United States Patent

[11] 3,590,389

[72] Inventor **Roland N. Latina**
Belleville, Ill.

[21] Appl. No. **5,231**
[22] Filed **Jan. 23, 1970**
[45] Patented **July 6, 1971**
[73] Assignee **Rawlings Sporting Goods Company**
St. Louis, Mo.

[54] **BALL GLOVE BACKSTOP**
10 Claims, 7 Drawing Figs.

[52] **U.S. Cl.** 2/19
[51] **Int. Cl.** A41d 13/10
[50] **Field of Search** ..... 2/19, 20, 158, 159, 161 A

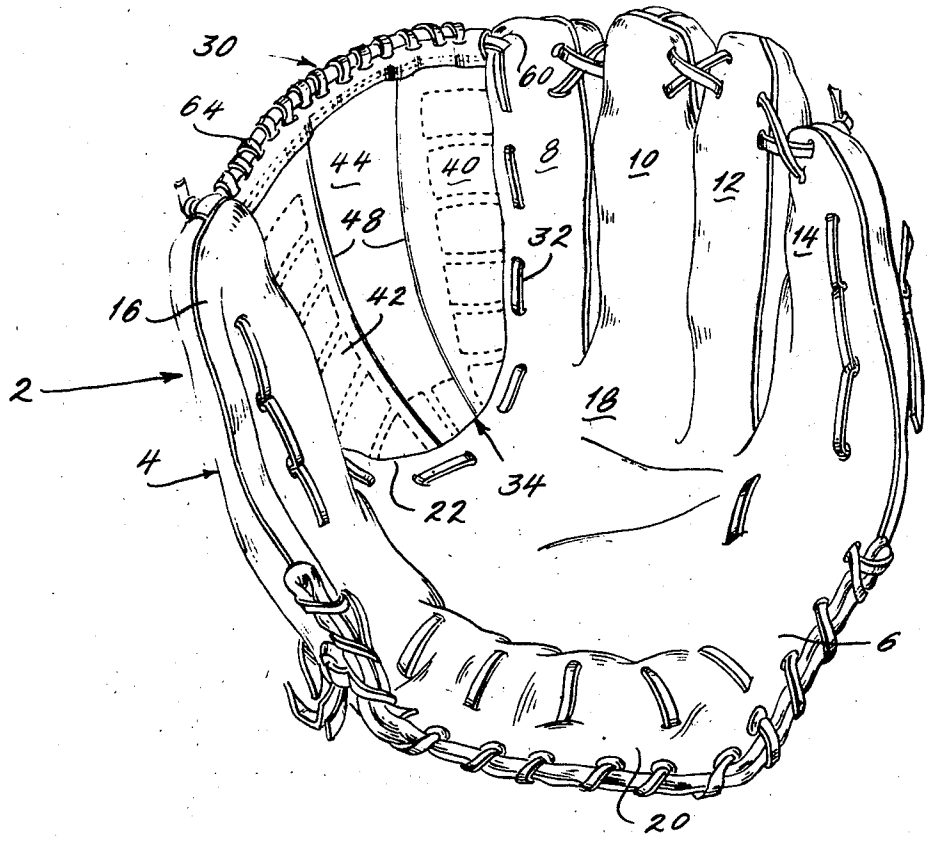
[56] **References Cited**

UNITED STATES PATENTS

3,042,929	7/1962	Kobos	2/19
3,169,250	2/1965	Heiman	2/19
3,321,771	5/1967	Latina	2/19

Primary Examiner—James R. Boler
Attorney—Gravely, Lieder & Woodruff

ABSTRACT: A ball glove having spaced finger and thumb sections with a backstop connected to and substantially closing the area between those sections. The backstop includes a pair of spaced side segments which are joined to a connecting segment at bellowslike folds. The folds permit the connecting segment to move rearwardly with respect to the side segments when a ball strikes the backstop and, in addition, enables the side segments to spread away from the connecting segment. This displacement between the segments permits the backstop to more closely conform to the shape of a ball which enters it, and to expand upon ball impact which absorbs some of the energy. It also allows the segments to work relative to each other, which affords greater control over the glove and enhances its retention capabilities.



