Jan. 14, 1964 E. F. PIO 3,117,609

GOLF CLUB COVER

Filed July 25, 1962 2 Sheets-Sheet 1

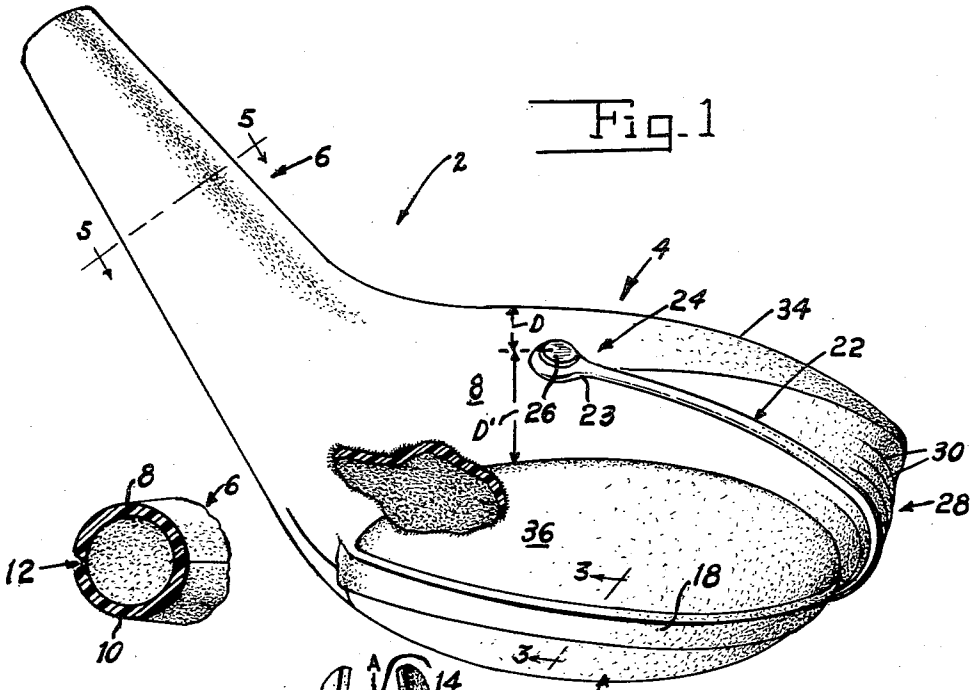


Fig. 1

Fig. 5

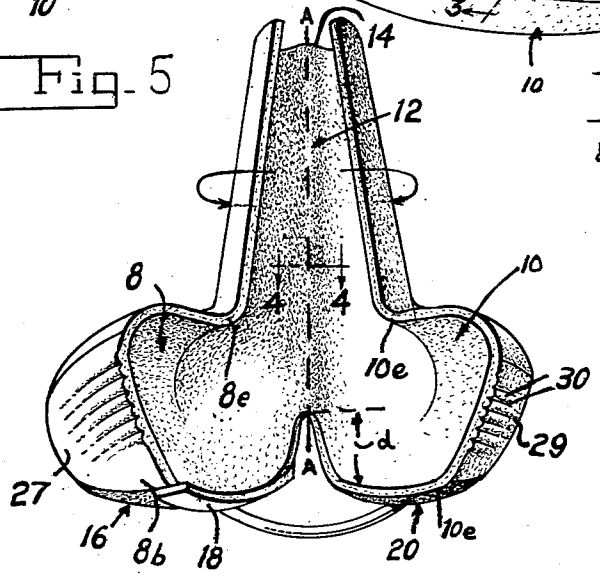


Fig. 2



Fig. 3

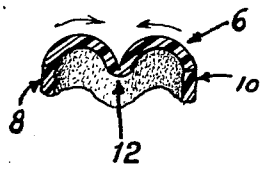


Fig. 4

INVENTOR

ELMO F. PIO

BY Jacobs & Davidson

ATTORNEYS

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GOLF CLUB COVER

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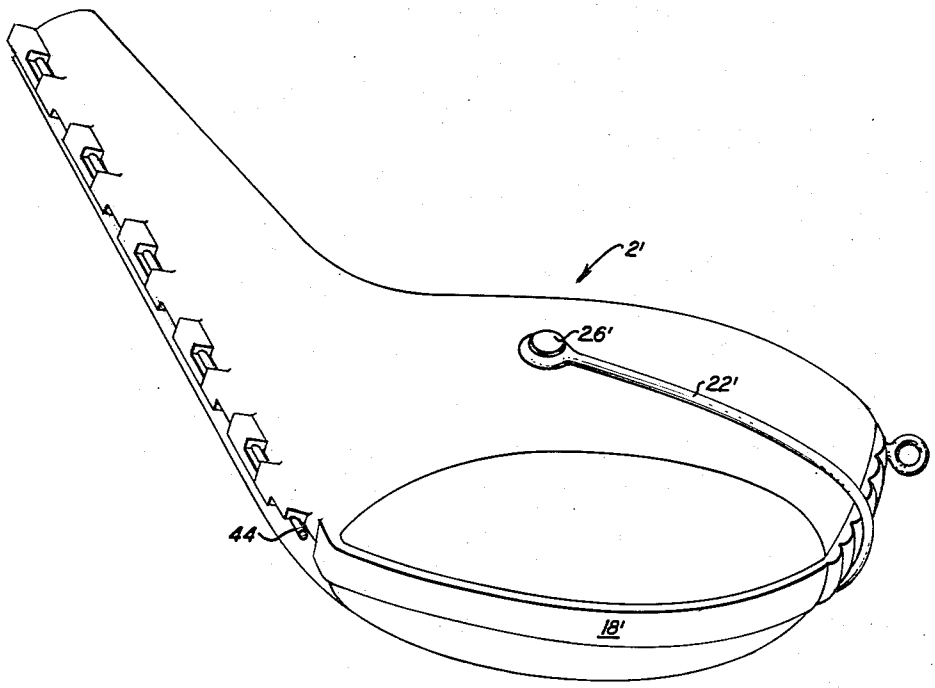


Fig. 6

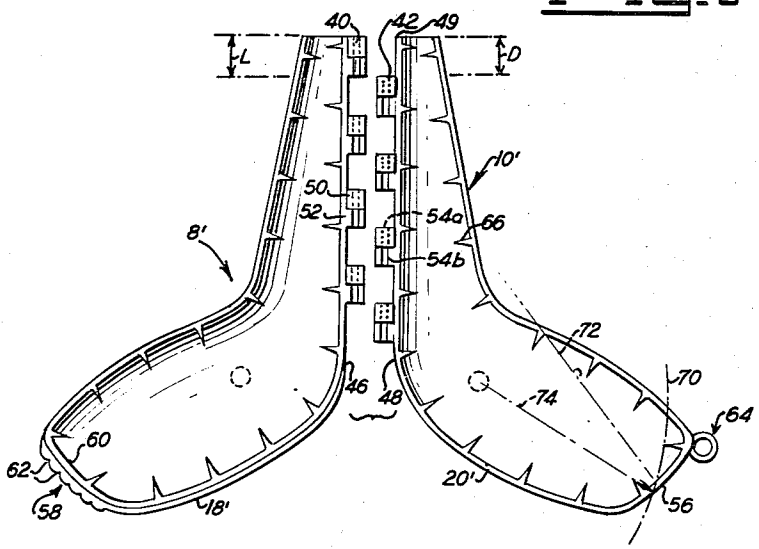


Fig. 7

INVENTOR

ELMO F. PIO

BY Jacobi & Davidson

ATTORNEYS

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GOLF CLUB COVER

Elmo F. Pio, 8801 Hawthorne Lane, Philadelphia 18, Pa.

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8 Claims. (Cl. 150—52)

This invention relates to means for protecting the ball-striking head of a golf club, and is particularly concerned with a new type of golf club cover.

Certain types of golf clubs have ball-striking heads formed of a highly polished material, normally wood, and in order to protect such ball-striking head from chipping of the finish thereon, it is conventional to utilize some type of protective cover which fits over the ball-striking head and prevents marring thereof.

