United States Patent [19]

Semenchuk

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[45] **Oct. 21, 1975**

[54] **CURLING BROOM**

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[21] Appl. No.: **524,853**

Related U.S. Application Data

[63] Continuation-in-part of Ser. No. 338,124, March 5, 1973, abandoned.

[30] **Foreign Application Priority Data**

July 28, 1972 Canada 149322

[52] **U.S. Cl.** ..... **15/210 R;** 15/160; 15/247

[51] **Int. Cl.²** **A46B 17/04;** A63B 67/14

[58] **Field of Search** ..... 15/114, 160, 168–171, 15/175, 189, 210 R, 247

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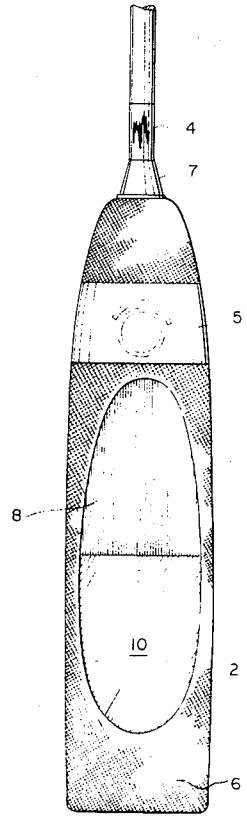
Primary Examiner—Daniel Blum

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[57] **ABSTRACT**

A broom for use in the game of curling has a handle and a sweeping head secured to one end of the handle. The head comprises a bundle of elongate fibres, means binding the fibres together to form the bundle, and means securing the bundle of fibres to the handle. A pouch surrounds the normally lower portion of the bundle of fibres, remote from the handle, and is formed of flexible sheet material having smooth non-binding inner and outer surfaces. Means are provided which tie the pouch to the binding means to prevent the pouch from slipping down the bundle, away from the handle. A flexible fabric cover is applied over the pouch and fibre bundle, and provides an outer surface suitable for contact with the ice surface during play of a curling game.