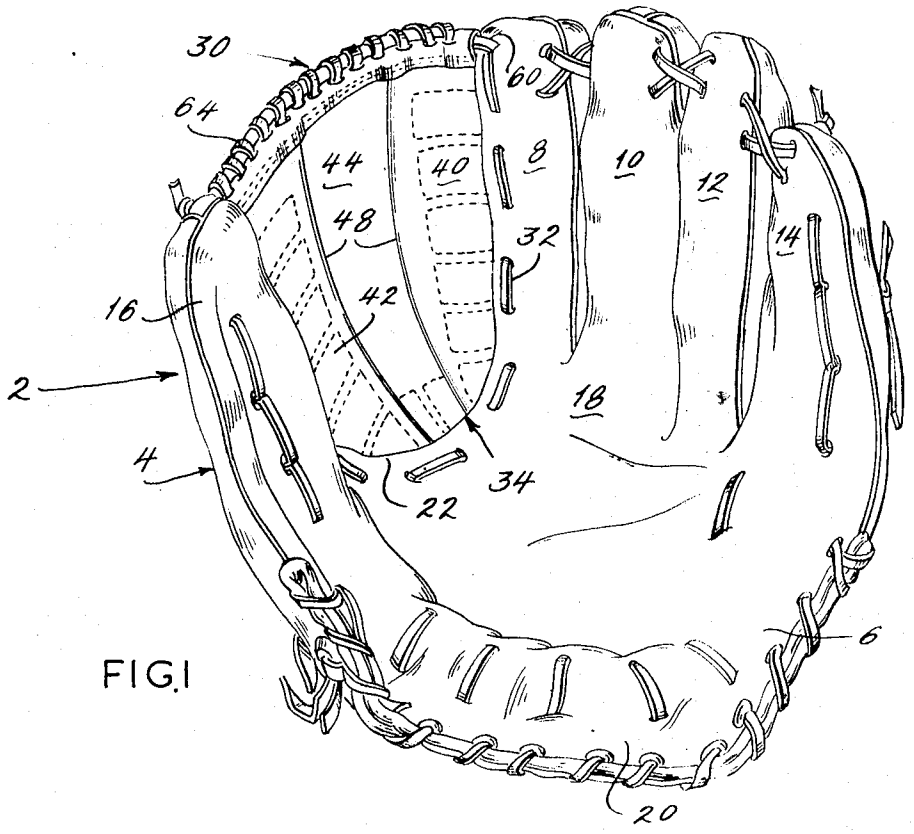


FIG.1

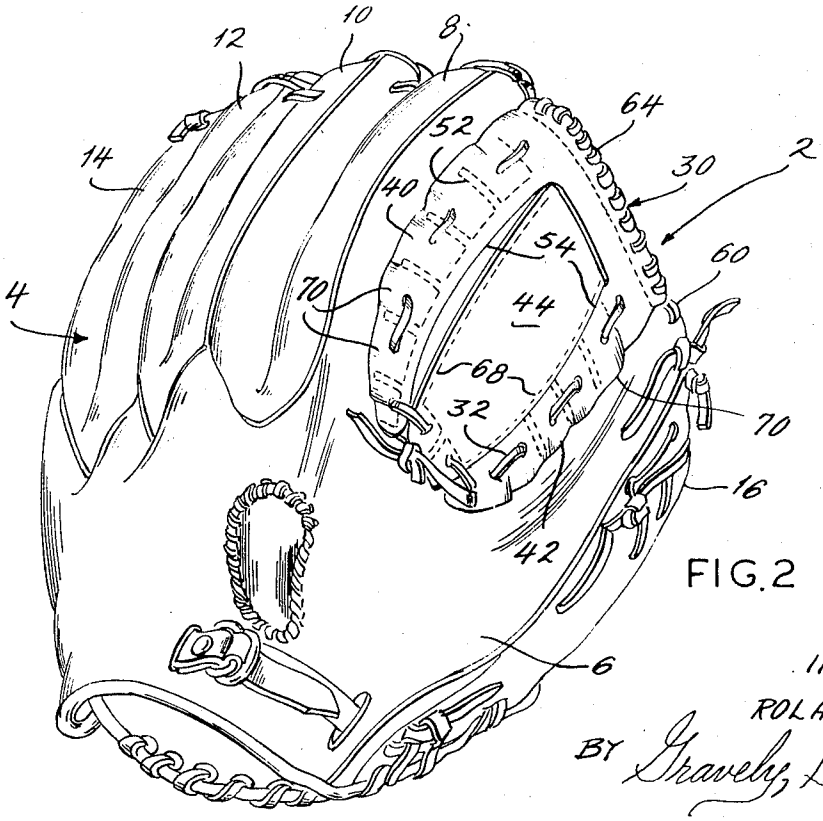


FIG.2

INVENTOR:
ROLAND N. LATINA
BY Gravely, Lieder & Woodruff
ATTORNEYS.