Usually, a golfer carries within his golf bag a group of clubs having comparatively narrow striking-heads with sloped forward faces, which heads are conventionally formed of metal. This group of clubs is known as "the irons." The clubs which have the highly polished striking heads are conventionally formed with the heads of substantial width, and many such clubs have a harder insert in the striking face thereof. These clubs with the wide heads are commonly known as the "woods." When the irons and the woods are carried in the same bag, the irons as well as other woods, have a tendency to engage and chip the surfaces of any given wood head unless the wood head is protected, and thus golf club covers have met with widespread use.

There are a multitude of different types of golf club covers presently available. Of the different types, those which are formed more or less as a sock have met with the most widespread commercial acceptance. This type of cover is made of a textile, knit, or leather material usually, and is removably placed over the club head by pulling the same thereon much in the same manner as a mitten is pulled onto the human hand, or a sock is pulled onto the human foot. Although this type of cover is widely used, the same is subject to certain limitations. First, by virtue of the inherent type of materials required to form such a cover inexpensively, the covers are easily torn, ripped, or otherwise mutilated. Secondly, the materials which are suitable for use in making a cover of the type in question tend to absorb water so that the same, in effect, provide little protection in the event the golfer is caught in the rain, and often become mildewed because of the tendency of golfers to store their clubs after use in a confined space, such as the trunk of an automobile. Thirdly, the sock-type covers are relatively soft and cannot therefore afford protection against any substantial impact. Fourthly, the sock-type covers, by virtue of the type of materials suitable for incorporation therein, tend to shrink upon becoming wet, thus making removal difficult. Fifthly, even without shrinkage, difficulty is encountered in removing sock-type covers, and two hands are most always required for a removal operation.

In apparent recognition of the disadvantages of the sock-type covers, previous workers in the art have suggested the provision of semi-rigid golf club covers formed more or less as a casing which can be opened and closed for purposes of locating the same over a golf club ball-striking head. These covers at least partially eliminated the disadvantages of the sock-type covers, but the previous suggestions in this regard have necessitated the use

of mechanical means in the form of spring clamps and the like for maintaining the casing closed and require the availability of substantial room to permit any opening and closing operation. Moreover, by virtue of the very nature of the casings themselves, substantial production cost was encountered. Thus, the sock-type golf club covers, notwithstanding their disadvantages, have dominated the commercial market.

The present invention has as its primary object the provision of a semi-rigid golf club cover which is not subject to the disadvantages of previous suggestions with respect to the casing-type cover, and which can be inexpensively manufactured so as to be competitive with the sock-type golf club covers. More specifically, the present invention has as one of its main objects the provision of a golf club cover, (*a*) which can be formed of a suitable material, e.g. rubber, wood, plastic, aluminum, or leather in at least semi-rigid form so as to encase the ball-striking head of a golf club and protect the same from marring, chipping or the like, even under substantial impact as well as from rain or the like, and (*b*) which is durable in use and not subject to tearing, ripping, or easy mutilation. Another important main object hereof is to provide a golf club cover which can easily be "put on" and "taken off" a golf club with the use of one hand.

Still further, specific objects of the present invention in accordance with the preferred embodiments hereof, are to provide a golf club cover conforming with the preceding objects: (1) wherein the cover comprises a casing formed by a pair of mating sections hingedly secured together along the rear of the casing, and a simple and easily operated means, preferably in the form of a strap for maintaining the sections in mating engagement and thereby in closing relation to a golf club ball-striking head; (2) wherein the golf club cover can be easily formed by a mass production molding operation so as to be available to the consuming public at a reasonable price; (3) wherein the golf club cover body portion carries projecting ribs integrally formed therewith for releasably maintaining the securing means or strap in desired position to hold the sections of the body portion in closed relation; (4) wherein the hinge connection between the mating sections is preferably formed either totally or partially integrally with the mating sections, but can be otherwise provided; (5) wherein the cover is adapted to receive club heads of varying size and accommodate the same in "non-rattling" engagement therein; and (6) wherein the golf club cover conforms with the preceding causes, and yet is durable and trouble-free with continued use.