7 Claims, 8 Drawing Figures



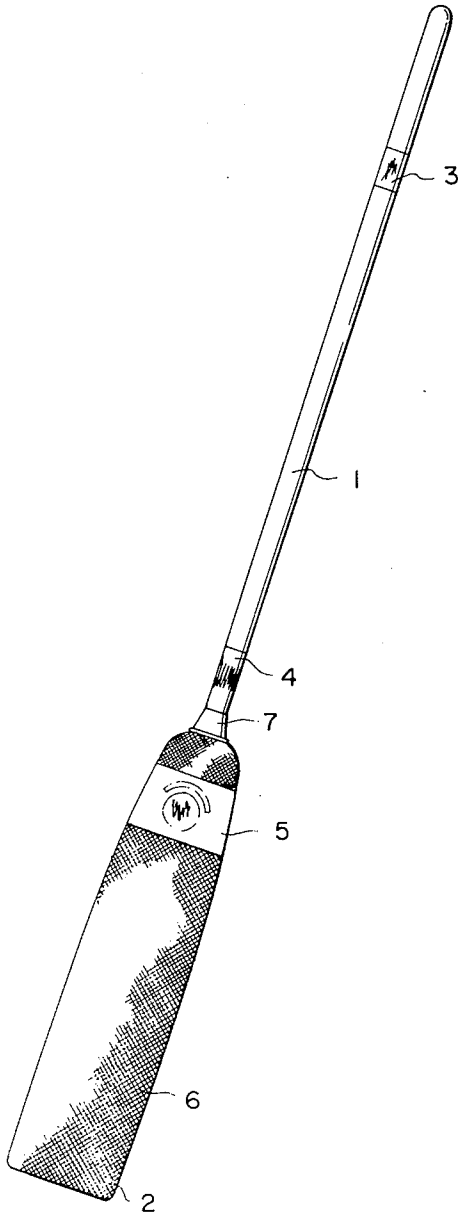


FIG. 1

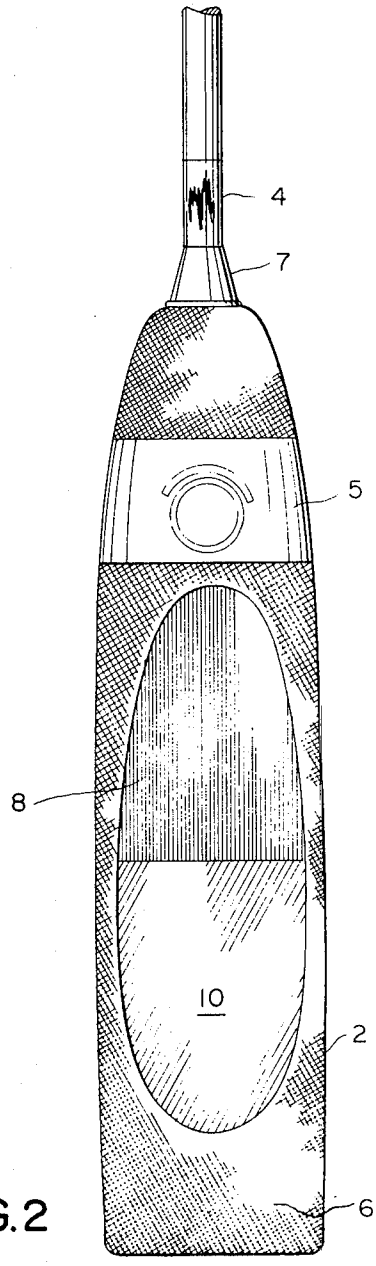


FIG. 2

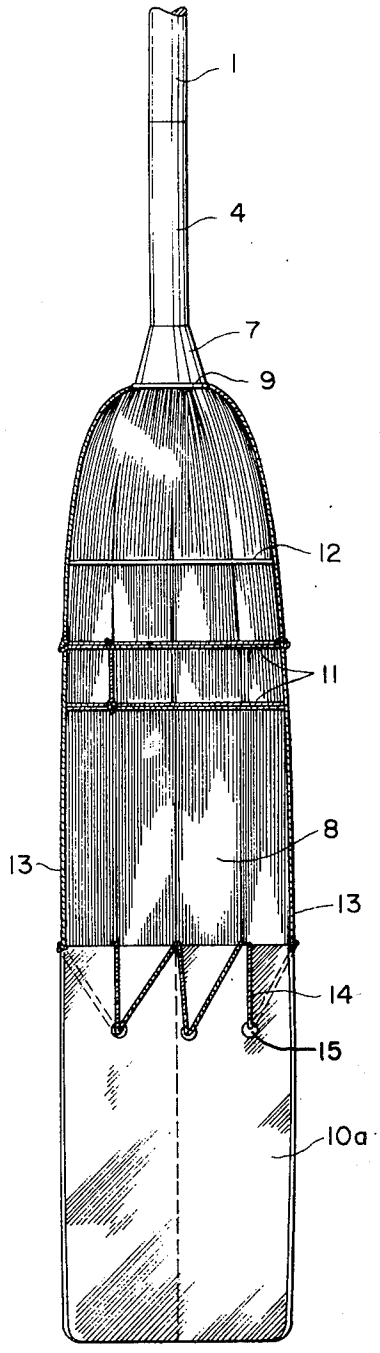


FIG. 3

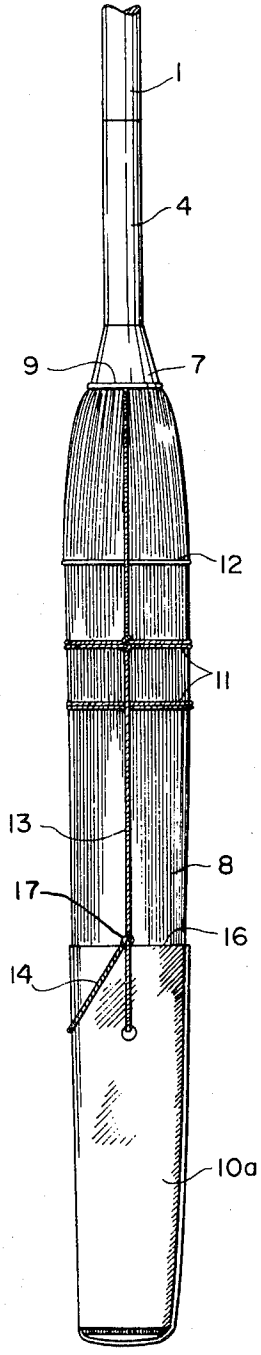


FIG. 3a

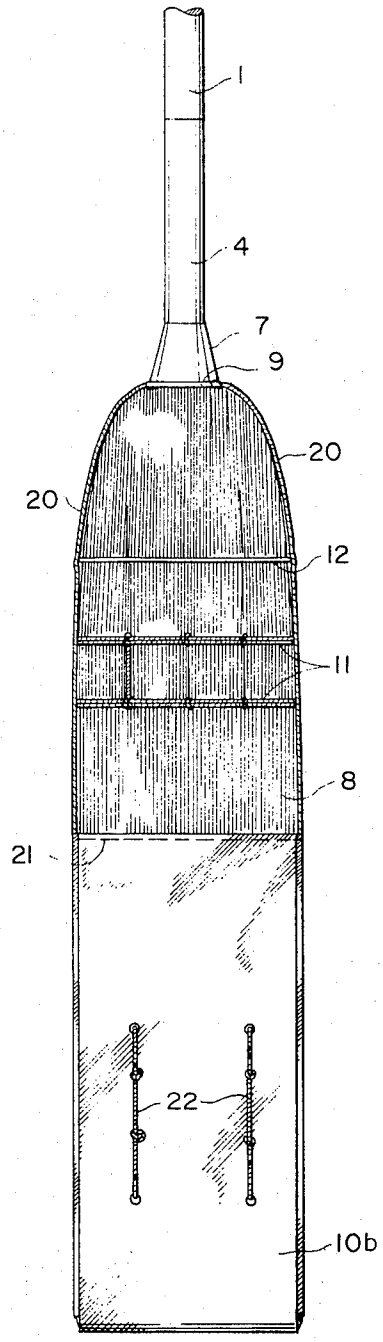


FIG.4

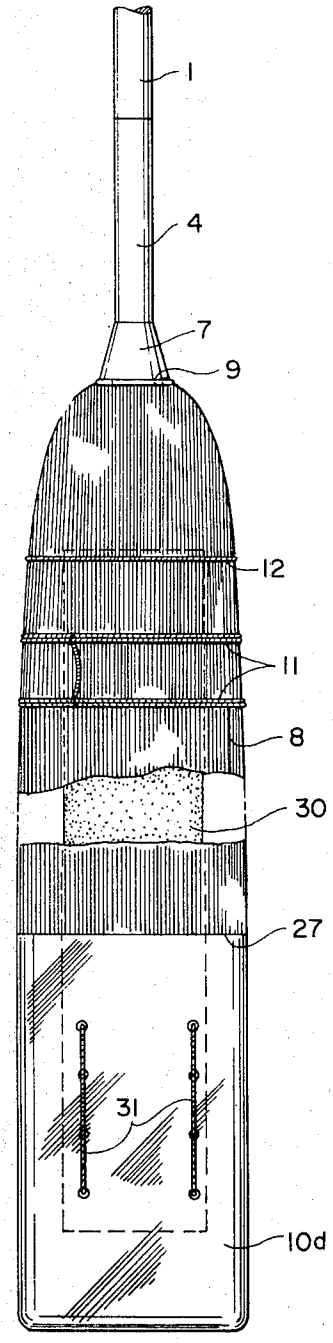


FIG.6

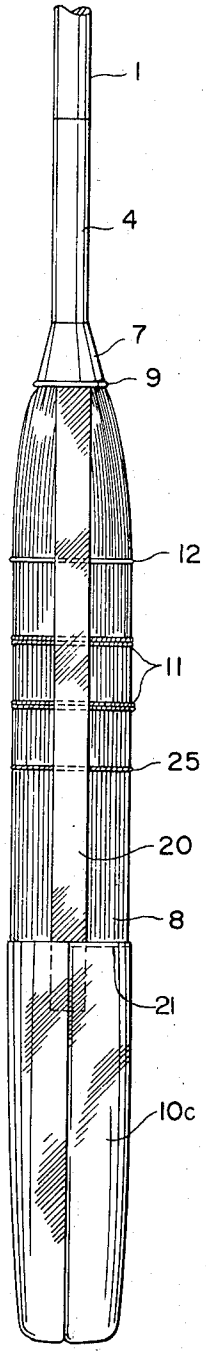


