The present invention provides a cushioned backpack which can be particularly positioned by the golfer between the golfer's back and a golf bag. The backpack and its individualized positioning maximizes the golfer's particular needs with regard to comfort and load stress allowing a golf bag to be carried over the distance of a typical golf course without causing undue fatigue or soreness to the golfer's shoulder, spine and hips.
BACKPAD APPARATUS FOR USE IN CONJUNCTION WITH A GOLF BAG

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] This invention relates in general to sport and utility bags, and in particular to a cushion apparatus for use with a golf bag which reduces the stress placed on a user's shoulders and back.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The game of golf is not only one of the world's oldest presently practiced sports, but is also one of the most popular sports both on a recreational and professional level. In recent years, an increasing number of men and women have taken up the sport as a recreational activity. Moreover, the popularity of golf tournaments and competitions has also increased. With this increase in popularity of the sport, there has also been an increase in interest in equipment and techniques for improving one's ability and enjoyment of the sport.

[0003] While much effort has been spent on the development of golf clubs and balls, many have failed to realize the impact that the golf bag has on one's ability and enjoyment of the sport. During a typical 18 hole golf game, a player may carry a bag full of golf clubs and other equipment for thousands of yards. It is no surprise that a common complaint among golfers relates to back, shoulder and neck pain caused by carrying heavy bags of golf equipment.

[0004] Moreover, the process of carrying such a bag a hundred yards or more, moments before lining up to swing at a golf ball, can severely affect the golfer's swing. Typical golf bags are designed with one or two shoulder straps such that the bag can be slung over one or both of the golfer's shoulders as the golfer walks from one ball position to the next. Such straps tend to concentrate the weight of the bag on either one or both shoulders. With a single shoulder strap, the weight of the golf bag is concentrated on one shoulder and offset relative to the golfer's spine, causing the golfer to shift his or her weight to the opposite side in order to balance the load.

[0005] Even with two shoulder straps, the weight of the golf bag on both shoulders tends to cause posture problems (e.g., hunching over of the shoulders) and discomfort. Furthermore, where most of the weight of the bag and equipment is concentrated on one or two shoulder straps, the straps tend to pinch nerves and possibly obstruct the circulation of blood in the shoulder area on which the strap is supported. This can result in numbness and loss of power and control in the golfer's arms as well as fatigue to shoulder and arm muscles. These adverse effects can offset the golfer's swing posture, strain muscles and cause severe spine and hip discomfort. Posture being a very important component to one's golf swing form and golf ability, it is readily apparent that various prior golf bag designs have been a major contributor to many poor golf games and golf injuries.

[0006] A prior golf bag having a strap design to support the bag in a centered relationship relative to the user's bag is described in U.S. Pat. Nos. 5,038,984, 5,042,703 and 5,042,704, all to Izzi. This bag has two shoulder straps and a back pad, to allow the golfer to carry the bag's weight on both shoulders and to rest the bag, almost horizontally across the golfer's lower back. However, like the above discussed prior bag designs, the primary portion of the weight of the bag is carried on the golfer's shoulders. Moreover, the position of the bag when being carried tends to allow clubs or other equipment to fall out of the bag.

[0007] U.S. Pat. No. 5,042,702 teaches a belt member having a velcro fastening system which mates with a corresponding piece of velcro attached to a golf bag. The belt member is intended to be worn at all times during play. One of the drawbacks which exist with this belt member is that it is designed to be worn throughout the golfing activity, which could adversely affect the golfer's normal swing or putting stance during play.

[0008] U.S. Pat. No. 5,419,473 teaches a golf bag with lumbar support and a waistband which is designed to attach to the lower portion of the golf bag. The golf bag is carried vertically along the golfer's back centered between the golfer's shoulders. A lumbar pad is provided to distribute the weight of the bag to the user's lower back. One drawback of this system is that the bag is vertically oriented, which inhibits the golfer's ability to easily remove or insert golf clubs into the golf bag, or access other items stored in the golf bag. A golfer may also be inhibited from easily bending forward to, for example, pick up a golf ball, drink from a drinking fountain, or tie shoelaces.