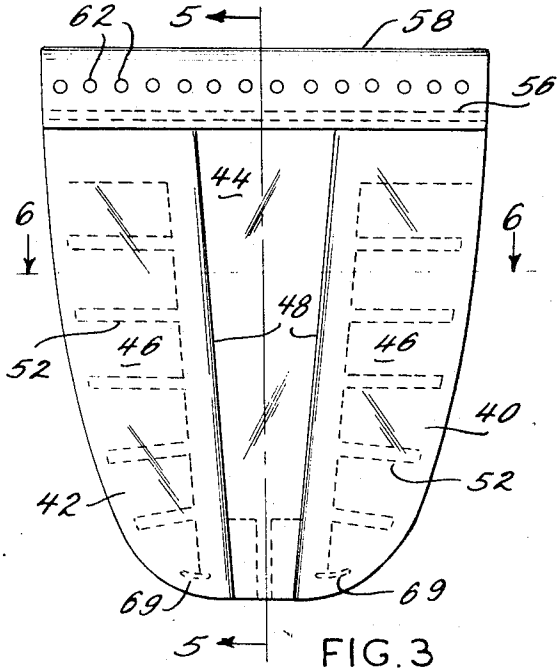


FIG. 3

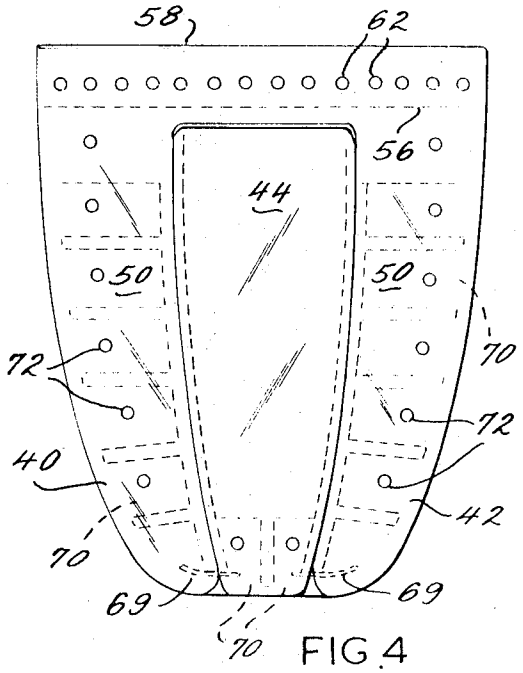


FIG. 4

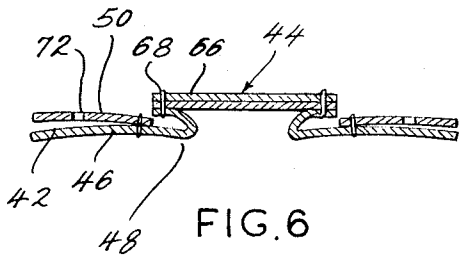


FIG. 6

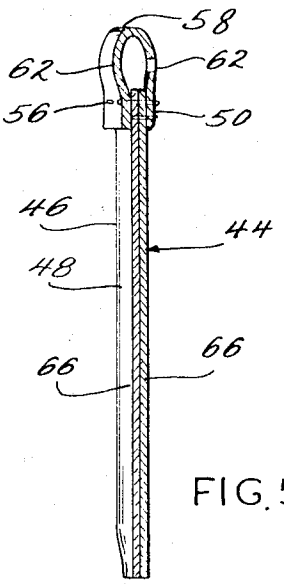


FIG. 5

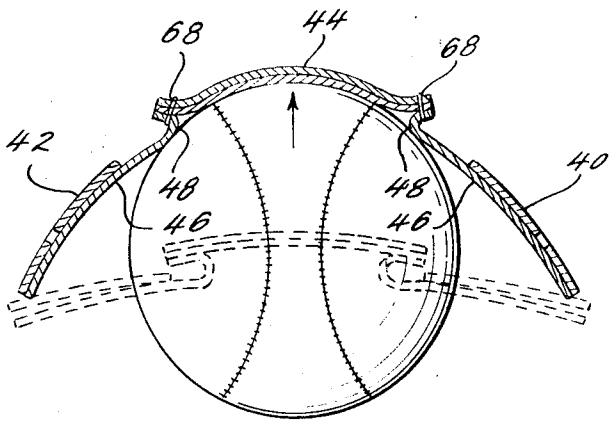


FIG. 7

INVENTOR:
ROLAND N. LATINA

BY Gravely, Lieder & Woodruff

ATTORNEYS.

BALL GLOVE BACKSTOP

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates in general to ball gloves, and more particularly to backstops for ball gloves.

In many gloves of current manufacture the finger sections extend considerably beyond the ends of the fielder's fingers, and likewise the thumb section extends considerably beyond the end of the fielder's thumb. Indeed, the fielder's fingers for the most part are presented behind the palm portion of the glove body, that is, directly behind the pocket area of the glove where baseballs are most often caught. The foregoing construction coupled with the natural divergence of the fielder's thumb and index finger require a relatively wide and long backstop between the thumb section and the first finger section of the glove body. This back stop forms a continuation of the pocket in the glove body and thereby prevents balls from passing between the thumb and finger sections of the glove.

In gloves of current manufacture the backstop normally constitutes nothing more than a flat piece of webbing laced or otherwise secured to the opposed edges of the thumb section and the index finger section. By reason of this flat construction, hard hit balls which enter the glove pocket obliquely or off center have a tendency to pass along the backstop and slip out of the pocket. Furthermore, the relatively flat web detracts from the flexibility of the glove, making control of the glove difficult, particularly when it is new and not yet broken in.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