FIG. 5a

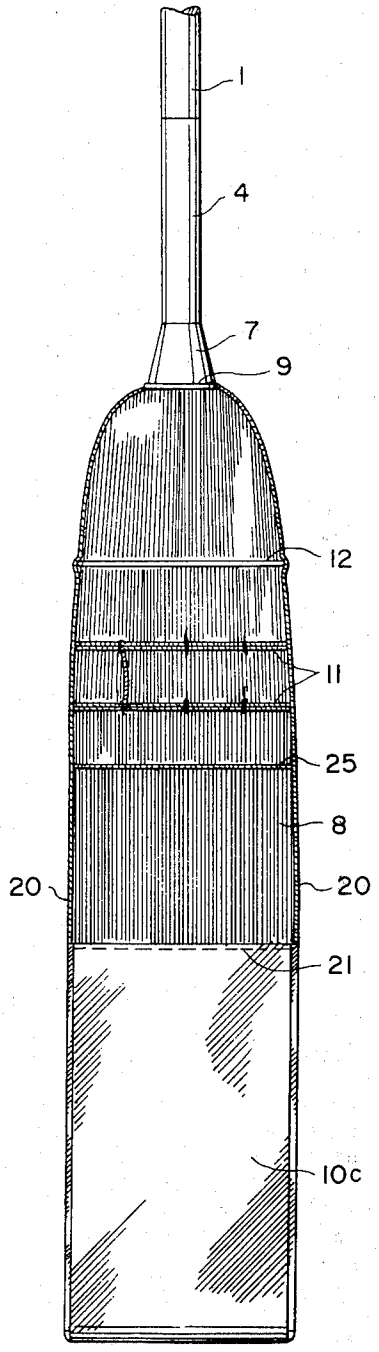


FIG. 5

CURLING BROOM

This application is a continuation-in-part of my earlier application Ser. No. **338,124,** now abandoned filed March **5, 1973.**

This invention is concerned with brooms for use in the game of curling, and in particular relates to an improved design and construction for such curling brooms.