[0009] What is needed is an apparatus and system for carrying a golf bag which reduces most of the load on the golfer's shoulders by transferring the weight of the load to the back, hips and legs, while maintaining an orientation of the golf bag which permits easy access to the items stored therein. The apparatus and system should also permit the golfer to easily remove the bag and its associated components so that the golfer can enjoy a natural golf swing unencumbered by the golf bag carrying apparatus.

[0010] It is with the shortcomings of the existing art in mind that the significant improvements and advancements of present invention were developed.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0011] As mentioned above there is a need in the industry for an apparatus in use with a golf bag which minimizes user discomfort and maximizes the user's golf posture. Therefore, it is an object of a preferred embodiment of the present invention to provide an attachable, detachable backpack which addresses the above-discussed problems associated with golf bags. The backpack can be positioned between the back and golf bag by the user which maximizes his or her particular needs with regard to comfort and load stress allowing a golf bag to be carried over the distance of a typical golf course without causing undue fatigue or soreness to the user's shoulder, spine and hips.

[0012] The preferred object of the present invention provides for a backpack apparatus comprising a containment element with a pouch, a cushion element positioned within the pouch of the containment element and an attachment device for securing the backpack apparatus to a golf bag. Optionally, the backpack can also be comprised of a skirt without a pouch, is contiguous with the containment element and consists of the same material as the containment element. Another object of the present invention provides for the containment element to consist of an absorbant material, such as a towel.
The pouch of the present invention is appropriately sized for insertion of a cushion(s) of particular dimensions. In addition, an object of the present invention provides for a closing device between the containment element and the pouch for sealing and unsealing the pouch where the cushion element is positioned. The closing device can be comprised of velcro, a zipper or other means of closure.

In a further object or embodiment of the invention the containment element can further be comprised of storage pockets on adjacent sides of the pouch for storage of golf associated accessories, such as golf balls, golf tees, golf gloves, etc.

In still a further object of the invention, the attachment device consists of a first grommet interlocked with a second grommet through a hole in the containment element, or alternatively of a female snap for fixedly securing to a male snap which is attached to a golf bag.

In another preferred embodiment of the invention the cushion element is comprised of foam. The type of foam can be selected from the group consisting of polystyrene, polyurethane and polyethylene, as well as bubble films, rubberized fiber, cellulose and airbags.

As such, the present invention meets the need in the industry for an apparatus in use with a golf bag which minimizes user discomfort and maximizes the user’s golf posture—a cushioned backpack which can be particularly positioned by the golfer between the golfer’s back and a golf bag. The backpack and its individualized positioning maximizes the golfer’s particular needs with regard to comfort and load stress allowing a golf bag to be carried over the distance of a typical golf course without causing undue fatigue or soreness to the golfer’s shoulder, spine and hips.

These together with other objects of the invention, along with the various features of novelty which characterize the invention, are pointed out with particularity in the claims annexed to and forming a part of this disclosure. For a better understanding of the invention, its operating advantages and the specific objects attained by its uses, reference should be made to the accompanying drawings and descriptive matter in which there are illustrated preferred embodiments of the invention.

**BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES**

The invention will be better understood and objects other than those set forth above will become apparent when consideration is given to the following detailed description thereof. Such description makes reference to the annexed drawings wherein:

**FIG. 1** is a diagramatic representation of a preferred embodiment of the backpack invention, illustrating the attachment of the backpack apparatus to a golf bag.

**FIG. 2** is a diagramatic representation of various elements of the backpack apparatus.

**FIG. 3** is a diagramatic representation of a horizontal perspective of the backpack apparatus containing the cushion element.

**FIG. 4** is a further diagramatic representation of various elements of the backpack apparatus.

**FIG. 5** is a diagramatic representation of the elements of the backpack apparatus as the apparatus would be assembled.