One of the principal objects of the present invention is to provide a ball glove with a backstop having superior retention capabilities for balls which enter it. Another object is to provide a backstop having segments which yield relative to one another so as to form a deep pocket within the backstop. A further object is to provide a backstop which is quite flexible and enables the user to maintain a high degree of control over the glove. Still another object is to provide a backstop which provides a deep pocket in the glove, yet affords easy retrieval of balls caught in the glove. Yet another object is to provide a backstop which is simple in construction and easy to manufacture. These and objects and advantages will become apparent hereinafter.

The present invention is embodied in a ball glove having a backstop formed from a plurality of segments connected together through bellow like folds. The invention also consists in the parts and in the arrangements and combinations of parts hereinafter described and claimed.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

In the accompanying drawings which form part of the specification and wherein like numerals and letters refer to like parts wherever they occur:

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of the front of a ball glove having a backstop constructed in accordance with and embodying the present invention;

FIG. 2 is a perspective view of the rear of the ball glove;

FIG. 3 is a view of the front of the backstop;

FIG. 4 is a view of the rear of the backstop;

FIGS. 5 and 6 are sectional views taken along lines 5–5 and 6–6, respectively, of FIG. 3; and

FIG. 7 is a sectional view similar to FIG. 6, but showing the backstop expanded on impact with a ball.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Referring now in detail to the drawings, 2 designates a ball glove including a glove body 4 (FIGS. 1 and 2) having an outer shell 6 provided with finger sections 8, 10, 12 and 14 and a thumb section 16, all of which emanate from a palm area 18 on the outer shell 6. One margin of the palm area 18 terminates at a heel 20, while an opposite margin defines a

crotch 22 located between the first or index finger section 8 and the thumb section 16.