In the early development of the sport of curling two types of brooms came into common use for cleaning and polishing of the surface of the ice upon which the game is played. In European countries, particularly Scotland, the so-called "push broom" or brush came into common use for cleaning and polishing the ice in advance of a curling rock moving across its surface. In North America, especially Canada, the conventional straw or corn broom was utilized almost exclusively for the sweeping of a curling stone during play of the game.

As the game of curling has developed and become more popular, the straw broom has undergone a number of changes designed to enhance its effectiveness and make it easier to use. Initially, the straw broom used in the game of curling was very similar to the straw broom used around the house and other buildings for sweeping the floor (the so-called "kitchen" broom). However, in many instances the straws or fibres were left longer than those usually found in a house broom, and the ends of the straws remote from the handle were not squared off or cut to be of equal length and form a straight edge. In the late **1950**'s the shape and structure of the curling broom was significantly changed, with the introduction of a new design for straw curling brooms by Fern Marchessault. His curling broom construction was granted protection under U.S. Pat. No. **2,983,939,** and enjoyed considerable commercial acceptance and success. A key feature in the design of that broom was the provision of an additional loosely-stitched binding around the normally lower portion of the broom straw, remote from the conventional upper bindings which bind the fibres to the handle. Virtually all straw curling brooms now feature this lower tie around the straw fibres. About the same time as the feature of the lower tie was introduced, the straw portion of the broom was lengthened (with a concomitant shortening of the handle) and the straws were brought closer together in a more compact unitary bundle, rather than being spread out in a broad head as previously.

These changes and adaptations to the straw broom have made it more suitable for use in the sport of curling, but also have brought new problems. Because of the longer straw and the lower tie this type of curling broom is more enjoyable and satisfying to use, having what curlers refer to as better "action". It also is considered to be more effective, with the player being able to "beat" the ice harder because of the more unitary action of the straw bundle which is provided by the lower binding. Unfortunately, the very features of this type of straw curling broom which make it so attractive (sweeping action and increased effectiveness) also have resulted in much more rapid wear. The individual straws split and break more readily under the heavier pounding of the broom on the ice, which is possible due to the more unitary action of the straw bundle. Many curlers who earlier had been able to use a single broom for a whole curling season or longer now have found

that a curling broom (if used vigorously) lasts only **15** to **20** games before being worn out as a result of the breaking up of the straw. Nevertheless, curlers prefer the much better sweeping action and effectiveness of this type of curling broom.

Because of increased popularity of the game of curling and also greater consumption of brooms by each player, the demand for the particular type of straw used in the manufacture of curling brooms has grown, resulting in a shortage of supply, a search for new sources of supply, and higher prices. The price of straw curling brooms has risen steadily over the past several years, and since they wear out much more quickly than the earlier but less satisfactory designs, the cost to an active curling participant for a supply of straw brooms has risen sharply.

This increased expense along with difficulties encountered in obtaining an adequate supply of first grade straw fibre has created a significant demand for a curling broom design which combines the action and effectiveness of the now traditional straw broom with a lower overall cost to the player. Several different ways of prolonging the life of a conventional straw curling broom have been tried, with varying degrees of success. One method which is in common use is the presence of a leather or fabric "tongue" or insert in the centre of the straw fibres and surrounded by them. This insert usually is stitched into the upper bindings and the lower tie, and moves in unison with the straw bundle providing a reinforcement for the straw and improving its whip-like action. Although such a tongue tends to improve the action and feel of the broom, it does not significantly prolong the life of the broom since the straw itself still comes in direct contact with the ice surface. The use of such an insert in some cases has tended to shorten the life of the broom, since the backing provided by the fabric also causes the straw to hit the ice harder and to break or split more quickly.

