioned, the surface **14** along the lower edge **12** of the overlay protector contacts the top peripheral surface **30** of the welt **20** from a point **34** located along the outside edge of the shoe at the toe to a point **36** coinciding with the ball of the wearer's foot and located along the inside edge of the shoe. Edge **16** extends in a convex manner from point **34** across the toe of the upper to a midportion of the toe. At the midportion of the toe, the curvature of edge **16** changes to concave with the edge extending in a concave manner from the midportion of the toe to a point adjacent the eyelets of the shoe wherein the curvature of edge **16** again changes to convex thereby forming a protruding portion overlapping at least one of the eyelets of the shoe. From the eyelets, the edge **16** extends down along the inside of the shoe to point **36** of the welt. Thus, it can be seen that the overlay protector **10** is cut so that the overlay will conform to the contour of the shoe when the forward tip **32** of the overlay is approximately aligned with point **34** of the toe and that the cut-out portion of overlay **10**, where edge **16** is concave, enables the shoe to flex in a normal manner.

The overlay may be used by either a right handed or left handed pitcher. A right handed pitcher uses his right foot to brace his pitching motion and therefore the overlay would be located on the inside and upper portion of the right foot. A left handed pitcher would of course wear the overlay on the inside and upper portion of his left foot. Although the overlay, as shown in Figure 1, is grooved for application to a left shoe, the overlay can be made for a right shoe merely by grooving the opposite side of the overlay.

FIGURE 3 shows a cross sectional view of the overlay protector. It can be seen that the overlay has a channel or groove **38** thereabout having an upper wall **43** and a lower wall **44** which is the upper surface of a partition or rib **40** which separates the groove from the welt. The groove is disposed outwardly and positioned adjacent the junction between the welt **20** and the upper **11**.

After the overlay has ben placed upon the shoe so that the lower wall **44** of the groove **38** is located over the welt, it is secured along the lower edge **12** by stitching **46**. While the overlay may be stitched to the upper by passing thread through rear wall **37** of groove **38** into the upper, this causes a weakening of the material in the upper by the needle perforations. However, by stitching downward through the heavy leather of the welt and sole, no damage is incurred and, in fact, such threading lends reinforcement to the sole and welt bind. Furthermore, when it is desirous to remove the overlay and replace it with another one, the upper is not weakened or destroyed by additional perforations. According to the preferred mode, even though perforations are left in the sole and welt when an overlay is replaced, the reinforcing stitch of the replacement overlay more than compensates for the weakened condition for the welt and sole.

The overlay protector is held in place on the upper portion of the shoe by lacing **49** which is threaded through an eyelet **50** in the uppermost part of the protector. The eyelet **50** is adapted to be aligned with eyelet A of the shoe so that when the lacing **49** is drawn through eyelet A and eyelet **50** and the shoe is laced up, the overlay is drawn taut and caused to lie closely above the forward portion of the upper.

While the eyelet **50** is designed to align with eyelet A in shoe S, such positioning is not critical. The number and location of eyelets in the protector **10** can be varied. Thus, it would be within the scope of the invention to extend the protector **10** to cover eyelets A and B, or A and C, to align with respective additional eyelets in protector **10** (not shown). Also, should the protector stretch in damp weather or due to perspiration it would be possible to compensate for stretching by means of lacing **49**. For instance, the shoelace **49** may be extended through eyelet **50** to communicate directly with eyelet C or some other eyelet further disposed from the eyelet **50** so as to create an extended distance over which the overlay may be drawn. It will be noted however that while such lacing means are feasible, it is preferred that the molded contour be utilized as fully as practical.

Various materials may be used to constitute the overlay. The preferred material is prime, full grain, harness leather. It provides maximum protection and comfort. It has been found preferable to use a four iron weight leather, approximately three-eights of an inch thick near the lower edge, and to taper the leather upward to two iron weight having a thickness of approximately one-eighth of an inch at the top of the overlay. For the best results, the leather should be skivered and cut specifically for each size shoe.

Obviously many modifications and variations of the present invention are possible in the light of the above teachings. It is therefore to be understood that within the scope of the appended claims, the invention may be practiced otherwise than as specifically described.

What is claimed is:

1. A flexible overlay protector for preventing wear of the toe and the inside forward instep area of a baseball shoe comprising:

at least one piece of material, said piece of material being defined by first and second edges having coterminous ends;

said first edge having a generally convex curvature and being adapted to abut an upper surface of a shoe welt which extends peripherally beyond a junction of said welt and an upper of said shoe, and said first edge being adapted to extend from a point on said welt

located on an outside edge of said shoe at the toe of said shoe to a point on an inside edge of said shoe approximately opposite a ball portion of said shoe;

said material having a groove in an outwardly disposed surface, said groove extending substantially parallel to said first edge, and said groove and said first edge defining therebetween a rib;

said rib being adapted to cover stitching securing said welt to the sole of said shoe and said rib being adapted to receive stitching therethrough whereby said protector can be sewn to said welt and sole;

said second edge having terminal portions with generally convex curvatures, said end portions of said second edge being joined by an intermediate portion of said second edge having a generally concave curvature and said second edge of said material being adapted to extend upwardly and rearwardly from one end of said first edge across said toe and forward instep area of said shoe to the other end of said first edge whereby said protector is adapted to cover a portion of said toe, a portion of said inside forward instep area and at least one shoelace eyelet of said shoe; and

said flexible material having at least one overlay eyelet therein adjacent said second edge within an area of said material defined by one of said convex terminal edge portions of said second edge, said overlay eyelet being adapted to be aligned with at least one shoelace eyelet of said shoe whereby a lace of said shoe

can be passed through said overlay eyelet and said at least one shoelace eyelet to hold said upper portion of said overlay protector against said shoe and said at least one overlay eyelet being an only means along said second edge for securing said edge of said overlay to said shoe.

2. An overlay protector as claimed in claim **1** wherein said piece of material is a single layer piece of leather.

3. An overlay protector as claimed in claim **2** wherein said material is skivered leather being tapered from greater thickness along said first edge to a lesser thickness at said eyelet.

4. An overlay protector as claimed in claim **1** wherein said groove is rectangular in cross section and has an upper wall, a lower wall and a rear wall.

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U.S. Cl. X.R.

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