The invention lies in the combination, construction and arrangement of the component parts thereof, and will be better understood after reading the following detailed description of the preferred and illustrative embodiment presented in the annexed drawing, wherein:

FIGURE 1 is a side elevational view, partially broken away, of a golf club cover constructed in accordance herewith;

FIGURE 2 is a front view showing the cover of FIGURE 1 as the same would appear when the cover is opened for insertion therein of a golf club striking head to be protected thereby;

FIGURE 3 is a fragmental detailed view taken on the line 3—3 of FIGURE 1 and presenting a preferred flange

construction incorporated in the golf club cover of FIGURE 1;

FIGURE 4 is a fragmental detailed view taken on the line 4—4 of FIGURE 2 and showing the relationship between portions of the cover provided hereby on opposite sides of the flexible hinge connection provided therein;

FIGURE 5 is a transverse sectional fragmental view taken on the line 5—5 of FIGURE 1 and showing the relationship of the parts of the shank portion of the cover provided hereby when the cover is in closed position;

FIGURE 6 is a side elevational view of a modified golf club cover constructed in accordance herewith; and

FIGURE 7 is a side view, partially exploded, and presenting the mating sections of the cover shown in FIGURE 6.

Any golf club includes a ball-striking head, a shank portion extending upwardly from said head, and a shaft portion extending upwardly from the shank portion and terminating in a handle section to be gripped by the golfer. Since this construction is so well-known and has been conventional for over at least half a century, the following description is based on a drawing showing the golf club cover provided here by itself.

Referring now more specifically to FIGURE 1, the golf club cover constructed in accordance herewith is generally designated by the numeral **2**. This cover comprises a body portion adapted to encase the head of the golf club and at least part of the immediately adjacent shank portion of the golf club. That part of the body portion which is adapted to overlie the striking head itself of a golf club is generally designated by the numeral **4**, and that part of the body portion adapted to encase the lower end of the club shaft and/or club shank and/or portion of the club shank is generally designated by the numeral **6**.

The body portion itself comprises a pair of hollow sections **8** and **10**, each of which conforms in contour, at least generally, to the contour of the head and shank portion of a golf club to be covered thereby. The particular construction shown in FIGURE 1 is adapted to cover "a wood," whether the same be a driver, a spoon, a brassy, or any other wood. As should be apparent, each of the sections **8** and **10** is adapted to overlie generally half of the club head and shank portion.

As shown in FIGURES 2 and 4 the sections **8** and **10** are hingedly joined along an axis A—A extending at least generally parallel to the axis of the golf club shaft. This hinged joining along the axis A—A (FIGURE 2) permits the lateral movement or spreading movement of the sections **8** and **10** with respect to one another. By virtue of the hollow construction of the sections **8** and **10**, and the lateral or spreading movement thereof, a golf club can be placed with the cover **2** when the sections are spread as shown in FIGURE 2, and the sections can then be brought into the closed position shown in FIGURE 1 so as to encase the underlying portions of the golf club.

Preferably, the body portion of cover **2** comprises an integral one-piece member or component formed of a semi-rigid or partially flexible material. It has been found that polymers of suitable commercial types such as polyallomer, polypropylene, and the like can be used to form the body portion, that suitably treated leather also permits obtaining the desired construction and that rubber, aluminum and/or wood or the like can be used if desired. However, the preferred embodiment hereof contemplates utilizing polypropylene, water-proofed leather as the material from which the body portion is formed. As should be known to those experienced in the fabrication of articles such as that here under consideration, the use of polypropylene permits rapid and mass molding operations, and the use of leather permits either a pressing operation or a commercial stitching operation, if desired.