Several curling brooms of completely synthetic construction, utilizing plastic fingers, plastic foams, and fabric covers over an underlying structure, have been marketed in recent years but have not met with overwhelming success. Many curlers still prefer the feel, action, and effectiveness of the traditional straw curling broom. Examples of such synthetic curling brooms are the subject of Canadian Pat. Nos. **807,872, 818,155** and **820,557.**

Recently a curling broom was introduced in which a woven or knitted fabric covering was placed over the straw, surrounding the straw bundle and encasing it, much like a sock. The broom did not meet with wide acceptance and was subsequently withdrawn from the market. Apparently, the sock-like covering impeded the action of the straw somewhat, and did not significantly reduce the deterioration of the straw during use. In fact, the straw upon breaking either collected at the bottom of the sock creating a lump formed of bits of straw, or pieces of broken straw fibre became enmeshed in the weave of the fabric cover. In addition, during use the action of the sock rubbing against the straw caused the weave of the fabric to catch the ends of the straw fibres, either breaking them off or causing them to bind against the fabric, impeding the swinging action of the broom. In some instances the straw fibres actually worked their way through and protruded outside the cloth sock before eventually breaking off.

The present invention seeks to provide a curling broom which retains the preferred action and feel of the straw broom, but which at the same time has improved wear characteristics and other features which will be attractive to curling participants.

In accordance with this invention, the fibres forming the head of the curling broom are at least partially covered by a pouch formed of sheet material and applied over the fibres. The sheet material has a smooth, flexible, non-binding inner surface next to the fibres. A flexible, fabric cover is applied over the pouch and fibres and provides a surface which is suitable for contact with the ice during the play of a game of curling. The fibre bundle forming the head of the curling broom is surrounded by the flexible, relatively smooth sheet material, which material does not have openings therein resulting from weaving or knitting and constitutes a "pocket" or "pouch" in which the normally lower end of the fibre bundle is encased. A knitted or woven fabric cover then is applied completely over the head of the broom.

Accordingly, the present invention provides a broom for use in the game of curling, having a handle and a sweeping head secured to one end of said handle. The broom head comprises a bundle of elongate fibres, and means binding the fibres together to form the bundle, and the bundle of fibres, is secured to the handle. A pouch surrounds the normally lower portion of the bundle of fibres (remote from the handle), and is formed of flexible sheet material having smooth non-binding inner and outer surfaces.

The pouch is tied back to the binding means to prevent it from slipping down the bundle, away from the handle. A flexible fabric cover is applied over the pouch and fibre bundle, and provides an outer surface suitable for contact with the ice surface during play of a curling game.

A curling broom constructed in accordance with the teachings of this invention possesses a number of distinct advantages over the straw brooms presently in use or which have been proposed. The presence of the straw fibres in the inner part of the broom head gives it excellent action and feel during use. The combination of the pouch over the lower ends of the straw and of the fabric cover over the pouch and head of the broom decreases the rate at which the straw breaks up during heavy use and significantly prolongs the life of the broom. Even though the broom costs more to manufacture initially, its long-lasting qualities make it a less-expensive broom to use in the long-run since it does not require replacement nearly as often. The use of the pocket or pouch inside the outer fabric covering diminishes the catching and breaking of the straw fibres on the woven or knitted cover, and the pouch tends to minimize and flatten any bunching or lumps caused by collection of bits and pieces of straw broken off the head of the broom during use. The inner pouch also tends to retain the broken bits of straw within itself and minimizes their catching in the fabric cover and sticking there or alternatively slipping through the cover and falling to the ice surface. This makes the broom a much "cleaner" broom for the curlers during the game and for the iceman who is responsible for the cleaning and care of the ice. This also is a distinct advantage since the presence of small pieces of broken straw on the ice surface can affect the speed and direction of travel of a curling rock should it come in contact therewith. The fabric used for the sock-like cover also can be dyed any color desired to enhance the attractiveness of the broom.

Particular embodiments of the invention now will be described with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

FIG. **1** is an overall view of a curling broom constructed in accordance with the teachings of this invention, in completed form ready for use;

FIG. **2** is a view of the head portion only of the broom in FIG. **1**, with a portion of the fabric sock-like cover cut away to reveal some of the inner construction details;

FIGS. **3, 4, 5** and **6** each show the head of a broom (as in FIG. **2**), but with the sock-like cover completely removed to reveal features of construction; FIGS. **3, 4,** 5 and **6** each showing alternative embodiments of brooms constructed in accordance with the teachings of this invention.

FIGS. 3A and 5A are side view of the embodiments illustrated in FIGS. **3** and **5,** respectively, which better illustrate certain details of construction.

Looking first at FIG. **1** there is shown a curling broom in completed form constructed in accordance with this invention, having a handle **1** and a head **2.** During play of a curling game, the participant grasps the handle **1** and beats or brushes the ice surface with the head **2.** The handle usually has labels attached thereto (as at **3** and **4**) designating the size and manufacturer, and a cloth label or jacket **5** applied over the upper bindings, often giving the broom model and name. The head of the broom is encased in a sock-like fabric cover **6** which completely surrounds the head, and which is bound to the handle of the broom (along with the straw fibres) by wire bindings (not shown) covered by sleeve **7,** in a conventional manner.