The glove body 4 also includes an inner or lining shell (not shown) having finger stalls and a thumb stall for receiving the user's fingers and thumb, respectively. The finger stalls are positioned such that the user's fingers will be spread generally behind the palm area 18 of the glove body 4 with the tips of the fingers being in the vicinity of the inner ends of the finger sections 8, 10, 12 and 14. Similarly, the thumb stall positions the end of the user's thumb in alignment with and near the beginning of the thumb section 16. Thus, the finger sections 8, 10, 12 and 14, and the thumb section 16 form extensions of the user's fingers and thumb, respectively.

The space between first or index finger section 8 and the thumb section 16 is closed by a backstop 30 which is secured to the finger section 8 and the thumb section 16 as well as to the intervening crotch 22 of the glove body 4 by means of a leather or other suitable lacing 32. The backstop 30 is normally substantially flat and together with the adjoining palm area 18 of the glove body 4 forms a ball receiving pocket 34 (FIG. 1) within the glove 2.

Broadly speaking, the backstop 30 consists of three backstop segments, namely a pair of side segments 40 and 42 and a center or connecting segment 44 (FIGS. 3, 4 and 6), which are positioned adjacent one another across the space between the index finger section 8 and the thumb section 16. In particular, the side segments 40 and 42 are attached to the first finger section 8 and the thumb section 16, respectively, whereas the center segment 44 is attached at its sides to the inwardly presented sides of the side segments 40 and 42 to close the area between them. The side segments 40 and 42 each include a separate facing ply 46 which is preferably cut from leather and at its margin adjacent to the center segment 44 is folded or doubled backwardly upon itself away from the opposite side segment 40 or 42 in the formation of a bellows fold 48 (FIG. 6). The bellows folds 48 extend generally in the same direction as the first finger and thumb sections 8 and 16.

The facing ply 46 for each side segment 40 and 42 is attached to a common backing ply 50 (FIG. 4) by means of a run of stitching 52, and the backing ply 50, like the facing plies 46, is also preferably formed from leather. In the vicinity of the center segment 44 the common backing ply 50 is provided with a cutout 54 having opposed side margins which are slightly curved and divergent, and these side margins are normally positioned adjacent to and in abutment with the end edges of the turned back bellows folds 48 on the overlying facing plies 46 (FIG. 6). At its outer end, that is, the end furthest from the crotch 22, the backing ply 50 is looped over the facing ply 46 of each side segment 40 and 42 (FIGS. 3 and 5) and stitched thereto along a straight run of stitching 56 which forms a tunnel 58 across the outer end of the backstop 30. The tunnel 58 contains a lacing 60 (FIGS. 1 and 2) which extends into the outer ends of the first finger and thumb section 8 and 16 on the glove body 4. At the tunnel 58 the backing ply 50, including its overturned portion, is provided with a plurality of spaced apertures 62 through which more lacing 64 is passed. The lacing 64 between each aperture 62 is looped over the folded portion of the backing ply 50 so that the lacing 64 is spirally wound around the lacing 60 at the outer margin of the backstop 30. This reinforces the outer end portion of the backstop 30 and prevents that portion from folding backwardly when a hard hit ball is snagged therein.

The center segment 44 includes two plies 66 (FIGS. 5 and 6) of leather or some other suitable material which are sewn together in overlying relation along a run of stitching 68. Each ply 66 possesses the same configuration for most of the length of the backstop 30 is the same as the configuration of the cutout 54 in the common backing ply 50. Moreover, the run of stitching 68 is located in close proximity to the side margins of the plies 66 and extends through the bellows folds 48, securing those folds 48 to the center segment 44 such that end margins of the folds 48 register with the side margins of the overlying plies 66. The side margins of the center segment 44 are nor-