**FIG. 6** is a diagramatic representation of the various elements of the backpack apparatus, illustrating the placement of the cushion element as part of the backpack apparatus.

**FIG. 7** is a diagramatic representation of a preferred embodiment of the backpack apparatus, illustrating the backpack in use by a golfer carrying a golf bag with golf clubs.

**DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION**

With reference now to the drawings, and in particular to FIGS. 4 through 6 thereof, a novel backpack apparatus embodying the principles and concepts of the present invention and generally designated by the reference numeral 2 will be described.

**FIG. 1** illustrates the backpack apparatus 2 attached to a golf bag 6 as a free standing unit. The cushion element 4 is represented by the dotted lines within the containment element 8. As illustrated in further detail in FIG. 2, the backpack apparatus can be comprised of a containment element 11 which itself is comprised of a pouch 8, an upper lip 12, a closing device 18, an attachment device 16, an optional contoured skirt 10 and optional storage pockets 14.

As viewed from a horizontal perspective in FIG. 3, the cushion element 4 is positioned within the pouch and enclosed with a closure device 18 and sealed at the bottom of the pouch 8 by a seam 20 that is fixedly secured to the containment element. Optionally, the seam can be comprised of a closing mechanism similar to the closure device 18 at the top of the containment element, allowing opening and closure. Also illustrated horizontally are the upper lip 12 of the containment element and the optional contoured skirt 10.

As more particularly illustrated in FIGS. 4 through 6, the backpack apparatus can be comprised of a containment element which itself can be comprised of an upper lip 12, an attachment device 16, storage pockets 14 adjacent to the pouch [which can be separate and sealable 22 at positions along their length or open as one unsealed vertical pocket from their openings starting at the upper lip 12 of the containment element 11], and a cushion element 4. Containment Element

The containment element provides for the enclosure of the cushion element. It can be comprised of different compartments such as the upper lip which contains the attachment device, the pouch which contains the cushion element and optional storage pockets. The storage pockets (14) can be at least one in number (24) on either side of the pouch (8) or, alternatively, there can be more than one which are separated and accessible along the length of the storage pockets. The accessibility to numerous storage pockets on either side of the pouch can be provided by separation of opening and closing mechanisms (22) similar to the closure device (18) for the pouch (8). Further, the storage pockets are separated from the pouch by sealings (20, 30a, 30b, 32a,
and 32b). Sealings can be provided by stitching or other means known in the art. The storage pockets are for the placement and keeping of golf accessories such as, golf tees, golf balls and golf gloves. Optionally, there can be a skirt (10) which is contiguous with the containment element. The preferred embodiment of the skirt is comprised of the same material as the containment element, for example, terry cloth towel. The skirt can be used for the same purposes as a golf towel for cleaning golf balls, golf clubs, etc. The containment element and optional skirt can be comprised of other materials such as leather, suede, soft plastics and like materials.

[0032] The containment element also is comprised of a closure device (18a,b) which is preferably positioned at the uppermost portion of the closure device. The closure device can be comprised of any means by which the cushion element can be placed and removed from the pouch. Preferred embodiments of the closure device include velcro affixed between the containment element and the inner uppermost portion of the pouch. Another preferred embodiment of the closure device includes a zipper between the containment element and the inner uppermost portion of the pouch. Other means of a closure device are known in the art.

Cushion Element

[0033] The cushion element (4) is the means which maximizes the golfer’s particular needs with regard to comfort and stress allowing a golf bag be carried over the distance of a typical golf course without causing undue fatigue or soreness to the golfer’s shoulder, spine and hips. It can be comprised of any material which provides a softening experience by the golfer when positioned between the golf bag and the golfer. Such materials can consist of various types of foam, particularly from materials as polystyrene, polyurethane and polyethylene. Alternatively, the cushion element can consist of bubble films, rubberized fiber, cellulose or inflatable devices such as airbags.