Regardless of the material used, the body portion of cover **2**, according to the preferred embodiment hereof, has an elongate section, such as that designated by the

numeral **12** in FIGURE 5, which is of reduced thickness with respect to the major part of the body portion. The elongate section **12**, as shown in FIGURE 2 can extend entirely or in part from the upper extremity of the body portion to the lower extremity thereof, but terminates in spaced relation to the base of the body portion so as to permit the spreading operation. Preferably, however, the elongate section **12** extends from the upper edge **14** to a point spaced from the bottom surfaces **8***b* and **10***b* of the sections **8** and **10** by a distance indicated in the drawing as *d*.

In the specific embodiment described above, the elongate section **12** of reduced thickness provides a flexible hinge. When the materials suggested above are used to form the body portion, the flexibility is inherent in the construction. However, it is to be understood that while an important aspect of the invention lies in providing a one-piece construction with a flexible hinging section, a multiple piece body portion incorporating hingedly joined sections in accordance herewith would not depart from the scope and spirit of the invention.

In the particular embodiment illustrated, and described above, and further in accordance with the invention, the elongate flexible hinge section **12** is disposed at the rear, or what would normally be referred to as the rear of the golf club cover. The sections **8** and **10** extend forwardly of the hinge section, and the edge portions **8**(*e*) and **10**(*e*) thereof mate in contacting engagement in a plane extending through the golf club head and shank portion of the golf club which is covered. Such plane would pass perpendicular to the drawing and include the axis A—A in FIGURE 2. The mating edge portions **8**(*e*) and **10**(*e*) as described, extend entirely about the free periphery of each of the sections **8** and **10**, and thus there is a complete closing of the cover about the club with which the cover is used.

To facilitate continuous alignment between the sections of the cover, and to provide increased strength therefor, as well as more efficient sealing from rain in the part normally exposed to the rain, one of the sections, the section **8** as shown, carries a bottom flange **18** which extends laterally below and therebeyond. The flange **18** is disposed continuously across the bottom face **16** of the section **8**, and when the cover is closed, the projecting portion of the flange **18** extends in underlying contacting relation with the adjacent edge portion of the base face **20** of the other section **10**. This disposition and closing relation of the flange to the cooperating edges and surfaces is best shown in FIGURE 3.

Notwithstanding the fact that the flange **18** is embodied within the preferred construction, and may be molded integrally with the body portion itself when formed, such flange may be eliminated if desired and particularly in instances where the wall thickness of the sections **8** and **10** is quite small.

Having now described the basic construction of the body portion of the golf club cover provided hereby, attention can be directed to the means incorporated for securing the sections **8** and **10** in position with the edge portions **8**(*e*) and **10**(*e*) in contacting engagement. This means, as shown in FIGURE 1, preferably comprises a strap or bale **22**. Opposite ends of the strap are connected to opposed sides of the sections **8** and **10**, one such connection being shown in FIGURE 1 and designated generally by the numeral **24**. This connection comprises a post generally designated by the numeral **26** having an enlarged head which serves to maintain the end **23** of strap **22** between the enlarged head and the side of section **8**. Of course, the end **23** of strap **22** is provided with a suitable aperture whereby the shaft portion of post **26** serves as a pivot shaft. The post **26** may be formed as a separate component which is attached in fixed position by a rivet type procedure, or other suitable securing procedure. Alternatively, the post can be molded inte-

gral with the body portion, and the strap 22 thereafter fixed thereon. The strap can be flexible whereby the portion thereof adjacent the aperture is spreadable for insertion over the enlarged head of post 26, or the strap can be otherwise formed as described more fully below.

Regardless of the particular post and strap construction, it should be understood that a suitable post is also provided on the section 10 corresponding to that included on section 8, and the bale or strap extends between the opposed posts and is preferably pivotally mounted with respect thereto so as to be swingable through an arc from the position shown in FIGURE 1 to the position shown in FIGURE 2.