mally presented in close proximity to the opposed side margins of the cutout **54** so that the center segment **44** normally gives the appearance of completely filling the cutout **54**. The outer end of the center segment **44** extends outwardly beyond the outermost margin of the cutout **54** and in between the main body of the backing ply **50** and the overturned portion thereof (FIG. **5**), and that end of the center segment **44** is caught in the straight run of stitching **56** which secures the tunnel **58**. At the extreme inner ends of the center segment **44** the overlying plies **66** thereof are attached directly to the folds **48** and to the backing and facing plies **50** and **46** of the side segments **40** and **42** by means of stitches **69** (FIGS. **3** and **4**) so that the center segment **44** will not separate from the side segments **40** and **42** at its inner or lower end. Similarly, the straight run of stitching **56** prevents the center segment **44** from separating from the side segments **42** at the outer or upper end of the backstop **30**. The plies **46** and **50** of the side segments **40** and **42** and the plies **66** of the center segment **44** are all fitted and stitched together such that the backstop **30** possesses a concave configuration.

The bellows folds **48** permit the center segment **44** to move rearwardly away from the side segments **40** and **42**, thus deepening the pocket **34** formed in part by the backstop **30**. In addition, the bellows folds **48** enable the side segments **40** and **42** to spread laterally away from the center segment at the center of the backstop **30** to increase the concavity of the pocket **34** within the backstop **30**. In this connection, it should be noted that the side margins of the outer segment **44** and likewise the normally abutting side margins of the cutout **54** are slightly curved and diverge slightly from the inner end of the backstop **39** to the tunnel **58**. Moreover, at their extreme inner and outer margins, the center segment **44** and the two side segments **40** and **42** are stitched together so no spreading between them occurs at both ends of the backstop **30**. However, at the center of the backstop **30** the side segments **40** and **42** are only attached through the bellows folds **48** so that spreading will occur in this area. The folds **48** possess their greatest width through the center of the backstop **30** so that greater spreading between the segments **40** and **42** and the segment **44** will occur in this area, as opposed to the areas adjacent to the inner or outer ends of the backstop **30**.

The outwardly presented margins of the side segments **40** and **42**, that is, the margins located opposite from the bellows folds **48**, are curved and generally conform to the curvature of the first finger section **8**, the crotch **22**, and the thumb section **16** of the glove body **4** (FIG. **2**). The innermost margin of the center segment **44**, which is relatively short, forms a continuation of the curved margins on the side segments **40** and **42** and is located adjacent to the crotch **22** of the glove body **4**.

Finally, it should be noted that the run of stitching **52** connecting the facing ply **46** and the backing ply **50** of the side segments **40** and **42** extends outwardly from the vicinity of the bellows folds **48** toward the side margin of the backstop and then back in again at generally equally spaced intervals so that the side segments **40** and **42** are provided with a plurality of outwardly opening stalls **70**. The same is true of the run of stitching **68** in the center segment **44** at the inner end of that segment. The portion of the common backing ply **50** behind each stall **70** in the segments **40** and **42** and likewise the portion of the rearmost ply **66** behind each stall **70** in the segment **44** is provided with an aperture **72** for accommodating the lacing **32** which is passed alternately through the apertures **72** and stalls **70** and through first finger sections **8**, crotch **22** or thumb section **16** of the glove body **4**. Thus, the side margins of the backstop **30** are held against the opposed side margins of the first finger section **8** and thumb section **16** so as to close the area between those sections.

Normally, the backstop **30** possesses some concavity yet is substantially flat, and it forms a continuation of the concaved palm area **18** of the glove body **4** so as to create a relatively deep pocket **34** in the glove **2** (FIG. **1**). In this position the center segment **44** substantially fills the cutout **54** (FIG. **2**) so that the curved side margins of plies **66** on the center segment **44** and the registered end margins of the bellows folds **48** are for the most part in abutment with the opposed side margins forming the cutout **54** in the backing ply **46**. In short, the center segment **44** is located adjacent to the side segments **42** when the bellows folds **48** are fully folded.