Turning now to FIG. **2,** the head portion **2** of the broom is shown enlarged, with an oval portion of the sock-like cover **6** cut away to reveal details of the inner construction of the broom. In the normally upper part of the cut away section of cover **6** can be seen the individual straws **8** which make up the head of the broom, as in a conventional straw curling broom. The generally lower portion of the straw fibres **8** is encased in a "pouch" **10** formed of a flexible, smooth sheet material. Rubberized nylon fabric has been found to be a suitable material for construction of the pouch. The individual straw fibres can be bundled together and bound to the handle in a conventional manner, with metallic wire wrapping at the handle and conventional upper cord bindings (hidden by label **5** and cover **6**). The flexible sheet material **10** is wrapped around the lower portion of the straws, and encases the straw fibres **8** loosely within a pocket formed therefrom. During sweeping motion of the broom the bundle of straws swings back and forth, constrained loosely by the sheet material **10** surrounding the straw fibres. The outer cloth or fabric cover **6** actually contacts the ice surface.

FIG. **3** is similar to FIG. **2,** and shows one embodiment of a broom with the outer cloth "sock" **6** and label **5** completely removed to reveal details of the inner construction of the broom. The individual straws **8** which make up the head of the broom are bound together and to the handle **1** in a conventional manner. The upper cord bindings **11** and compressed metal ring **12** bind the straws into a bundle, and adjacent to the handle **1** is a sleeve **7** (usually metal) which covers the

upper ends of the individual straws and the wire **9** which is wrapped around the straw and is attached to the handle **1.** The sleeve **7** provides a smooth transition from the head **2** to the handle **1.**

The lower portion of the straw forming the head of the broom is encased in the pocket or pouch **10***a* formed of smooth, flexible sheet material, for example, rubberized nylon fabric. In this particular embodiment illustrated in FIG. **3,** the sheet material is formed into the pouch **10***a* by cutting a broad somewhat T-shaped pattern, wrapping the wings of the T around the straw, and then bringing them together so that they meet at approximately the lateral mid-point of the broom head. The lower part of the T then is folded up from the bottom of the broom to cover the lateral flaps and form a pouch while completely surrounds the straw fibers in the lower portion of the head of the broom. This formation of the pouch can, perhaps, be best seen by reference to FIG. 3A, which is a side view of the broom of FIG. **3.** Alternatively, the rubberized nylon sheet material could have been cut into a rectangular form, and then folded longitudinally at its midpoint and sewn along the sides to form the pouch **10***a.*

The pocket in which the straw fibers are nestled is loose fitting and does not constrain the movement of the straw fibers, except to give them a unitary bundle motion when swinging from side to side. The seams of the pouch optionally may be stitched along the upper edge **16** of the sheet material, to give the pouch formed therefrom added strength and resistance to loss of shape and dimension.

In the particular embodiment illustrated in FIGS. **3** and 3A, two nylon cord ties **13** are sewn into or tied to the uppermost binding **11** and extend down the sides of the broom head, as shown. These same ties are passed back and forth through the upper portion of the pouch **10***a* and the straws in a zig-zag manner as shown at **14,** so that they hold the pouch to the straws and give a unitary motion to the straw bundle and the pouch during broom use. More particularly, the tie **13** shown in FIG. 3A is retained at one end by the wire wrapping **9** and is knotted to the uppermost binding **11,** from which this tie **13** extends downwardly and into the pouch through one of a plurality of holes **15** in the pouch. From this hole **15,** this tie **13** extends upwardly within the pouch and is knotted to itself at knot **17,** from which it extends downwardly and to the left, as viewed in FIG. 3A, and passes through another of the holes **15.** This tie is then passed through the bundle of straw fibers **8** and the opposite side of the pouch, upwardly and backwardly over the pouch, through the fibres again and then downwardly at an inclination, as shown in FIG. **3,** to the next hole **15,** thus forming one of a plurality of loops **14** extending around opposite sides of the pouch and through the fibre bundle. A plurality of further similar loops or stitching **14** are formed by this tie **13,** which is then knotted to the other tie **13.** This other tie extends downwardly from the wire wrapping **9,** is knotted to the uppermost binding **11** and to itself, and looped in a similar manner. In actual assembly the two ties **13** extending down to the pouch and the stitching **14** can be one unitary piece of cord which is tied back firmly into the uppermost binding **11** and into the wire wrapping **9** at the base of handle **1.** These ties **13** and lower stitching **14** are not applied snugly or tight, but rather are loosely applied so that neither the ties **13** or the stitching **14** will interfere with the natural flexing action and swinging motion of the broom head. A moderate amount of play must be left in the ties **13** to permit slight up and down motion of the pouch, and the stitching **14** must be loosely applied so that the individual straw fibres **8** can move relative to one another. The stitching **14** must however be just snug enough to hold the pouch in place and encourage a unitary action of the straw bundle during swinging motion. In this particular embodiment, because of the placement of the stitching **14** extending through the broom head from side to side, it is possible to eliminate actual sewing of the sheet material with thread at edge **16** to form the pouch, since the stitching **14** also acts as a former to hold the pouch in proper shape and position encasing the straw bundle.

