# United States Patent [19]

**Hayes**

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[54] **TENNIS BALL POCKET**


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[52] **U.S. Cl.** ..... **2/250**
[51] **Int. Cl.** ..... **A41d 27/20**
[58] **Field of Search** ..... 2/250, 247, 1; 224/5 D



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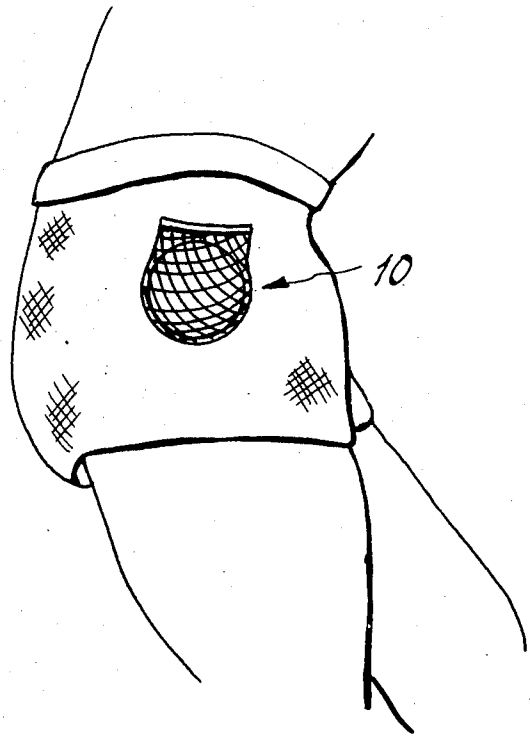
[57] **ABSTRACT**

A pocket for a tennis ball which is attachable to a garment and which will retain the ball without interfering with the activity of the participant during play. The pocket includes a base element for attachment to the garment and which has affixed thereto and across, an extensible elastic fabric material of sufficient elasticity to receive and hold the ball, permit ready removal thereof and which will lie flat and unobstrusive when empty. The elastic material is capable of bilateral extension and conforms in shape to the outer edge of the base element which is generally provided with a pair of straight parallel edges joined at one end by a semicircular segment to form a "U." The outer edge of the base element and elastic material are joined together along this edge as by stitching, adhesive or any other suitable means. This aforedescribed structure is open at one end and there is provided a closure means across the elastic material to insure proper closing thereacross. This latter means can take the form of an elastic piping or a multiple foldover of the elastic material. The pocket, thus formed, is suitably affixed to the garment as by a thermosetting adhesive on the base element surface opposite the pocket, or physically attached by stitch sewing, by buttons or where applicable, by a zipper. Additionally, a dual pocket can be formed by merely forming the backing and the elastic material each in a unitary shape resembling a pair of "U" s joined at the center arm and stitched thereacross. Reduced to a basic configuration, it is merely necessary to affix the elastic fabric material directly to the garment such as tennis shorts, and thus delete entirely the backing material element.