Attachment Device

[0034] The attachment device (16) is a means by which the backpack apparatus can be attached and detached from a golf bag. Alternatively, the backpack can be permanently affixed to a golf bag. A preferred embodiment of an attachment device includes a first grommet interlocked with a second grommet through a hole punched through the containment element (see FIG. 5, number 16). Another embodiment of an attachment device includes a female snap for fixedly securing to a male snap which is attached to a golf bag. Other means of attaching and detaching the backpack apparatus are known in the art.

[0035] As to a further discussion of the manner of usage and operation of the present invention, the same should be apparent from the above description. Accordingly, no further discussion relating to the manner of usage and operation will be provided.

[0036] With respect to the above description then, it is to be realized that the optimum dimensional relationships for the parts of the invention, to include variations in size, materials, shape, form, function and manner of operation, assembly and use, are deemed readily apparent and obvious to one skilled in the art, and all equivalent relationships to those illustrated in the drawings and described in the specification are intended to be encompassed by the present invention.

[0037] Therefore, the foregoing is considered as illustrative only of the principles of the invention. Further, since numerous modifications and changes will readily occur to those skilled in the art, it is not desired to limit the invention to the exact construction and operation shown and described, and accordingly, all suitable modifications and equivalents may be resorted to, falling within the scope of the invention.

[0038] The teachings of U.S. Pat. Nos. 6,634,041; 6,408,462; 6,129,452; 6,115,872; 5,927,489; 5,729,846; 5,724,698; 5,587,219; 5,467,487 and 3,698,947 are herein all incorporated by reference in their entirety.

1. A backpack apparatus comprising a containment element with a pouch, a cushion element positioned within the pouch of the containment element and an attachment device for securing the backpack apparatus to a golf bag.
2. A backpack apparatus of claim 1 wherein the containment element consists of an absorbent material.
3. A backpack apparatus of claim 1 wherein the absorbent material is a towel.
4. A backpack apparatus of claim 1 further comprising of a skirt without a pouch which is contiguous with the containment element and consisting of the same material as the containment element.
5. A backpack apparatus of claim 1 wherein the pouch is appropriately sized for insertion of a cushion of particular dimension.
6. A backpack apparatus of claim 1 wherein the containment element and pouch further comprise a closing device between them for sealing and unsealing the pouch.
7. A backpack apparatus of claim 6 wherein the closing device consists of velcro affixed between the containment element and the inner uppermost portion of the pouch.
8. A backpack apparatus of claim 6 wherein the closing device is a zipper between the containment element and the inner uppermost portion of the pouch for opening and closure of the pouch.
9. A backpack apparatus of claim 1 wherein the containment element further comprises storage pockets on adjacent sides of the pouch for storage of golf associated accessories.
10. A backpack apparatus of claim 9 wherein the storage pockets can receive golf accessories consisting of the group of golf balls, golf tees and golf gloves.
11. A backpack apparatus of claim 1 wherein the attachment device consists of a first grommet interlocked with a second grommet through a hole punched through the containment element.
12. A backpack apparatus of claim 1 wherein the attachment device consists of a female snap for fixedly securing to a male snap which is attached to a golf bag.
13. A backpack apparatus of claim 1 wherein the cushion element is comprised of foam.
14. A backpack apparatus of claim 13 wherein the type of foam is selected from the group consisting of polystyrene, polyurethane and polyethylene.
15. A backpack apparatus of claim 13 wherein the cushion element is selected from the group consisting of bubble films, rubberized fiber, cellulose and airbags.
16. A backpack having a top edge, a bottom edge, and side edges, at least one pouch extending between the side edges at the bottom edge of the backpack; the pouch having an outer face and an inner face, the pouch outer face and inner face being connected to each other along a pouch top edge, the
inner face being between the outer face and a face of the backpack and separate from the backpack.

16. The backpack of claim 16 wherein there are at least two or more pockets adjacent to the pouch, the pockets being separated by lines of stitching which extend from the bottom edge of the backpack to the pocket top edge.

17. The backpack of claim 16 including a cushion is received in the pouch.

18. A method of using the backpack of claims 1-17 wherein the cushion can positioned by the user.

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