Turning now to FIG. **4,** there is shown an alternative form of construction for a curling broom according to this invention. As in FIG. **3,** the outside cover **6** and label **5** have been removed to reveal inner construction details. In this embodiment, the broom head is formed in a conventional manner as described above from individual straws **8** tied and bound to the handle **1** by uppermost binding **11** compressed wire ring **12,** wire wrapping **9,** and sleeve **7.** In this case, however, the ties **13** back to the upper bindings and the stitching **14** have been omitted. In place of ties **13,** two straps **20** of approximately ¼ inch to ½ inch width and formed of strips of the same sheet material as pouch **10***b* are connected to the pouch **10***b* or are unitary therewith, and extend up the sides of the broom head (See FIG. 5A). These straps **20** pass over the uppermost binder **11** and compressed metal ring **12,** and are bound in place by wrapped wire **9.** Alternatively, the straps may be bound to the handle in the same manner as the straw **8,** by passing under bindings **11** and ring **12.** These straps **20** can be unitary with the flexible sheet material forming pouch **10***b,* or alternatively can be sewn or glued thereto. The straps **20** fulfill the same purposes as ties **13** in the embodiment of FIG. **3,** and must be flexible and not drawn too tight.

The pouch **10***b* in FIG. **4** is formed in the same manner as in FIG. **3.** Optionally, the edges of the pouch **10***b* may be sewn together by thread **21** so that the pouch **10***b* keeps its shape better under the stress and wear of use. Although the pouch **10***b* is tied back to uppermost binding **11** and its shape and form surrounding the straw is held by sewing **21,** it has been found preferable in practice to loosely stitch the pouch **10***b* to the straw bundle **8.** It should be understood, however, that stitching the pouch to the straw bundle may be omitted, if desired, without departing from the spirit and scope of this invention (See FIG. **5**). In this particular embodiment, however, a cord has been passed loosely back and forth through the broom head from one side to the other, to form stitching **22.** This stitching **22** prevents the sides of the pouch **10***c* from spreading too far from each other, and also holds the pouch close to the straw fibres, causing the straw and pouch to swing in unison during use. The stitching **22** as shown in FIG. **4** extends in a longitudinal direction as it passes back and forth through the broom head, however, it should be made clear that stitching **22** also could extend laterally across the broom head.

FIGS. **5** and 5A illustrate a broom constructed in accordance with the embodiment illustrated in FIG. **4,** but with the loose lower stitching **22** omitted. In this case, the pouch **10***c* is not stitched to the straw bundle

8 but loosely surrounds it, and is held in place by straps **20,** as in FIG. **4.** As indicated above, stitching **22** can be omitted because of the controlling effect of cloth cover **6** which eventually will cover the head of the broom. However, when stitching **22** is omitted it is preferred to sew the pouch **10***c* into shape with thread **21.** Sewing **21** does not go through the straw bundle to the other side of the broom, but rather sews the flaps of the sheet material in the shape of the pouch **10***c*. It has been found that if both sewing **21** or stitching **22** are omitted, the completed broom tends to lose its shape more quickly under heavy use. The presence of one or the other is preferred, and both components may be included if desired. It also has been found practical, particularly in the case where stitching **22** is omitted as in this embodiment, to include an additional upper binding **25.** This extra upper binding helps to flatten the broom head and give it a better shape, and is placed about 3 inches below the lowermost of the upper bindings. It is particularly useful in this particular embodiment of FIG. **5** where lower stitching **22** has been omitted, but may be included in or omitted from any or all embodiments as desired.