When a ball enters the pocket **34** of the glove **2** and strikes the backstop **30** (FIG. **7**), either directly or after passing along the palm area **18** of the glove body **4**, the center area of the center segment **44** is displaced rearwardly relative to the side segments **40** and **42** inasmuch as the segments **40** and **42** are connected to the center segment **44** at that location only through the folds **48**. As this occurs, the bellows folds **48** open and permit the side segments **40** and **42** to spread away from the rearwardly displaced center portion **44**. Hence, the pocket **34** deepens, and its degree of concavity increases, thus enabling it to more easily capture and retain a ball. In other words, when a ball strikes the backstop **30**, the bellows folds **48** permit the three sections **40**, **44** and **42** of the backstop **30** to yield and assume the curvature of the ball so that the ball is retained in the glove **2**.

The opening of the bellows folds **48** in the presence of a hard hit ball furthermore absorbs some of the energy of the ball so that not all of it is transferred to adjacent portions of the glove body **4** and to the player's wrist.

Finally, the bellows folds **48** impart flexibility to the backstop **30** and this, in turn, enables the player to have more control over the glove body **4**.

This invention is intended to cover all changes and modifications of the example of the invention herein chosen for purposes of the disclosure which do not constitute departures from the spirit and scope of the invention.

What I claim is:

1. In a ball glove including a glove body having a ball-receiving pocket and spaced apart thumb and finger sections, and improved backstop forming a continuation of the ball-receiving pocket of the glove body and attached to the thumb and finger sections for substantially closing the space between those sections, the backstop comprising a plurality of segments forming an initially substantially flat backstop, and bellowslike folds operatively connecting said segments and responsive when a ball strikes the backstop to unfold and expand said backstop into a ball-catching pocket by allowing said segments to move out of the initially flat condition between the segments.

2. A structure according to claim **1** wherein the segments are arranged adjacent one another between the thumb and finger sections of the glove body; and wherein the folds extend generally in the direction of the thumb and finger sections.

3. A structure according to claim **2** wherein the folds fold away from the ball-receiving pocket.

4. A structure according to claim **2** wherein the folds do not open at the ends of the segments so that the ends of adjacent segments are not displaced relative to one another, whereby when a ball strikes the center area of the backstop and the folds in that center area open, the backstop will assume a more concave shape.

5. A structure according to claim **2** wherein two spaced segments have facing plies forming a portion of the ball-receiving side of the backstop; wherein the facing plies are doubled back upon themselves to form the bellowslike folds; and wherein a connecting segment is attached to the folds and extends between the two spaced segments.

6. A structure according to claim **5** wherein the spaced segments further include a backing ply attached to the facing ply and forming a cutout in the back side of the backstop; and wherein the connecting segment is generally positioned within the cutout.

7. A structure according to claim **6** wherein the connecting segment substantially fills the cutout when the folds are fully folded.

8. A structure according to claim **7** wherein the side margins of the cutout in the backing ply terminate at the area of the glove body through which the finger section and the thumb section merge.

9. A structure according to claim 7 wherein the backing ply at its outer end is folded forwardly across the facing plies and attached to the facing plies and the connecting segment so as to form a tunnel through the backstop; and wherein a lacing extends through the tunnel and into the first finger and thumb sections of the glove body.

10. In a ball glove including a glove body having spaced apart thumb and finger sections, an improved backstop forming a ball-receiving pocket with the glove body and being attached to the thumb and finger sections for substantially closing the space between those sections, the backstop comprising a plurality of sections connected to each other at bellowslike folds so that the sections can yield relative to one another and increase the depth of and impart greater contour to the backstop and ball-receiving pocket.

PO-1050
(5/69)

UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE
CERTIFICATE OF CORRECTION

Patent No. 3,590,389 Dated July 6, 1971

Inventor(s) Roland N. Latina

It is certified that error appears in the above-identified patent and that said Letters Patent are hereby corrected as shown below:

The Assignee should be: "by mesne assignment to A-T-O Inc., Willoughby, Ohio; an Ohio Corporation"

Signed and sealed this 16th day of November 1971.

(SEAL)
Attest:

EDWARD M.FLETCHER,JR.
Attesting Officer

ROBERT GOTTSCHALK
Acting Commissioner of Patents