**5 Claims, 8 Drawing Figures**



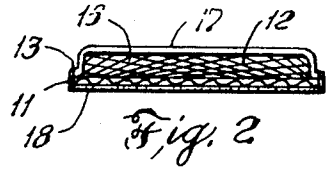



Fig. 2

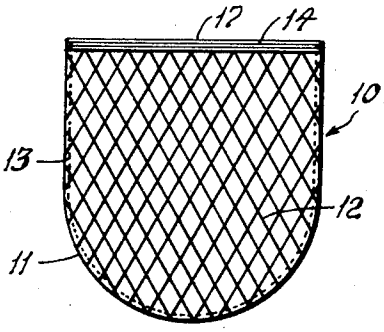



Fig. 1

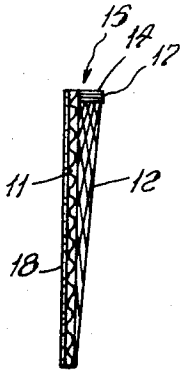



Fig. 3

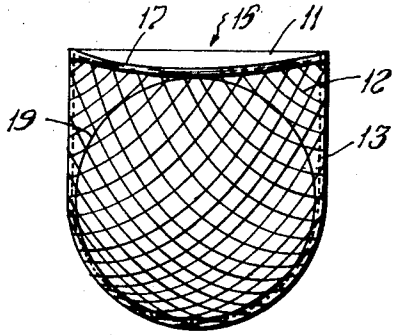



Fig. 4

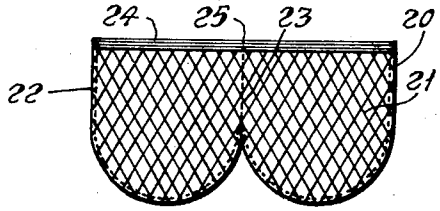



Fig. 6

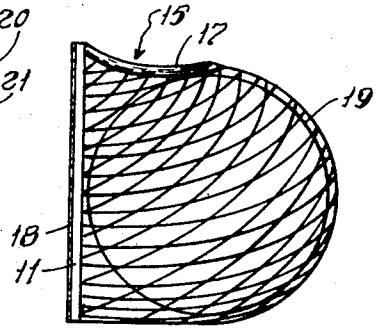



Fig. 5

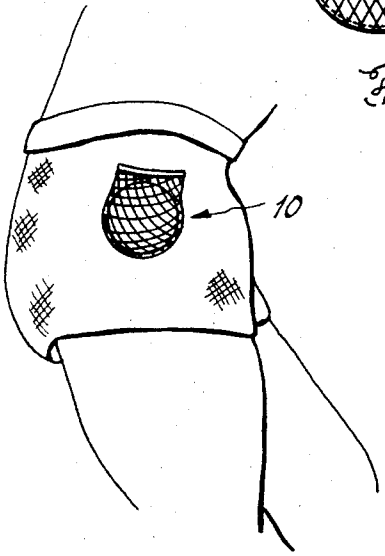



Fig. 7

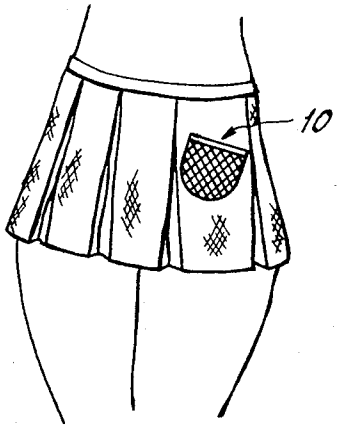



Fig. 8

# TENNIS BALL POCKET

## BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to garment pockets and more particularly pertains to an improved elasticized pocket for tennis balls which is particularly adapted to be attached directly to a garment worn by the player at the most comfortable and convenient position while readily accessible during play without hindering or in any way interfering with movement. Further, the tennis ball can be readily inserted and removed from the pocket and when devoid of the ball, the pocket will lie flat against the garment.

In the field of holders or pockets for various implements and balls employed in sports, it has been the general practice to provide ordinary pockets or suitable holders affixed to a belt or the like of the player to perform this function. This solution has proved satisfactory only in those sports where the players activity is limited and relatively slow, and even there, a certain degree of interference has always been experienced. Particularly in those sports where the player is in continual motion such devices have not been employed. This is exceedingly evident when one considers a sport such as tennis wherein the player is permitted at least two initial serves and must thereafter engage in constant activity. As presently practiced, the server holds at least two balls in one hand during service and is, therefore, somewhat limited in his freedom and ability to serve properly. This problem is of even greater magnitude to those who have relatively small hands and experience difficulty in retaining one ball while throwing the other upward during their service. Side type slash pockets for men have been found to be totally inadequate and, as a general rule, they are kept empty as evidenced by the fact that tennis shorts are made and sold completely devoid of these pockets as are all womens tennis garments. There is not presently available a satisfactory means or device for the retention of tennis balls on the person of the player either as part of the garment or an attachment therefor. The subject invention overcomes the aforementioned difficulties and fills a long desired need.

## SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The general purpose of this invention is to provide an attachable holder or pocket for tennis balls that has all the advantages of similarly employed prior art devices and has none of the above described disadvantages. To attain this, the present invention provides a sphere retaining pocket which includes a backing member whose outer edge is in the form of a "U" and of a material that preferably can be of the type wherein one face thereof is coated or treated with a mastic, adhesive or other thermosetting composition which, when subjected to heat, as from an ordinary pressing iron, will adhere to another fabric. Where desirable the backing can suitably be sewn to the garment fabric or affixed thereto by means of buttons or a zipper. A netting or an extensible elastic fabric of the same general configuration is affixed to the backing material along the side and bottom peripheral edges leaving the upper straight edge open between the backing and the elastic fabric which fabric, suitably should be capable of extensive stretching in two directions. The elastic fabric is sewn or suitably affixed while positioned flat against the backing so as to always remain in tightly abutting relation therewith. The upper open edge of the elastic fabric is provided with an elastomeric band thereacross so as to continually urge this upper free edge or lip toward the backing and into a closed position for retaining within the pocket any sphere disposed therein. This elastomeric band may take the form of multiple sewn together folds of the elastic fabric. Thus, there is provided a pocket or holder suitably contoured and structured to comfortably hold a ball and which can be readily affixed at any position to a garment.



An object of the present invention is to provide a simple, inexpensive and reliable pocket for holding therein a sphere which can be affixed to a garment and worn without interfering with movement of the wearer.

Another object is the provision of a garment attachable pocket for tennis balls into which the ball may be easily and readily inserted and removed while firmly positioned against the body of the wearer without excessive movement of the ball during strenuous movement of the player and, which pocket contours to the shape and form of the area to which it is affixed.

Other objects and many of the attendant advantages of this invention will be readily appreciated as the same becomes better understood by reference to the following detailed description when considered in connection with the accompanying drawings wherein:

FIG. 1 is a front view of an embodiment made in accordance with the principle of this invention;

FIG. 2 is a top view of the embodiment;

FIG. 3 is a side view of the same embodiment;

FIG. 4 is a front view of the embodiment with a ball disposed therein;

FIG. 5 is a side view of FIG. 4;

FIG. 6 is a front view of another embodiment illustrating a double pocket; and,

FIGS. 7 and 8 illustrate the embodiment of this invention as applied to apparel worn by tennis players.