If reference is again made to FIGURE 1 it will be noted that the strap 22 has a length and preferably normal shape which permits the disposition thereof adjacent the body portion 2 and across the front face 28 thereof. In other words, the strap is dimensioned, in accordance with the preferred embodiment, so as to be movable into locking engagement across the front of the cover to thereby maintain the sections 8 and 10 in closing engagement. For this purpose, the front face 28 of the cover, formed by the respective front surfaces 27 and 29 of the sections 8 and 10, is tapered inwardly toward the base faces 8(*b*) and 10(*b*) of the sections, and thereby the base face of the cover itself. Due to the taper, the strap is movable upwardly from the position shown in FIGURE 2 into contact with the face 28, and further upward contact causes pressure to be exerted by the strap on opposed sides of the cover thereby maintaining the sections thereof with the mating edges in abutting contact.

To releasably lock the strap 22 in place in the closed position of the cover, the forward face 28 of the cover is provided with a series of generally horizontally extending projecting ribs and/or grooves 30. The ribs or grooves provide adjustment position locks for the strap—i.e. each projection serves to maintain the strap tightly in place and/or thereabove.

With the provision of a strap and ribs as described above, a user need merely grasp the strap, for example, with a finger of one hand while placing the thumb of the same hand at the base of the axis A—A, and then exert an upward force on the strap with such finger to cause the cover to immediately open with disengagement of the strap from the ribs. Alternatively, the user may grasp the strap with the thumb of one hand, and place a finger at the base of the axis A—A to open the cover through disengagement of the strap with the ribs by virtue of the force exerted on the strap by the thumb. It should thus be apparent that the cover provided hereby can be easily and immediately removed from a golf club, or even placed thereon, by one hand and in a minimum of time and space.

The embodiment of the invention referred to in detail in the preceding paragraphs constitutes the preferred embodiment hereof. However, certain structural characteristics, features and elements of the embodiment shown in FIGURES 6 and 7 may be incorporated in the preferred embodiment, if desired, as will be understood from the following description of the modified embodiment of FIGURES 6 and 7.

In these latter mentioned figures, prime numerals have been used to designate components of the modified embodiment corresponding to components of the preferred embodiment. Thus, in FIGURES 6 and 7 the cover is designated generally by the numeral 2′ and is shown as comprising a pair of hollow sections 8′ and 10′. The sections 8′ and 10′, however, are not joined by an integral elongate section 12 of reduced thickness, but instead are hingedly joined along the rear axis of the cover by mating hinge elements 40 and 42 carried respectively by the sections 8′ and 10′, and cooperating with a hinge pin 44. The hinge elements 40 and 42 project beyond the rear edges 46 and 48 respectively of the sections 8′ and 10′, and the hinge elements 42 are spaced apart by a distance equal to the length of the hinge elements 40. Moreover, the hinge elements 42 start in spaced relation to the upper edge 49 of the section 10′ by a distance D equal to the length L of the hinge elements 40. Preferably the hinge elements 42 have a length equal to the length of the hinge elements 40, so that the spacing is the same whether the hinge elements 40 or the hinge elements 42 be used for comparison.

Each of the hinge elements 40 and 42, as shown in FIGURE 7, comprises an upper section 50 and a lower section 52. As shown in FIGURE 6, the lower section 52 is laterally offset with respect to the upper section 50, but each section is provided with a generally semicircular recess extending longitudinally thereof, such recesses being designated by 54*a* and 54*b* respectively in FIGURE 7.

The recesses 54*a* and 54*b* in each hinge element are in opposed aligned relation, and the recesses in all of the hinge elements 42 are aligned with one another. Similarly, the recesses in all of the hinge elements 40 are aligned with one another, and all of the recesses are so positioned as to provide an elongate channel when the hinge elements mate with one another. Such channel receives the elongate hinge pin or rod 44. With the pin in position, as shown in FIGURE 6, the sections 8′ and 10′ are hingedly joined to one another for movement in the same manner as the sections 8 and 10 of the embodiment of FIGURE 1.

It will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that the hinge construction of the embodiments of FIGURES 6 and 7 facilitates molding of the hinge elements integrally with the sections 8′ and 10′ of the cover 2′. Moreover, it will be apparent that the hinge construction of FIGURES 6 and 7 is durable in use and inexpensively incorporated.