A further alternative embodiment of this invention is illustrated in FIG. **6.** In this construction the ties **13** or straps **20** running up the sides of the broom head are eliminated. The pouch **10***d* is formed as described previously from smooth, flexible sheet material, and may or may not be sewn at the top edge **27.** In order to provide support for pouch **10***d*, a leather or leatherette flexible "tongue" or "insert" **30** is included in the centre of the straw bundle during build-up of the broom head. This inclusion of a tongue **30** already is common procedure in the manufacture of certain types of curling brooms, as described at the beginning of this document. Usually the tongue **30** is included in the centre of the broom head to provide support for the straw fibres and to give the broom better feel and action during use. In this case, stitching **31** (similar to stitching **22** shown in FIG. **4**) passes back and forth from side to side through the pouch **10***d*, the straw bundle **8,** and the tongue **30,** holding the three components together and giving them a unitary action during use. The tongue **30** is firmly anchored into the uppermost binding **11** of the broom head, and usually extends close to the bottom end of the broom straws. The stitching **31** holds the pouch **10***d* in position relative to the straw **8** and tongue **30,** and anchors the pouch **10***d* to the uppermost binding **11** so that it cannot fall away from the straw bundle **8.** The stitching **31** is not pulled too tight, so as to allow some relative movement between the individual straw fibres **8,** the pouch **10***d*, and the tongue **30.** Although the stitching is shown running vertically along the broom head, as mentioned before it can run laterally across the broom head. Also, the pouch **10***d* can include additional sewing along the upper edge **27,** if desired.

In the embodiments discussed, the construction of this type of curling broom has been particularly described with reference to a conventional straw curling broom. It will be obvious that features of this invention could be applied to a broom using a fibre other than the conventional straw, for example palm fibre, or some other fibre derived from natural sources. In addition, synthetic plastic fibres having properties similar to straw have been prepared. It should be understood that the scope of this invention is not limited to use with just conventional straw, but includes its use with fibres from other natural sources or synthetic fibres substituted for the natural fibre.

In each of the embodiments illustrated in FIGS. **2** to **6,** the pouch is formed of smooth, flexible sheet material which acts as a liner for the sock-like cover **6.** The pouch or liner provides a smooth surface next to the fibres of the broom head, so that they do not bind against or get caught in the cover **6** during use. The use of a cloth or fabric cover **6** provides a soft, resilient nap for contact with the ice surface.

Various methods of holding the separate pouch of smooth, flexible sheet material in place have been described and illustrated.

Also, the pouch has been illustrated as covering the bottom one-half to one-third of the broom head, and it has been found as a practical matter that the pouch should cover at least about the bottom third of the straw bundle.

I claim:

1. A broom for use in the game of curling, having a handle and a sweeping head secured to one end of said handle, said head comprising:

a bundle of elongate fibres;

means binding said fibres together to form a bundle comprising a plurality of rows of cord stitching which pass through and around said fibres at the normally upper end of said fibre bundle adjacent to the handle;

means securing said bundle of fibres to said handle;

a pouch surrounding only a lower portion of said bundle of fibres remote from said handle but covering at least the lower third of said bundle, said pouch comprising flexible sheet material having smooth non-binding inner and outer surfaces, and extending around the lower end of said fibre bundle to form a pocket in which the fibres are completely surrounded and loosely encased, the sides of the pocket extending toward the handle of the broom over at least one third of the lower portion of said fibre bundle;

means holding said pouch on said broom head and preventing said pouch from slipping down said bundle away from said handle; and

a flexible fabric cover applied over said pouch, fibres and bindings, and in direct contact with said smooth non-binding outer surface of said pouch so that the cover can slide freely relative to the pouch, said flexible fabric cover being bound to said broom handle, and providing an outer surface suitable for contact with the ice surface during play of a curling game.

2. A curling broom as defined in claim **1,** wherein said means holding said pouch on said broom head comprises cord which passes through said pouch and is tied back to said means binding said fibres together.

3. A curling broom as defined in claim **2,** wherein: adjoining edges of the sheet material forming said pocket are sewn together to provide improved shape retention.

4. A curling broom as defined in claim **2,** wherein: said cord passes through the sides of said pouch and through said fibre bundle in a relatively loose manner so as to hold the pouch adjacent the fibre bundle and give the bundle and pouch substantially unitary motion during broom use, but not interfere with the natural flexing action and swinging motion of the broom head.

5. A curling broom as defined in claim 1, wherein: said means holding said pouch on said broom head comprises a strap formed of smooth, flexible sheet material attached to said pouch and fastened to said handle.

6. A curling broom as defined in claim 1, wherein said means holding said pouch on said broom head includes cord ties which pass through the sides of said pouch and through said fibre bundle from one side of the pouch to the other in a manner which is loose enough to permit relative movement between adjacent fibres and between the fibre bundle and the pouch, but which holds the pouch close to the fibre bundle and gives unitary motion thereto during use.

7. A curling broom as defined in claim 1, including:

an insert tongue enclosed within and surrounded by said bundle of fibres and secured therein by said upper cord bindings, said insert tongue extending from said binding means down the broom head and away from said handle at least a major portion of the length of said broom head; and

relatively loose stitching passing through opposite sides of said pouch, said fibre bundle and said tongue insert, said stitching acting to give the pouch, the fibre bundle and the tongue insert a unitary action during use and attaching said pouch to said tongue insert and upper cord bindings so as to prevent said pouch from sliding off said fibre bundle.

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