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

In the illustrated embodiment of FIGS. 1, 2 and 3, the pocket or holder structure 10 includes a backing or base element 11 which is of a general "U" shape and which may comprise a solid surface as shown, or only the peripheral edge to form the outer contour and of a sufficient width for attachment to a garment. The backing element can be of any suitable fabric or material which will conform to the garment on which it is placed. Disposed over and flatly abutting the backing 11 is an elastic extensible fabric 12 that can, if desired, be in the form of netting or the like as shown and is of the same general pattern as the backing element so as to properly overlay thereon. A most suitable and satisfactory elastic fabric that provides elasticity in two directions is a Raschel Power Net Knit although fabrics such as LYCRA have been found suitable. The elastic fabric can be affixed to the backng along the edge in a variety of fashions as by adhesive or, as illustrated, by sewing stitches 13 therealong and should be joined thereto while lying flat and slightly extended. The sewn portion is proximate the edge and extends therealong except for the upper straight horizontal edge 14, thereby providing an opening 15 into the cavity formed between the elastic fabric and the backing element. Since it is desirable that this opening remain as closed as possible at all times, there is provided a means for urging the upper fabric edge 14 toward the backing

which may take the form of an elastic piping therealong or as illustrated it may simply consist of extending the elastic fabric and folding it over upon itself in multiple layers and thereafter joining the folds together as by sewing to form a lip **17**. The general size of the aforementioned structure is selected to accommodate within the pocket or cavity any particular object and, by proportioning it to the dimension of a tennis ball, it is clear that the ball can be readily inserted and removed. Various satisfactory methods or means of attaching the pocket to a garment have been employed and these include sewing, buttoning, strapping to a belt, but it has been found that the most expedient technique consists of using an adhesive or mastic applied to the face of the backing element opposite the elastic fabric. Preferably, this surface can be provided with a coating or facing of a thermosetting adhesive **18** which merely requires the application of heat, as from an ordinary pressing iron, to join the pocket to another fabric or garment.

FIGS. **4** and **5** illustrate the pocket with a tennis ball inserted therein. It is clear that the width of the pocket is of a sufficient dimension so as not to require excessive stretching of the backing element **11** and yet permit the elastic fabric to encompass the ball and apply pressure inwardly against the ball to urge it toward the backing element. Thus, the ball is firmly held and positioned against any movement during activity of the wearer. Having thus described in detail the foregoing embodiment, it is clear that, where desired and suitable, the fabric or material of the garment on which the pocket is to be structured can serve as the backing element **11** and the means for attaching, eliminated. This simple configuration would essentially include affixing the elastic extensible fabric **12** with its lip **17** directly to the garment namely a pair of tennis shorts.

FIG. **6** shows still another embodiment structured on the principle of this invention wherein a pair of pockets are formed with a unitary backing element **20** and a stretchable elastic fabric **21** which are shaped as a double "U." The elastic fabric again overlays the backing but, is affixed thereto by stitching **22** along the peripheral edge as well as along the "juncture" **23** of the "U"s thus dividing the structure into two pockets. As previously described, the multiple opening is provided with a similar biasing lip **24** which is joined to the backing at the center **25**. These multiple pockets can be made in any number desired and affixed to the garment by a thermosetting adhesive. FIGS. **7** and **8** illustrate the single tennis pocket as applied to garments of both male and female players. Although each user may apply the pocket at an area most comfortable and convenient, it has been found that the hip region is quite suitable and provides relative easiness for the player in removing and inserting of the ball.

It should be understood, of course, that the foregoing disclosure relates to only preferred embodiments of the invention and that numerous modifications or alternations may be made therein without departing from the spirit and the scope of the invention as set forth in the appended claims.

I claim:

**1.** A garment attachable pocket for holding a tennis ball or the like which comprises:

a backing member having a peripheral edge and generally of a "U" shape to encompass at least one tennis ball,

adhesive means on the surface of said backing member for readily attaching said backing member to a garment,

an elastic, stretchable fabric element of a generally "U" shaped pattern overlaying said backing member and affixed thereto along all of said peripheral edge except for an upper transverse portion whereby there is provided an opening between said backing member and said fabric element through which said ball may pass and a cavity within which it is retained.

**2.** The pocket according to claim **1** wherein said adhesive is a thermosetting adhesive coating.

**3.** The pocket according to claim **2** further including a biasing piping carried by the free edge of said elastic fabric element urging said fabric element toward said backing member thereby closing said opening.

**4.** The pocket according to claim **3** wherein said piping comprises a plurality of folds of said elastic fabric element joined together.

**5.** The pocket according to claim **4** wherein said elastic fabric element is of a net-like structure capable a simultaneous elastic extension in two directions.

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