A further modification provided hereby concerns the disposition and construction of a modified form of flange 18. In FIGURES 6 and 7, a projecting flange 18′ is shown. This flange not only extends in underlying contacting relation to the adjacent edge portion of the base face 20′ of the section 10′ when the cover is in use, but also extends in overlying contacting relation with the forward face 56 of the section 10′ of the cover. Moreover, that portion of the flange 18′ designated by numeral 58 and extending upwardly along the forward face 60 of section 8′, and projecting therebeyond laterally, carries or has formed therein a series of ribs 62. These ribs correspond to the ribs 30 of the embodiment of FIGURE 1, but instead of being formed on the forward face of the sections providing the cover, the ribs are formed solely in the extension of the flange 18′. These ribs, cooperate with the strap 22′ in the same manner as the ribs 30 cooperate with the strap 22.

In addition to the above, for convenience, in the embodiments of FIGURES 6 and 7, the section 10′ carries an eye 64 at the upper end of the forward face 56, the eye being spaced from the free edge of face 56 to permit the upper end of flange 18′ to move in overlying engagement with the face 56. The eye 64 is adapted to receive the normal coupling cord which is conventionally used to couple a series of club covers together so that any one cover "hangs down" from the others when the one cover is not disposed on its associated club.

Still further, in the embodiment of FIGURE 7, a series of hair-like projections 66 are disposed adjacent the free edges of the respective sections 8′ and 10′. The projections 66 extend inwardly of the sections, and are readily flexible. The number of projections can be varied, as can the location thereof, and the disposition of the projections shown in FIGURE 7 is but exemplary. The projections may not exist along one edge, or along several edges, or they may be disposed over a substantial

part of the interior of each section, or otherwise placed. The projections **66** engage a club head disposed within the cover **2'**, and being flexible, readily permit the cover to accommodate club heads of differing size in non-rattling relation. In other words, the projections provide more or less of an automatic adjustment for club size, and thus the number and location of the projections can be varied so long as the function is achieved. Of course, the projections **66** can be molded integrally with the sections **8'** and **10'** or otherwise suitably incorporated in any cover constructed in accordance herewith.

In the preceding discussion, it has been assumed that the strap **22** or **22'** is pivotally secured to opposite sides of the cover, and that the strap is flexible. It is to be understood that the strap can be formed of plastic, rubber, spring-type wire, or other suitable bale material. Moreover, the posts **26** and **26'** can take forms other than that described without departing from the scope and spirit of the invention. Since various pivoting means are well known, modifications in this regard need not be explained further. Of course, for certain embodiments or applications, a readily detachable strap or bale may prove preferable or a permanently pivotally attached strap or bale may yield some advantage, and the invention contemplates use of such variations with the basic structure hereof.

Where the pivoted strap posts are placed, however, is important, and to understand the preferred disposition of the posts in this respect, attention is again directed to FIGURE 7. By reference to this figure, it will be noted that the forward faces **56** and **58** of the sections **8'** and **10'**, and the co-extensive portion **58** of the flange **18'** are convexly curved. The curvature of these elements or faces or portions is generally the same due to the mating engagement, and thus the radius of curvature of the forward faces and/or portion **58** of flange **18'** can schematically be displayed as by the line **72**. The arc traversed by the strap **22** or **22'** can similarly be schematically designated as by the arc line **70**. The radius of the arc **70** is designated by line **74**. It will be noted that with the arc having less radius than the curvature of the forward faces or overlying flange portion, and with the outward taper of the forward faces and overlying flange portion, the arc of the strap extends from outside the radius **72** across the arc which would be generated by such radius. As a result, movement of the strap to engagement with the ribs **30** or **62** causes a tightening of the strap against the ribs, and accordingly positive locking of the cover provided hereby in the closed position.

After reading the foregoing detailed description, it should be apparent that the cover provided hereby achieves the objects set forth at the outset of the instant specification, accordingly, what is claimed is:

1. For use with a golf club having a ball-striking head, a shank portion extending upwardly from said head, and a shaft extending upwardly from the shank portion, a golf club cover comprising a body portion adapted to encase the head and at least part of the immediately adjacent shank portion or the golf club, the front of said body portion being tapered toward the base of said body portion and provided with rib projections, said body portion comprising a pair of hollow sections conforming in contour at least generally to the contour of said head and shank portion, said sections being hingedly joined at the rear of said body portion along an axis extending at least generally parallel to the axis of the golf club shaft for lateral movement with respect to one another to open said cover, said sections having mating edge portions movable into contacting engagement in a plane extending through said head and shank portion, a strap for securing said sections in position with said edge portions in contacting engagement, and means for connecting opposite ends of said strap to different of said sections whereby said strap is movable into releasably locking engagement with said rib projections.

2. A golf club cover as defined in claim 1 wherein said body portion comprises an integral one-piece member having an elongate section of reduced thickness from the major portion of said body portion hingedly joining said sections.

3. A golf club cover as defined in claim 2 wherein said elongate section extends continuously along said axis between the lower and upper extremities of said body portion.

4. A golf club cover as defined in claim 1 wherein said sections are hingedly joined by a flexible connection extending along said axis.

5. A golf club cover as defined in claim 1 wherein said sections carry mating hinge elements projecting respectively from opposite of said sections about said axis, said hinge elements having aligned recesses therein defining an elongate channel, and wherein a rod member is disposed in said channel, said hinge elements and rod member hingedly joining said sections.

6. For use with a golf club having a ball-striking head, a shank portion extending upwardly from said head, and a shaft extending upwardly from the shank portion, a golf club cover comprising a body portion adapted to encase the head and at least part of the immediately adjacent shank portion of the golf club, said body portion comprising a pair of hollow sections comforming in contour at least generally to the contour of said head and shank portion, said sections being hingedly joined along an axis extending at least generally parallel to the axis of the golf club shaft for lateral movement with respect to one another to open said cover, said sections having mating edge portions movable into contacting engagement in a plane extending through said head and shank portion, the base edge of one of said sections carrying a flange extending laterally therebelow and therebeyond, said flange being disposed in underlying contacting relation to the adjacent edge portion of the other of said sections when the edges of said sections are in contacting relation, said flange also extending across the mating edge portion of said sections opposite the edge portions thereof where said sections are hingedly joined, said flange carrying ribs thereon extending in overlying relation to said last mentioned mating edge portions, strap means for securing said sections in position, and means for connecting opposite ends of said strap to different of said sections whereby said strap is movable into releasably locking engagement with said ribs.

7. For use with a golf club having a ball-striking head, a shank portion extending upwardly from said head, and a shaft extending upwardly from the shank portion, a golf club cover comprising a body portion adapted to encase the head and at least part of the immediately adjacent shank portion of the golf club, said body portion comprising a pair of hollow sections conforming in contour at least generally to the contour of said head and shank portion, said sections being hingedly joined along an axis extending at least generally parallel to the axis of the golf club shaft for lateral movement with respect to one another to open said cover, said sections having mating edge portions movable into contacting engagement in a plane extending through said head and shank portion, projections extending inwardly of said hollow sections, said projections being flexible whereby said cover is adapted to accommodate and grip golf club heads of varying size and shape, and means for securing said sections in position with said edge portions in contacting engagement.

8. For use with a golf club having a ball-striking head, a shank portion extending upwardly from said head, and a shaft extending upwardly from the shank portion, a golf club cover comprising a body portion adapted to encase the head and at least part of the immediately adjacent shank portion of the golf club, said body portion comprising a pair of hollow sections conforming in contour

at least generally to the contour of said head and shank portion, said sections being hingedly joined along an axis extending at least generally parallel to the axis of the golf club shaft for lateral movement with respect to one another to open said cover, said sections having mating edge portions movable into contacting engagement in a plane extending through said head and shank portion, the base edge of one of said sections carrying a flange extending laterally therebelow and therebeyond, said flange being disposed in underlying contacting relation to the adjacent edge portion of the other of said sections when the edges of said sections are in contacting relation and strap means for securing said sections in position with said edge portions in contacting engagement.

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